

Out Smart

NOV. '18

HOUSTON'S LGBTQ MAGAZINE

outsmartmagazine.com

'ERASED' NO MORE

Author GARRARD CONLEY is the
conversion-therapy survivor
behind a blockbuster new film

Pg.36

PLUS

WORLD AIDS DAY
with
TITUSS BURGESS

Pg.43

'BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY'
STARS TALK
QUEEN'S LEGACY

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**GENDER-BENDING
DANCER**
DARIUS HICKMAN

Pg.57

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WORLD AIDS DAY 2018



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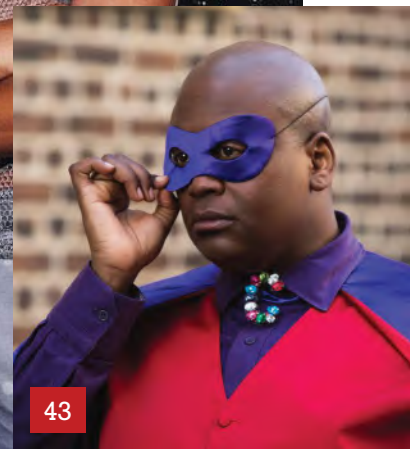
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Gay conversion therapy is not therapy at all; it is torture based on junk science.

Nevertheless, in 2018 alone, an estimated 77,000 adolescents in the U.S. will be subject to this horrific practice.

Garrard Conley, whom writer Ryan Leach interviews for our November cover story, has made it his mission to ban gay conversion therapy in all 50 states. But Conley acknowledges that religious leaders can still practice it, even in places where gay conversion therapy is banned.

Conley, a conversion-therapy survivor, is the author of *Boy Erased: A Memoir*, the book that serves as the basis for Joel Edgerton's blockbuster film coming out this month. Conley hopes the film, along with his new podcast, will raise awareness and help eradicate the root cause of conversion therapy: anti-LGBTQ bigotry.

Speaking of noteworthy LGBTQ-related films, the new Queen biopic from Bryan Singer, *Bohemian Rhapsody*, will also be released this month. Writer Gregg Shapiro offers a sneak

preview of the film in the form of an interview with three of its stars, Rami Malek, Joseph Mazzello, and Gwilym Lee.

Elsewhere in this November issue, writer Don Maines chats with Tituss Burgess, star of the hilarious Netflix show *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. Burgess will headline the Houston World AIDS Day Luncheon on November 30.

Maines also talks with Darius Hickman, a Top 10 finalist from *So You Think You Can Dance* who will be in Houston this month to reprise his viral, gender-bending performance from the reality TV show.

Meanwhile, writer Marene Gustin profiles Jan Rattia, who serves as education director at the Houston Center for Photography and is perhaps best known for his Tease exhibit, which focuses on male dancers.

Finally, the holiday season is officially upon us, and what better way to get into the spirit than with a drag-themed version of a yuletide classic?

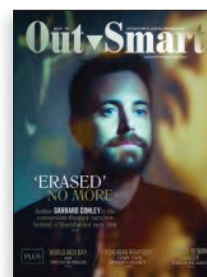
Miss Gay Texas America Regina Blake-

Dubois, one of OUTSMART's LGBTQ Heroes of Harvey from last year, stars in Obsidian Theater's production of *A Drag Christmas Carol*, opening the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Until then, gobble gobble!



—John Wright



ON THE COVER

'ERASED' NO MORE
Author Garrard Conley is the conversion-therapy survivor behind a blockbuster new film.
Pg.36

Photo by ioulex
Design by Alex Rosa

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IRIS RODRIGUEZ

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For more information on where Iris likes to hang out, check out www.mygayhouston/discover

My Gay
HOUSTON

Kellett Foundation to Shutter

Organization to distribute final round of grants to local LGBTQ organizations.

By Brandon Wolf

After 26 years of providing grants to LGBTQ organizations, Houston's John Steven Kellett Foundation is closing.

Since 1992, the foundation has doled out more than \$250,000 in the form of 203 grants. The foundation's remaining funds will be awarded for "transformative" projects up to \$100,000, or 10 percent of an organization's budget, according to president Brian Riedel.

The Kellett Foundation was established by John Kellett, a retired Exxon executive who in 1986 began making personal gifts to organizations that did not receive funding from traditional sources. By 1992, Kellett had set up the foundation and established a six-member board to oversee it.

He died at age 90 in January.

Riedel said that in the years prior to his death, Kellett considered several scenarios for what should happen to the foundation. After his death, the board determined that there were not enough funds to operate in perpetuity. They chose to give one final round of grants that would help organizations achieve a significant transformation.

Riedel said the window for proposals for these final grants will be from November 1, 2018, through February 28, 2019.

Riedel describes transformative proposals as "what is currently needed that isn't being done—that if we rearranged what we were doing, we could get to." The board is purposely leaving the definition vague. "We want the community organizations to tell us what they need and why they need it," Riedel explained.

Grants may be paid in one lump sum, or in annual installments over the next three years. Riedel says the board encourages organizations to "think big."



A Banner Achievement

The late John Kellett, below, began making personal gifts to local LGBTQ organizations in 1986, then formed a charitable foundation in 1992. The foundation has distributed more than \$250,000 to hundreds of groups, including The Banner Project on Houston LGBTQ history, shown above.

Historically, Kellett Foundation grants have been much smaller, from a few hundred dollars to \$5,000.

Riedel said Kellett's consistent response to the board's questions about the disposition of the foundation was always, "I trust you all to do what you think is best." Because Kellett did not want to burden the foundation with a list of restrictions, the sunsetting of the foundation will be a smooth effort.

The foundation's previous grants have helped many organizations that would otherwise have floundered. One example is Houston's Gay Film Festival,

which has received over \$24,000 in grants and matured into the impressive annual QFest.

In addition to local grants, the foundation funded some statewide and national organizations that did work in Houston—such as Equality Texas and the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Riedel remembers Kellett as a low-profile person who sought to help the community grow, but wanted no fanfare for himself. "John allowed the foundation name to be used only as an encouragement for others to think about funding community efforts."

The only known interview Kellett gave was to OUTSMART →



John Kellett

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in 2005, and he used the article to describe a funding model that others could use. “The important thing was to show people their own community but not have it taste like medicine—to give people a lesson without it feeling like school, and to help people find each other and have it be fun,” Riedel said of Kellett’s philosophy.

After Kellett’s death, Riedel said the board met in March to determine the future of the foundation, and by September a plan had been developed. The board then contacted each organization that has received a Kellett grant to inform them about the final round of transformative gifts.

Once the grant window has closed, the board will evaluate all the proposals received and choose those that they find most compelling. Riedel said he does not expect a grant award announcement any sooner than May 2019. Because some of the grants may include a three-year payout, the foundation could continue to exist through 2021 before its final dissolution.



Riedel

The foundation’s website lists 45 of the organizations that the foundation has provided funding for over the years. The list includes such groups as Bayou City Performing Arts, Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of Houston, Houston Gay and Lesbian Parents, Stonewall Lawyers, and Uncommon Legacy.

Another grant recipient was The Banner Project, which created a “pop-up museum” of Houston LGBTQ history. “Receiving a grant for the Banner Project from the Kellett Foundation was the decisive event making the banners possible,” said Sara Fernandez, who coordinated the effort. “In January 2014, the deadline for completion was fast approaching and we had less than half of the money needed. Without the Kellett Foundation, the banners may not have happened.”

Activist Tori Williams is involved in two organizations that were funded by the foundation.

“The John Steven Kellett Foundation was

the first organization to provide financial support to The oH Project,” Williams said. “Without these important startup funds, our oral history project documenting Houston’s response to the AIDS epidemic would not have been born.

“In 1996, when AssistHers was trying to educate local physicians about the health-care needs of Houston-area lesbians, the foundation underwrote the cost of printing and distributing information to several hundred physicians,” Williams added. “A number of physicians told us that they changed their patient intake forms to be more sensitive to lesbians in response to the effort. These are just two of many seeds that John planted which made, and will continue to make, Houston a better place for all of us.”

To apply for a transformative grant, visit KellettFoundation.org.

Brandon Wolf is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On October 21, Melissa Etheridge hosted a fundraiser for Democratic congressional candidate **Dayna Steele** at Pearl Bar. Pictured are District Attorney **Kim Ogg**, **Melissa Etheridge**, **Olivia Jordan**, and **Dayna Steele**.



On September 30, Ovation’s Nightclub hosted Caring Cabaret Sees Red, a benefit for the Red Collar Rescue. Pictured are **Patti Barnes**, **Terry Jones**, **Katharine Engelmann**, **Roger Woest**, **Aaron Reines**, **Cristina Québécois**, **Glynda McGinnis**, **Mark Stonebarger**, **Katie Bate**, and **Deborah Boily**.

On October 7, Tony’s Corner Pocket celebrated its 12th anniversary with a fundraiser for St. Jude’s Hospital, bringing in \$15,495. Pictured are **Randall Jobe** and **Tony Vacarro**.



On October 24, the Walk for Mental Health Awareness hosted its annual fundraiser at Stude Park. Pictured are **C. Patrick McIlvain** and the superheroes from Cosplay for Kids.



On October 6, the Houston Gaymers hosted a drag show benefiting the group’s Project Blue Shell charity at Rich’s. Pictured are **Lynn**, **Adonis**, **Selina Rosalie Cavazos**, **Layla Blitz**, **Ella Mayo**, **Daniel Nolan**, **Candy Saldana**, **Christian Virtue**, and **Ivanna Cupcak**.



On October 13, Pearl Bar hosted its fifth anniversary celebration. Pictured are **Albany Lewis**, **Paige Pitonyak**, **Kris Murray**, and **Julie Mabry**.

continued on page 32

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Do NOT take BIKTARVY if you also take a medicine that contains:

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- rifampin
- any other medicines to treat HIV-1

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

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

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Trump Again Targets Transgender Rights

Administration wants to define gender based on sex assigned at birth.

LGBTQ leaders across the U.S. reacted with fury last month to a report that the Trump administration is considering adoption of a new definition of gender that would effectively deny federal recognition and civil-rights protections to transgender Americans.

"I feel very threatened, but I am absolutely resolute," Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Rights, said at a news conference convened by more than a dozen activist leaders. "We will stand up and be resilient, and we will be here long after this administration is in the trash heap."

The activist leaders, speaking amid posters reading "#WontBeErased," later addressed a protest rally outside the White House.

On October 21, the *New York Times* reported that the Department of Health and Human Services was circulating a memo proposing that gender be defined as an immutable biological condition determined by a person's sex organs at birth. The proposal would define sex as either male or female, and any dispute about one's sex would have to be clarified through ge-



#WontBeErased

Activists rally outside the White House following reports of a Trump administration memo that proposes erasing transgender people from civil-rights laws.

netic testing, according to the *Times*' account of the memo.

For LGBTQ-rights leaders, it's the administration's latest attack on transgender Americans. They also cite an attempt to ban them from military service, as well as a memo from attorney general Jeff Sessions concluding that civil-rights laws don't protect transgender

people from discrimination on the job, and the scrapping of Obama-era guidance encouraging school officials to let transgender students use school bathrooms that matches their gender identities.

President Donald Trump briefly addressed the latest controversy as he left the White

continued on page 51

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I Know What You Did Last Summer

If you see only one play this month, make it Last Summer at Bluefish Cove.

Kristen Sheils (from left), Ruthie Irvin, and Julisa Filio star in Resurrection MCC's production of *Last Summer at Bluefish Cove*. In triangle at far left: Kala Winkelman.

BOTH PHOTOS - TASHA DUARTES



This play is an important work in lesbian theater—the first mainstream, high-quality script featuring gay characters. And it is a truly moving piece that is as powerful today as it was when it premiered in 1980. Jane Chambers was a pioneer in lesbian theater, and this is one of her finest plays. It's the story of a woman Eva, dissatisfied with her

husband, who heads to Bluefish Cove to reconsider her life. Also at the cove is a group of seven lesbian friends taking their annual beach vacation. Of course, Eva falls in love with Lil, a smart, funny woman. But what Eva doesn't know is that Lil is dying of cancer. Did we mention to bring tissues? But it's more than just a tearjerker. There's some snappy, comedic

dialogue (Jean Smart—think *Designing Women*—was the first Lil), and many of the issues surrounding the women are still relevant today. It's about laughter, love, and, yes, death. But what a ride life can be.

—Marene Gustin

November 15–18
Last Summer at Bluefish Cove
ResurrectionMCC.org

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1 Thurs. Body as a Work of Art 📅 thru Jan 11, 2019 It's more than skin deep. thehealthmuseum.org	2 Fri. Autumn Knight: M...ER ★ Performance art at MATCH. matchouston.org After Memphis: Crafted Postmodern 📅 thru Jan 13, 2019 A group exhibit. crafthouston.org	3 Sat. Houston Heart Walk + American Heart Assoc. houstonheartwalk.org Hands on Houston 📅 Family craft festival. crafthouston.org Marcia Ball ★ Roadhouse rhythm and blues. mainstreetcrossing.com	4 Sun. Loosen the Bible Belt ★ A minister (Rev. Jay Bakker) and a lesbian (Kristen Becker) take the stage at The Secret Group. loosenthebiblebelt.com
5 Mon. Dear Charlotte ★ thru 11 A play about the Brontë sisters. uh.edu/uh-arts	6 Tues. Address 📅 thru Dec 8 Exhibit by Richard Rezac. blafferartmuseum.org	7 Wed. The Illuminated Forest + Writers in the Schools' annual gala. witshouston.org CraftTexas 2018 📅 thru Jan 6 The best of Texas-made crafts. crafthouston.org	8 Thurs. The Nutcracker Market + thru 11 All your holiday shopping. nutcrackermarket.com (See p. 22.) Houston Cinema Arts ★ thru 12 Five-day film festival. cinemahtx.org

9 Fri. Forbidden Dreams ★ Free movie night. czechcenter.org La bohème ★ thru 11 The original Rent. houstongrandopera.org Elf Jr. ★ thru 17 The musical! crightontheatre.org	10 Sat. Children's Festival + & 11 Fun for all! woodlandscenter.org The Connoisseur's Eye 🖼️ thru Feb 3, 2019 Ceramics in the Rienzi Collection. mfah.org	11 Sun. Sebastian Maniscalco ★ Stand-up comedy. soundchronicle.com The Big Show 🖼️ last day Lawndale's annual art exhibit. lawndaleartcenter.org	12 Mon. Film & Live Performance 🎬 ★ An evening of art by four artists. aurorapictureshow.org
13 Tues. Bucky Miller: Two Raccoons 🖼️ thru Mar 31 Part of the Art on the Lawn series. camh.org	14 Wed. Bon Temps on the Bayou + Bayou Preservation Association gala. bayoupreservation.org The Condition of Being Here 🖼️ thru Jan 27 Jasper John's exhibit at the new Menil Drawing Institute. menil.org	15 Thurs. The Phantom of the Opera ★ thru 18 Music of the night! houston.broadway.com Christmas Is Coming Uptown ★ thru Dec 30 Scrooge is a Harlem slumlord. ensemblehouston.com	16 Fri. Theta Charity Antiques Show + thru 18 thetacharityantiquesshow.org Agrippina ★ & 18 Ars Lyrica's Baroque opera. arslyricahouston.org Winter Lights + Lights at Gulf Greyhound Park. magicalwinterlights.com
17 Sat. Turkish Festival + All things Turkish. houstonturkishfest.com	18 Sun. Galveston Arts Center 🖼️ last day Three new exhibits. galvestonartscenter.org	19 Mon. Concierge Classic + Golf tournament. houstonconciergeassn.org	20 Tues. A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story of Christmas ★ thru Dec 30 God bless you, everyone. (See page 23.) alleytheatre.org
21 Wed. Mr. Popper's Penguins ★ thru Dec 15 A play based on the children's book. mainstreettheater.com	22 Thurs. Turkey Day! + Get up early and join the Turkey Trot footrace for BakerRipley. Work off those calories you know you're going to eat later. houstonturkeytrot.org	23 Fri. Guitar Star Jackie Venson ★ One night only at the Duck. mcgonigels.com Miss Bennett: Christmas at Pemberley ★ mainstreettheater.com (See page 22.) The Nutcracker ★ At the Wortham. houstonballet.org (See page 22.)	24 Sat. Asleep at the Wheel ★ Merry Christmas, y'all! thegrand.com Mozart & Brahms Thanksgiving ★ Beautiful music for the holidays. houstonsymphony.org
25 Sun. The Priests ★ Musical match made in heaven. thegrand.com Texas Renaissance Festival + last day There be dragons here. texrenfest.com	26 Mon. Pentatonix ★ A cappella group sings Christmas songs. Two members of the group (Mitch Grassi and Scott Hoying) are openly gay. smartfinancialcentre.net		28 Wed. It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play ★ thru Dec 23 The classic as a radio play adplayers.org
29 Thurs. A French Baroque Christmas ★ & Dec 1 & 2 Holiday music from Mercury. mercuryhouston.org	30 Fri. World AIDS Day Luncheon + With Tituss Burgess. aidshep.org (See page 43.) A Christmas Carol ★ & Dec 1 Spooks on the island...and dancing! thegrand.com		

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Calendar of Events

continued from previous page

Nutcracker Market & The Nutcracker

8-Dec. 29

'Nutcracker Market' Nov. 8-11

'The Nutcracker' Nov. 23-Dec. 29

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! And many thanks to the Houston Ballet and its foundation. The company returns to the restored Wortham Theater Center on the 23rd for their annual holiday run of the classic *The Nutcracker*, much to the delight of generations of Houstonians. But prior to that, the Nutcracker Market, benefitting the foundation, opens on the 8th and runs through the 11th. This is also a Houston tradition. It's a giant marketplace with 280 vendors offering everything you need for your holiday shopping.

nutcrackermarket.com
houstonballet.org



The Grand 1894 Opera House

10-Dec. 1

Nov. 10-Dec. 1

There is much to look forward at The Grand on the island this month. Cellist Gabriel Royal for one, on the 10th. Asleep at the Wheel's Christmas program on the 24th, and The Priests on the 25th, three fathers who sing. Then on the 27th take the kids to Erth's Prehistoric Aquarium Adventure featuring giant puppets of creatures that lived at the bottom of the oceans eons ago. And finally, *A Christmas Carol* on the 30th and December 1 that's fun for the whole family.

thegrand.com

SeaWalk

November 11

11

Lace up those shoes for the first annual Galveston HIV/AIDS SeaWalk. Sponsored by Access Care of Coastal Texas, Inc., the walk will run for two miles along the seawall and ends up with some Sunday-Funday drag shows at Rumor's Beach Bar, Robert's Lafitte, and 23rd Street Station. Register early online to get your swag bag.

acctexas.org

Main Street Theater

Nov. 11-Dec. 23

11-Dec. 23

Mr. Popper's Penguins kicks off Main Street Theater's Youth series this month on the 11th and runs through December 15. Singing and dancing penguin puppets! It's fun for all ages. On the Main Stage it's *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* November 23 through December 23. This is a sequel to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and takes place two years later.

mainstreettheater.com

Christmas Is Coming Uptown

Nov. 15-Dec. 30

15-Dec. 30

Scrooge is a Harlem slumlord who is just about to foreclose on a tenement house and a church when a surprise visit from an "old friend" and some groovy ghosts make him reconsider. If you're looking for something different in holiday fare, this is it.

ensemblehouston.com

Why Torture Is Wrong

Nov. 16-Dec. 8

16-Dec. 8

And the People Who Love Them. (Hint, this is not holiday fare.) This play is a satirical look at terrorism, right-wing patriotism gone haywire, pornography, and theater lovers (and haters). Some crazy comedy about some serious topics.

islandetc.org

A Christmas Carol

Nov. 16-Dec. 30

16-Dec. 30

Like Houston Ballet's *The Nutcracker*, Alley Theatre's *A Christmas Carol* is a Houston tradition. Subtitled *A Ghost Story of Christmas*, this is a very spooky yet still family-friendly play based on the classic Dickens tale.

alleytheatre.org

World AIDS Day Luncheon

November 30

30

Not just another luncheon, this is to raise awareness about HIV and remember the community members and loved ones lost to AIDS. Houston ranks 11th in the nation for new HIV transmissions. Over 26 percent of those new transmissions will be diagnosed with AIDS, and there are 29,643 people living with HIV in Houston/Harris County. Keynote



speaker is award-winning actor and singer Titus Burgess of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* fame. (See page 43.)

aidshep.org ■

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Navigating the LGBTQ Economy

The community's financial clout is growing. Are you prepared?

The word “equality” is used often in reference to the LGBTQ community. For years, the fight for equality has been fierce, and those efforts have finally started to pay off.

On one hand, mainstream acceptance of LGBTQ individuals is continuing to spread. On the other hand, there is still such a long way to go—and financial and retirement planning is one area where the LGBTQ community may be falling behind. But it doesn't have to be that way.

In early 2018, Experian conducted a survey of attitudes, challenges, and opportunities as they relate to LGBTQ finances. The survey found that more than 40 percent of respondents said they struggle to maintain adequate savings and that, on average, only 11 percent of their monthly income goes toward savings or investment.

On the flip side, the broader LGBTQ economy has been gaining momentum when it comes to spending power, jobs, and its overall contribution to society.

In 2017 alone, LGBTQ consumer buying power was estimated to be more than \$917 billion. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, the average annual revenue of LGBTQ-certified businesses was just under \$2.5 million, and their combined contribution to the economy exceeded \$1.7 trillion.

As the number of LGBTQ, gender-fluid, and allied individuals grows, it is likely to create a much greater demand for inclusivity, as well as a strong preference for doing business with companies that are known to be friendly to the community.

With changing laws throughout the country, combined with changing attitudes, it is anticipated that those in the LGBTQ community will be able to live more authentic lives going forward, which in turn will allow the community to grow even more. And in many ways, this could be a good thing for the finances of LGBTQ people.

A recent study conducted by Community Marketing Insights (CMI) and T. Rowe Price showed three key themes with regard to the LGBTQ community and investment behaviors:

- **Self-reliance of LGBTQ Investors** With



a median age of 51, participants in the study have lived most of their lives during an era when marriage equality and same-sex benefits were not universal. The mindset for the majority of those surveyed was to look out for themselves financially. Because of that, roughly 80 percent were invested in assets that could provide for their longer-term needs. In fact, based on figures from the T. Rowe Price survey, earning money for retirement is the primary objective for self-reliant LGBTQ investors.

- **Openness to Guidance** In order to help pursue their financial goals, more than half of the survey participants noted that they were open to guidance from experts—and almost as many stated that they currently work with an advisor.

- **A Feeling of Being Underserved** While many of the LGBTQ investors in the survey were ready, willing, and able to move forward with a financial plan, most said they would prefer to work with an advisor and/or a firm that is supportive of the LGBTQ community. However, fewer than 10 percent of the survey participants could identify any financial company that was known for being particularly friendly to the community.

So finding the right advisor would likely improve the LGBTQ economy, both from individuals' perspectives as well as for the community overall.

Most LGBTQ adults came of age at a time

when their legal rights, and cultural acceptance as a whole, was filled with uncertainty and instability. The good news is that many are working to turn that around.

Given the historical changes in marriage laws over the last few years, financial planning for same-sex couples has evolved significantly. But in many ways, we are still just scratching the surface. So it is important not to just assume that everything will automatically fall into place.

For example, just because marriage equality is the law of the land, financial planning is not the same for the LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ communities—starting with the way individuals think about money.

With that in mind, working with a professional who is experienced in financial matters, as well as knowledgeable in matters that impact the LGBTQ community, can be an ideal way to ensure that your financial future is in good hands.

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 September 2017 issue of Texas Monthly. Yung can be reached at grace.yung@lpl.com.



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Legislative Session Looms

Another onslaught of anti-LGBTQ bills seems likely in 2019.

Come January, when the 86th Texas Legislature convenes in Austin, look for more hysteria about an imaginary threat to public safety as Republicans make good on their promise to launch another round of “bathroom bills” targeting transgender people.

It's a laughable concept, but conservative extremists scared the devil out of many folks during the last session by warning that men masquerading as women would do God-only-knows-what to the innocent children who encountered them in public restrooms. Forget about crime in the streets. Right-wing church leaders and politicians will be too busy warning everyone that some people using closed-door restroom stalls to relieve themselves might not be biologically equipped to conform to the stick figure posted at the restroom entrance.

The eek factor was over the top, thanks to the insanity of the authors of multiple bathroom bills. After all, the lewd messages that have always existed on restroom walls of both men and women (female sources confirm) make it pretty clear that weird people (gay, straight, trans, or whatever) have always prowled them.

The antigay rhetoric was nothing new to the LGBTQ community, but the brouhaha sure gave the GOP traction among Southern Baptists and other staunch conservatives. North Carolina is another state where lawmakers obsessed on the issue of transgender people's use of public restrooms in 2016, and succeeded in passing an anti-trans law.

The North Carolina bill reportedly cost the state billions in revenue because of a loss of commerce related to conventions, tourism, and corporate relocations.

Sadly, the bathroom-bill debate—definitely one that captures the public imagination more vividly than other issues—is only one of the legislative controversies that Texas' LGBTQ community will be forced to endure in the new legislative session.

In September, conservative lawmakers speaking at the Faith, Family, & Freedom Forum



Temporarily Flushed

Nicole Perry and other transgender Texans rally against bathroom bills at the Texas Capitol in 2017. Although the bathroom bills were defeated last year, they are likely to resurface in 2019.

sponsored by Texas Values promised to target LGBTQ people in 2019, in accordance with the goals set by the Texas Republican Convention in San Antonio in June. Republicans introduced some 33 anti-LGBTQ bills in the last session, and even more could be floated in the new one.

Republican delegates to last summer's state convention left a threatening message to the LGBTQ community in their wake, signaling their intention to launch another battle in what has become a cultural war. Plank 316 in the platform reads, “We urge the Texas Legislature to pass religious liberty protections for individuals, businesses, and government officials who believe marriage is between one man and one woman. We oppose the granting of special legal entitlements or creation of special status for homosexual behavior, regardless of state of origin. We oppose any criminal or civil penalties against those who oppose homosexuality out of faith, conviction, or belief in traditional values.”

The legislation that conservative lawmakers plan to introduce along with a bathroom bill (likely targeting public schools in particular)

would allow business owners, healthcare professionals, government employees, and others to turn away LGBTQ people if their personal religious convictions cause a conflict.

Although Republicans failed to pass much of their discriminatory legislation in the last session, they may be able to make more progress in the new session, owing to the retirement of House speaker Joe Straus. The moderate Republican enraged hard-line conservatives by blocking the bathroom legislation that governor Greg Abbott placed on the 2017 Special Session agenda, just as the speaker had done in the regular session.

Republicans are expected to maintain their supermajority in the Texas Senate in the new session, and that will allow them to set the agenda for what legislation will be considered. The appointment of a new speaker to the House will be key, and that hinges on whether Republicans can maintain a supermajority in that chamber.

There could be yet another stumbling block for Republicans, though, because Governor Abbott signaled in a September 28 debate →



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Nuremberg to Budapest	Dec 12 - 19, 2019

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Budapest to Bucharest Danube River Cruise - <i>Ms Amadeus Queen</i>	Aug 20 - 29, 2019
2019 Irish Odyssey	Sep 1 - 12, 2019
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ATLANTIS EVENTS

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continued from page 26

with Democratic gubernatorial candidate Lupe Valdez that he would no longer advocate for bathroom legislation, presumably because of the feared economic impact that was seen in North Carolina. The unknown factor would be whether he would veto the legislation if it reached his desk.

When the results of the November 6 midterm elections are known, we will have a clearer indication of what to expect from Texas lawmakers next year. The midterm elections traditionally draw a smaller turnout, but this year could be different.

In any case, the culture war is on with renewed vigor in the wake of the U.S. Senate's battle over the confirmation of conservative Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was sworn in October 6.

By the time the Texas Legislature wraps up its work the next time, there could be a flurry of sign-making under way across the state to explain which restroom and showering facilities certain people can use in schools and other public buildings, and who will be welcomed as customers in businesses.

David Webb is a veteran Texas journalist with four decades of experience in the mainstream and alternative media.

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'Toxic Silence'

UH professor's book examines violence against black trans women in Houston.

One of the things I love to do when I have the opportunity is to get my hands on a good book. While I enjoy a good romance novel (and author Kayla Perrin happens to be one of my favorites in that genre), the bulk of my reading tends to be nonfiction that covers a wide range of topics, from current events to politics to biographies.

I love to read books that talk about history, and some of the books in my personal collection, as you may have guessed, address transgender-related topics.

Books written by and about trans folks over the years include autobiographies like Caroline "Tula" Cossey's *My Story* and April Ashley's *My Odyssey*. Others have an academic slant, such as Julia Serano's *Whipping Girl* or Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*. There's also *Transgender History* by Susan Stryker, in which a certain award-winning OUTSMART columnist is mentioned.

Other well-known trans-themed books that come to mind are *Gender Outlaw* by Kate Bornstein, *I Am Woman* by Daliah Husu, and *Born on the Edge of Race and Gender* by Willy Wilkinson.

One of the things I have lamented is that there aren't many books focused on black trans people. In fact, the people I meet at conferences and other TBLGQ events frequently ask me when I'm going to write my own book.

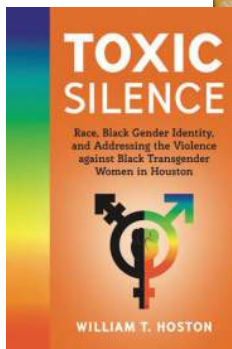
Hmm. You want fiction or nonfiction?

One of the earliest books featuring a black trans person that I remember hearing about—and have been trying for years to get a copy of—is *A Finer Specimen of Womanhood*, which was published by Sharon Davis in 1987.

Janet Mock, a black trans woman, hit the *New York Times* Best Seller list when her autobiography, *Redefining Realness*, was published in 2014. Mock followed it up last year when the sequel, *Surpassing Certainty*, was published.

Also last year, C. Riley Snorton published *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. I'm looking forward to reading it when I get a copy.

One book about black trans issues that I did



Fighting an Epidemic

William Hoston's 17th book, *Toxic Silence*, examines the underlying causes of violence against black trans women.



get a chance to read recently has an H-Town flavor to it.

William T. Hoston, an associate political-science professor at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, just published his 17th book, *Toxic Silence: Race, Black Gender Identity, and Addressing the Violence against Black Transgender Women in Houston*.

I met Hoston a few years ago during one of my Trans 101 panels at HCC-Southeast. I had heard through Mia Ryan, who was one of the local trans women interviewed for the panel, that Hoston was working on a book—and this is the one she was talking about.

Toxic Silence is divided into five chapters: "Before I Was Trans, I Was Born Black," "The Black Trans Identity," "Black Transphobic Violence and Murders," "Black Trans Voices: Their Lived Experiences," and "Black Trans Liberation."

The chapters of *Toxic Silence* provide a snapshot of the local trans community via interviews with local trans women, discussions of black trans identity, and sobering statistics about the murders of black trans people.

The book points out that we must address the off-the-charts level of violence targeting

black trans people both inside and outside of the black community.

The book's appendix includes an interview with former Houston mayor Annise Parker. She discusses with Dr. Hoston the false anti-trans propaganda that killed the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance. I was also surprised to see that I was mentioned on pages 8 and 14 of the book.

Hoston offers some solutions-based recommendations in *Toxic Silence* that include getting the black community to take steps toward ending toxic masculinity. He also talks about the urgency, in these Trumpian times, of encouraging the black community to become more accepting and active allies for their black trans and gender-nonconforming siblings.

Toxic Silence is a needed and necessary addition to the increasing number of scholarly nonfiction books that focus on black trans lives. I'm looking forward to seeing which topic Dr. Hoston focuses on in his next project.

Monica Roberts, a native Houstonian, is the founding editor of the GLAAD award-winning blog *TransGriot*. Her ongoing mission is to educate people on the lives of transgender people and fight for everyone's human rights.

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Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On October 10, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted Brewing Up Business at Maggiano's. Pictured are **Roy Alvarez Jr., Kailee Single, James Boswell, Corey Allen, Tammi Wallace, Corey Heier, Deborah Lawson, Jill Maxwell, Andy Dejene, Elizabeth Muchow, Gary Wood, Paul Hanlon, and Jake Paulhamus.**



On October 13, OutReach United hosted its Houston Coming Out event at Neon Boots. Pictured are OutReach United supporters.



On October 13, the Houston Pride Band hosted its 40th-anniversary concert at the Hobby Center. Pictured are (front row) **Joe Dombrowski, Julian Hernandez, William Fu;** (second row) **Chelsea Rasing** (out of frame), **Casey Cummings, Michael Schirmacher;** and (third row) **Kevin Taylor, Mark Bailes, Matthew Williams, and Gonzalo Agudelo.**



On October 13, the Latino LGBT Gay Pride Baile 2018 was held at Crowne Plaza NRG. Pictured are **Maria Gonzalez, Elia Chino, Gloria Sierra, and Ramiro Fonseca.**

continued on page 49

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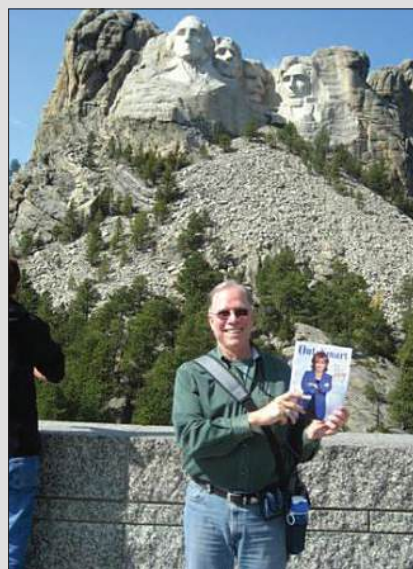
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November 1: The Council on Recovery presents Alice Cooper. Proceeds benefit the Council on Recovery. [INFO councilonrecovery.org](http://INFO.councilonrecovery.org)

November 11: 2018 Galveston HIV/AIDS SeaWalk. Walk with a "porpoise" benefitting Access Care of Coastal Texas. accctexas.org

November 30-December 1: World AIDS Day Events. See OUTSMART's calendar for more information.

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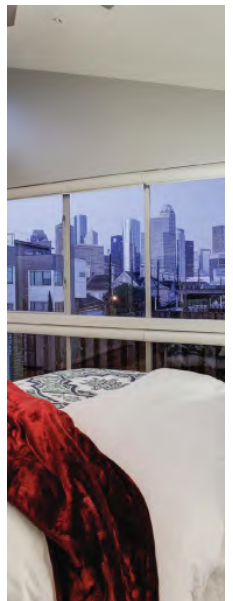
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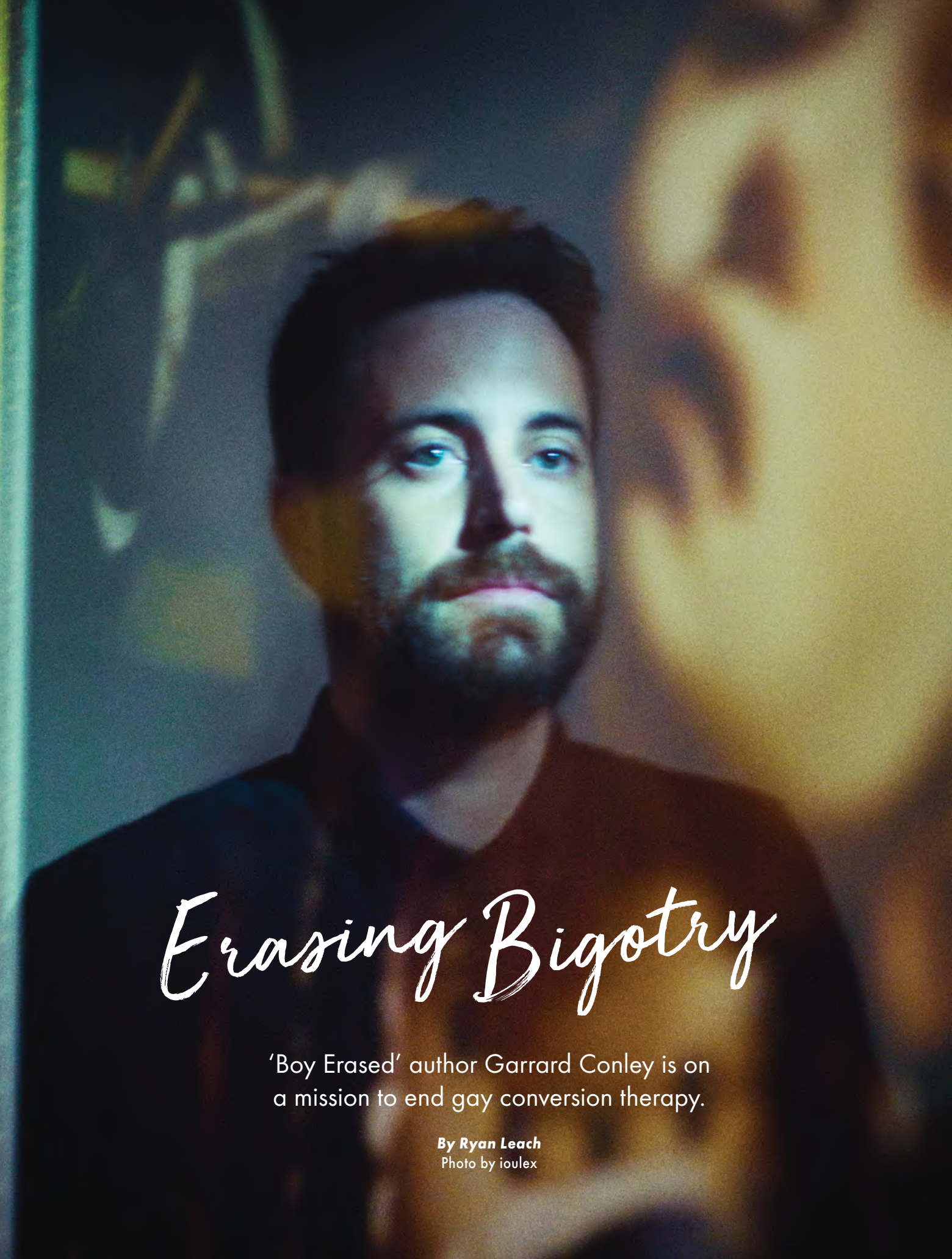
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A portrait of Garrard Conley, a man with a beard and blue eyes, looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and out of focus, with some warm light on the right side.

Erasing Bigotry

'Boy Erased' author Garrard Conley is on a mission to end gay conversion therapy.

By Ryan Leach
Photo by ioulex

A

Author Garrard Conley's life as a teenager revolved primarily around two things: his family and his church.

When Conley realized he was gay, he knew it could impact those relationships negatively. And he was correct. But what he could not have possibly imagined is that his ordeal would eventually lead to a best-selling book and film called *Boy Erased*, as well as a mission to end the atrocity of so-called gay conversion therapy.

When Conley was 16, his father started the multiyear process of becoming a pastor at a Missionary Baptist church in rural Arkansas. In the midst of that process, Conley, now 33, came to terms with his sexual orientation.

Conley and his mother struggled with how to reveal his gay identity to his father. In their congregation (as in many Southern churches), a pastor's children are considered reflections of their parents, for better or worse. When Conley came out at 19 in 2004, his father gave him an ultimatum: go to Love In Action, a gay conversion therapy camp, or be ostracized from his family and church, which seemed like an untenable option for the teen.

From Page to Screen

Joel Edgerton adapted the screenplay for Conley's book, *Boy Erased: A Memoir*. He also directed the film and stars in it as the story's antagonist. "When Joel approached me, I wasn't necessarily comfortable with a straight man taking my story, rewriting it, and directing a film about it," Conley says in an exclusive interview with OUTSMART.

"When we met, Joel told me that he wanted to talk to as many survivors as he could first," Conley recalls. "That felt very good to hear. I told him he needed to meet with several LGBTQ civil-rights organizations, as well as groups like The Trevor Project from the beginning—and he did. I had complete veto power on anything that I thought was insensitive to the story, and I was allowed to give input on all of the drafts the story went through. That made me comfortable enough to trust him with it."

Although Conley had written the 2016 memoir, he opted not to pen the screenplay. "I didn't want to. I had already re-lived the experience while writing the book, and I didn't want to do it again for the film. Edgerton wrote the first draft in about two weeks while he was filming *Red Sparrow* with Jennifer Lawrence. He sent me a draft and I was shocked at how immersed he was in this story."

Conley was not cavalier about granting permission to adapt his story. Prior to being approached by Edgerton, he had rejected another screenplay offer that would have developed a dual story, split between Conley and John Smid, who served as executive director of Love In Action from 1990 to 2008. Smid eventually left the organization where he did so much damage to so many people, and came

out of the closet himself. He is now married to his husband and lives in Texas, and his story received a significant amount of attention prior to *Boy Erased*.

"To focus on Smid would take away from the story about the victims of these places," Conley says. "People gravitate toward a story of this anti-hero demon-turned-angel. I think that it is a harmful narrative. We forget to focus on the victims of people like John. Although I appreciate that he has made a positive change in his life, and I think he is going about trying to



FOCUS FEATURES

rectify [the pain he inflicted] in the right way, I don't want it to distract from the families and kids that are still being subject to this and who are committing suicide as a result of it."

Boy Erased also stars Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman as the parents of Conley's character, Jared, played by queer actor Lucas Hedges.

Although Hedges recently came out, saying he identifies as being on the queer spectrum, he had not yet done so when a story about the film was first leaked to the media. As a result, the production received early criticism for an anticipated "straight-washing" of a queer story.

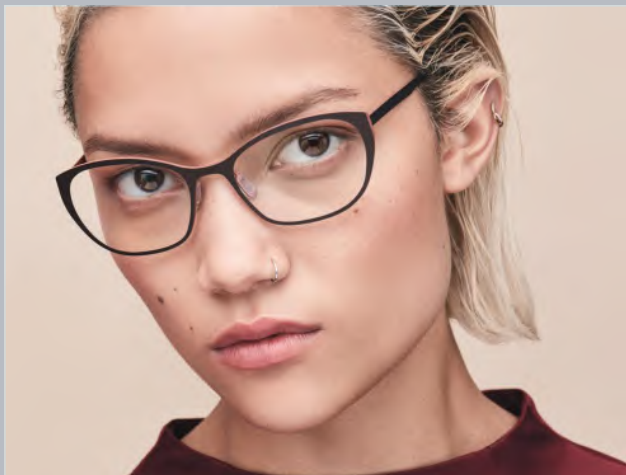
"When the story was leaked, I had already met Lucas and knew that he was not straight, and I thought it was wrong for people to assume his sexuality at age 20," Conley says. "He revealed to me that he was 'on the spectrum.' But aside from that, he is an amazing actor. I think that people got very trigger-happy in regards to that conversation about the production. They failed to see that we had a significant amount of queer representation, in front of and behind the camera. There are so many queer actors in →

Star-Studded Cast

"Boy Erased" features Theodore Pellerin as Xavier, and Lucas Hedges as Jared (above), Nicole Kidman as Nancy (opposite page, above), and Joel Edgerton as Victor Sykes (opposite page, below).

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the film, there were two queer co-producers of the film, and I had a tremendous amount of say in the process.”

Queer pop star Troye Sivan, who is also in the film, wrote a song with Jónsi (a musician with the Icelandic band Sigur Rós) called “Revelation” that is featured on the soundtrack and the film’s trailer.

Dealing with the Fame

Conley says he enjoys a great relationship with his mother, Martha, who has become something of a gay icon as a result of Hollywood’s attention to their story. Martha, whose character is portrayed by Nicole Kidman, was recently the subject of an entire article in the *New York Times*.

“Mom was stalked by a reporter in Arkansas the other day,” Conley laughs. “He showed up at a place where she was getting a pedicure. They had to shoo him out with a broom.”

For Conley and his mother, seeing their lives play out in print—and then on the big screen—has been an emotional experience at times. Conley recalls what it was like seeing the film at an early private screening. “I remember being embarrassed. Writing the book, you have the padding of your words to [explain to the reader] whatever bad decisions you are about to make. But watching it, I just thought, ‘How could I have been so dumb?’ I know that I view it through a different lens than the audience will, but that’s what I felt.”

His mother’s experience was a little different. “Mom saw [the movie] for the first time at the Toronto Film Festival. I thought it was going to be a really emotional experience for her, sitting in a crowd of 1,700 people. She loved it, though. She thought they got it exactly right. She thought they put Nicole Kidman in way too many Walmart tops, but other than that it was a nice experience.”

Martha Conley, who lives in Mountain Home, Arkansas, with Conley’s father, has embraced the attention and the responsibility of shedding light on the damage caused by

gay conversion camps. She spends much of her time as an advocate and as a PFLAG mom with ties to a network of “momma bears” throughout the country, including in Texas.

Conley’s father is a different story. “[My father] has not seen [the movie] and he is not going to the premiere. He says he hasn’t read the book, although I am not sure how much I believe that. He is still a pastor, and even if he himself might be up-to-date that [being gay] is not a choice, he fears that by admitting that publicly, he would run the risk of losing his church.”

For a while, Garrard Conley and his father exchanged poetry, which allowed them to com-

municate despite their differences. Conley joked during a 2017 speech that he was working on “slipping a few female authors in” to expand his father’s horizons. But lately that has slowed down.

“The whole process of becoming a public figure has threatened him a bit, and we have much more of a strained relationship at the moment,” Conley says. “It’s a shame. Since I was a kid, I was told to follow my heart and make the right choices, even if it’s hard. My dad hasn’t decided to do that, unfortunately, and I think it makes him a bit of a coward, but I hope that changes,” Conley adds, before a long pause. “That was the first time I ever said something like that during one of these interviews.”

The Enduring Trauma

It is clear in talking to

Conley that he and his family are still working through the raw trauma inflicted on him by conversion therapy. But many LGBTQ people who undergo conversion therapy do not have the resources or opportunity to seek healing after their ordeal.

A June 2018 study conducted by the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at UCLA estimated that about 698,000 LGBTQ adults have endured conversion therapy, including about 350,000 as adolescents.

Nine states, DC, and 32 localities have enacted laws banning conversion therapy for minors. Texas is not one of those states. →



“For me, my immediate goal is to get gay conversion therapy banned in every state.”

—Garrard Conley



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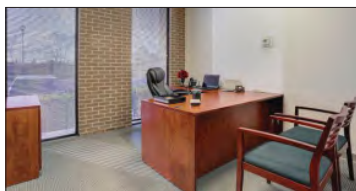


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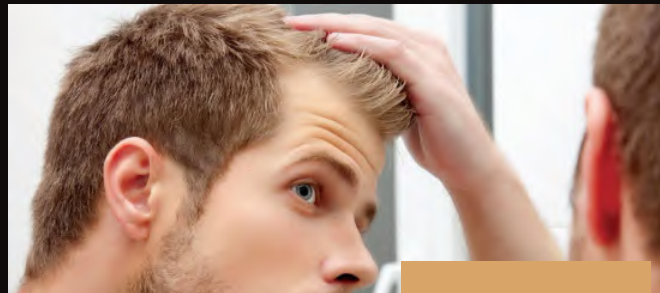
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ERASING BIGOTRY

continued from page 39

Even in the states that ban the use of conversion therapy by mental-health professionals, some religious organizations continue the harmful practice. In 2018, it is estimated that 77,000 adolescents will be subjected to conversion therapy in the U.S., either from mental-health practitioners or religious institutions.

"For me, my immediate goal is to get gay conversion therapy banned in every state," Conley says. "But even in the states where it is banned, religious groups can still practice it because the laws do not consider this type of therapy a fraud that would be classified as illegal."

Indeed, anti-LGBTQ groups have argued that banning conversion therapy impedes their religious liberty. This is a similar argument to the one used to allow discrimination against LGBTQ people in court cases like *Masterpiece Cakeshop*, in which a baker refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple by citing his religious beliefs.

"Long term, my goal is to battle the type of bigotry that creates this issue in the first place," Conley says. "Every time a pastor says something non-affirming to an LGBT person, or a parent forces them to be something that they are not, it does harm and it is happening all of the time to a lot of people. My goal is to jolt people awake."



Conley hopes that the film, the book, and his new podcast, *Unerased*, will help accomplish these goals. The podcast is a four-part series explaining the history of conversion therapy. It includes conversations with both the survivors and the perpetrators of the abuse, including John Smid. That podcast launches on November 2, coinciding with the release of the film. Conley currently lives in New York with his husband of three years, and is working on a new novel.

Ryan Leach is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.



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KING TITUSS

Star of 'Unbreakable
Kimmy Schmidt'
headlines World
AIDS Day Luncheon.

By Don Maines

Photo by Eric Liebowitz

Tituss Burgess is changing television on the Netflix comedy series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* even though his character says, “I can’t fix America.”

Off-screen, Burgess works to change the world, including his upcoming appearance as the keynote speaker at the World AIDS Day 2018 luncheon in Houston.

The November 30 event’s tagline is “It’s more than a luncheon, it’s World AIDS Day.”

Burgess has participated in numerous HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns because the cause is so important to him.

“Visibility is everything,” he tells OUTSMART. “If you don’t know something exists, you can’t have the full extent of information. I feel a personal responsibility to inform others and make them aware of an issue that my community—and so many other communities across the world—deal with on a daily basis.

Awareness is the only cure for ignorance.”

At the luncheon, to be held in The Ballroom at Bayou Place, Burgess will hear how the University of Houston Honors College is performing groundbreaking outreach work in communities with high HIV transmission rates. The school’s effort will be honored as the 2018 Shelby Hodge Vision Award recipient.

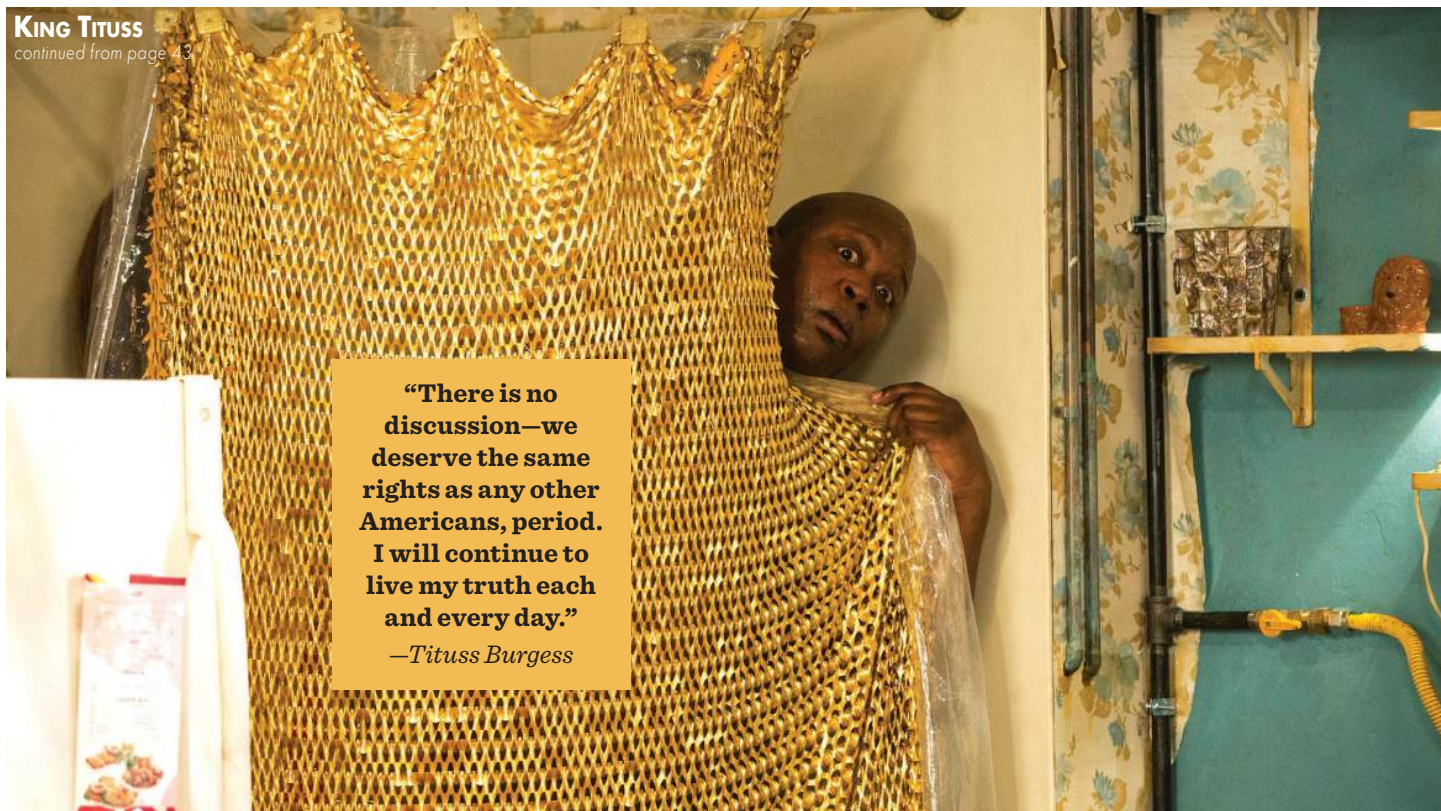
Burgess is a native of Athens, Georgia, who has played roles originally performed by women (such as *The Witch* in Stephen Sondheim’s *Into the Woods*) and white men (such as Nicely-Nicely Johnson in *Guys and Dolls*) before Tina Fey cast him as D’Fwan, a part with just one line, on Fey’s acclaimed NBC-TV series *30 Rock*. Fey was so impressed with Burgess that she brought him back in three more episodes as the gay hairdresser to Sherri Shepherd as Angie Jordan.

Next, Fey created the character of Titus

(with one “s”) Andromedon for Burgess to play on *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, which stars Ellie Kemper. They play roommates in New York City, where Burgess also lives. His character is considered groundbreaking because TV audiences had never seen an outspoken, overweight, narcissistic, out black man portrayed with such dignity.

Burgess has been rewarded with four consecutive nominations for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series. In addition to other nods and some awards he’s won, Burgess feels he’s been handed a responsibility to parlay his fame as an openly LGBTQ actor into a selfless spokesman for societal progress.

“In this country today, so many of our rights are being threatened,” he says. “It is necessary for each and every minority to be fully themselves and be as proud and visible →



'Unbreakable' Breakthrough

Burgess plays Titus Andromedon, whose character is considered groundbreaking because TV audiences had never seen an outspoken, overweight, narcissistic out black man portrayed with such dignity.

as possible. We have to let people know that we've always been here, and we will always be here. There is no discussion—we deserve the same rights as any other Americans, period. I will continue to live my truth each and every day."

As for his dream role, Burgess says, "It has not been written yet."

Sponsors of the World AIDS Day 2018 event in Houston will have the opportunity to meet Burgess at an underwriter party the evening before the luncheon. Also, a limited number of individual tickets will be available for the underwriter party at \$100 each. The underwriter party will take place on Thursday, November 29, 6–8 p.m. at CASA Houston, 2800 Kirby Dr., Suite B100.

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Hooker are co-chairs of the luncheon, which will benefit the preventative and stabilizing services provided by AIDS Foundation Houston and the comprehensive community healthcare provided by Avenue 360 Health & Wellness, both of which serve to normalize HIV prevention and treatment.

The annual Shelby Hodge Vision Award, which recognizes those who demonstrate extraordinary vision in addressing HIV/AIDS, will be accepted at this year's luncheon by UH Honors College research assistant professor Dan Price.

"This award recognizes a paradigm shift in how we think about educating communities

about HIV and how we drive behavioral changes in those communities," Price says. "I came to embrace the more human connection to healthcare through community health workers (CHWs) after seeing that, over the past 20 years, what was being done wasn't working, or it only moved the needle one or two percent."

In contrast, says Price, CHWs "are very good at driving traffic" toward information about HIV. "They are trained, but they don't go into a community as a medical doctor wearing a white jacket. They go in and engage people and direct them as far as where to go to get information. We discovered that you don't lead people with expertise; you lead them by engagement."

Over the next few years, the UH program hopes to hire dozens of CHWs to act as independent contractors, making human connections at the community level and leading people to healthcare technology and expertise.

Houston ranks 11th in the nation for new HIV transmissions, and more than 26 percent of those new transmissions will be diagnosed with AIDS, according to AIDS Foundation Houston. In addition, there are 29,643 people living with HIV in Houston/Harris County.

World AIDS Day is also commemorated as a day to remember community members and loved ones we have lost to AIDS.

What: Houston World AIDS Day Luncheon

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Easing the Transition

Houston therapist Denise O'Doherty creates a self-care manual for the parents of transgender children.

By Lourdes Zavaleta

After Denise O'Doherty moved from New York to Houston in 1981 to work as a psychiatric nurse, she was shocked to witness colleagues belittling a transgender patient.

"Within my first week at the hospital, I heard nurses and doctors make fun of a patient in the process of their transition," O'Doherty recalls. "In that moment, I decided that I wanted to understand gender issues and practice therapy."

A year later, O'Doherty began working part-time at the Montrose Center, where she counseled trans and gender-nonconforming clients and their loved ones. She later left her nursing job to become a full-time therapist. For more than 25 years, she has owned a private practice in Houston, specializing in relationships, substance abuse, and gender issues.

In addition to her practice, O'Doherty has offered advice through her blog, online classes, and workshops. Her latest guidance project is her new book, *Thriving through Transition*, a self-care manual for the parents of trans children.

Thriving through Transition is a seven-chapter guide that outlines how people can come to embrace their trans children. Exploring topics such as grief and religious and soci-

etal conflicts, the book discusses how a parent at any stage of acceptance can reach complete approval of their child's gender identity.

"It's important for the parents of trans kids to be supported, because the challenges they face are not mainstream," O'Doherty says. "I wrote my book to validate parents' feelings and to help give them a sense of what's going on in their lives."

While there are other books for the parents of trans children, most were written to help them understand their kids' needs. *Thriving through Transition* differs from these books because it focuses on the parents. O'Doherty believes that by dealing with one's emotions, parents can become better equipped to raise their trans children.

O'Doherty pairs each topic of her book with the real-life experiences of clients. She says

she included these excerpts because many of the parents' testimonies, despite their backgrounds, had commonalities.

The parents of trans kids almost always almost face "transition grief," a phrase that O'Doherty coins in *Thriving through Transition*. The term explains the personal loss that people feel when having to let go of relationships with their children as they knew them prior to the gender transition.

"Whether a child is five or 50, their parents often face a multitude of emotions when children come out as trans," O'Doherty says. "It's important that they know what to do next, and most importantly, know how to care for themselves in the process."

Digital and print copies of *Thriving through Transition* can be purchased online at Amazon.com. →



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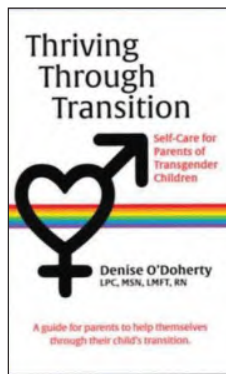
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EASING THE TRANSITION

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③

Rebuilding Families

In "Thriving Through Transition," Denise O'Doherty discusses how a parent at any stage of acceptance can reach complete approval of their child's gender identity.

O'Doherty grew up in Long Island, where she says queer people were accepted and embraced. Every summer, her family took a ferry to Fire Island. On the back of the ferry, O'Doherty saw LGBTQ Manhattanites dancing and laughing, and she longed to join them.

As she got older, O'Doherty began sitting in the back of the ferry. There she made gay and trans friends and began visiting LGBTQ bars. Even though O'Doherty was brought up Catholic, she says that she was taught to appreciate everyone.

"I was raised in a New England conservative environment, but GLBT people were very much a part of our culture," O'Doherty says. "I grew up with them. Many out GLBT people worked in theater, or as choreographers and makeup artists. These people were loved for their artistic contributions."

O'Doherty received her bachelor's in nursing from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. After she got her master's from the University of Florida, O'Doherty moved to Houston to work at St. Joseph's Hospital as a psychiatric nurse.

As a therapist at the Montrose Center for a year and a half, O'Doherty counseled with trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming folks and their families; led support-group meetings; and spoke at national conferences.

She also met gay therapist Bill Scott, one of the Montrose Center's founders. Scott had a private counseling practice and asked O'Doherty to join his team part-time. O'Doherty worked at St. Joseph's and with Scott until she decided to leave nursing.

In 2019, O'Doherty plans to marry her girlfriend of 29 years.

"My goal has always been to improve the lives of others by helping them work through their emotions," O'Doherty says. "I love my job, because every day I get to witness people make changes in their lives for the better."

For more info about O'Doherty, visit relationshiptherapisttrn.com/about-denise.

Lourdes Zavaleta is a staff writer for OUTSMART magazine.

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COMMUNITY

continued from page 32

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On October 14, OutReach United hosted a VIP Brunch at the home of Bryant Johnson-Wood and Gary Wood. Pictured are **Jack Berger, Miss Conception, Bryant Johnson Wood, Tim Stokes, Gary Wood, Carol Wyatt-Woodell, Sallie Wyatt-Woodell, Bob Briddick, and Micheal Reeves.**



On October 14, the Krewe of Olympus hosted its Bitchy Witchy Brunch at the Montrose Center. Pictured are **Bill Jones-Walters, Heather McCullough, Beverly McPhail, Krystal Batkins, Stephanie Hall, Jenna Grove, John "Bubbles" Lindquist, Maxene Grove, Cynthia Grove, and Laura Smith.**



On October 14, Peter Bisuito of *My Big Funny Peter* hosted a fried chicken brunch at Eagle Houston. Pictured are **Albert Delgado, Arturo Medina, Anthony Fernandez, Orlin Cullever, Peter Bisuito, Gerard O'Brien, Gene Glaeser, Jr., and Kent Stapleton.**



On October 13, OutReach United hosted the annual Houston Coming Out Event at Neon Boots. Pictured here are **Brent Leafgreen and Alan Moehle.**

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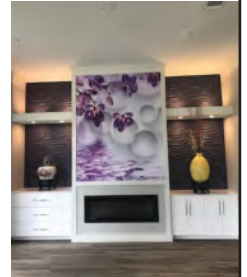
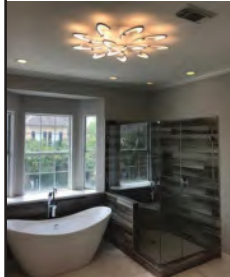
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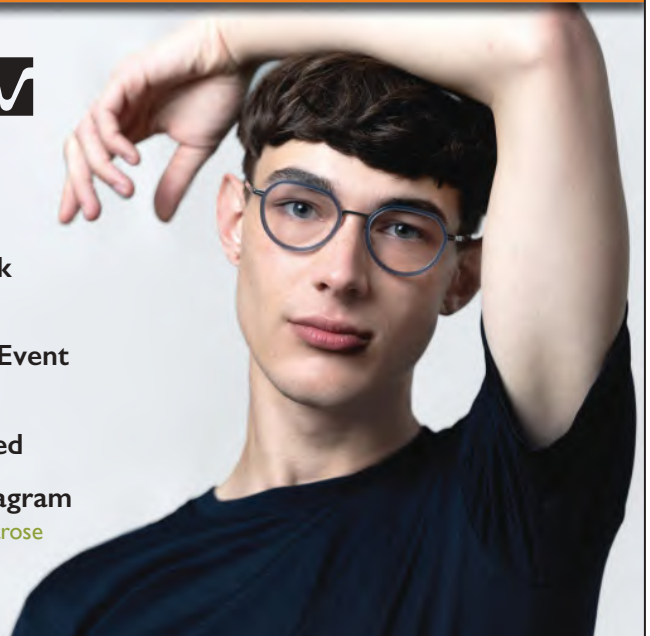
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House for a trip to Houston to hold a rally in support of senator Ted Cruz, but Trump left it unclear how his administration plans to proceed.

"We have a lot of different concepts right now," Trump said. "They have a lot of different things happening with respect to transgender right now—you know that as well as I do—and we're looking at it very seriously."

Trump added: "I'm protecting everybody."

The Department of Health and Human Services had acknowledged months ago that it was working to rewrite a federal rule that bars discrimination in healthcare based on "gender identity." It cited a Texas-based federal judge's opinion that the original rule went too far in concluding that discrimination based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination, which is forbidden by civil-rights laws. The department said it would not comment on "alleged leaked documents." It did release a statement from Roger Severino, head of its Office for Civil Rights, saying his agency was reviewing the issue while abiding by the 2016 ruling from Texas-based federal judge Reed O'Connor.

LGBTQ activists, who pledged legal challenges if the reported memo leads to official policy, said several other courts had issued rulings contrary to O'Connor's.

"For years, courts across the country have recognized that discriminating against someone because they are transgender is a form of sex discrimination, full stop," said Diana Flynn, Lambda Legal's litigation director. "If this administration wants to try and turn back the clock by moving ahead with its own legally frivolous and scientifically unsupportable definition of sex, we will be there to meet that challenge."

Shannon Minter, a transgender attorney with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, called the reported plan a "cynical political ploy to sow discord and energize a right-wing base" before the November 6 election.

UCLA legal scholar Jocelyn Samuels, who ran the HHS civil rights office in the Obama administration, said the Trump administration would be going beyond established law if it adopted the policy in the memo.

"What they are saying is you do not get to decide your sex; it is the government that will decide your sex," said Samuels.

Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, a lawyer with Lambda Legal, said the proposed rule change appears to still be undergoing White House review. It would need to be signed off by the departments of Justice, Labor, and Education, which are also involved with civil-rights enforcement. He said "the purpose of this rule is to erase transgender people from existence, to write them [out of] federal law, and to institute a definition that is contrary to case law, contrary to medical and scientific understanding, and contrary to the lived experience of transgender people." —AP

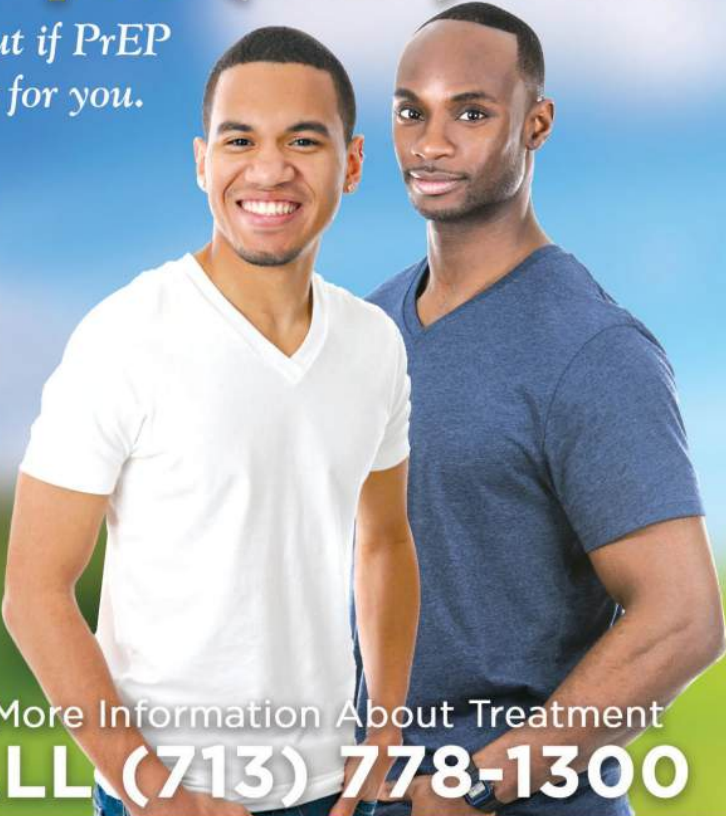


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A man with a beard and glasses is sitting in a wooden director's chair. He is wearing a dark cap with the word "THING" on it, a brown leather motorcycle jacket over a black t-shirt, dark pants, and black boots with white soles. He is holding the brim of his cap with his right hand. A vintage-style camera with a red strap is on the floor next to him. The background is dark and the floor is grey.

“People say these are
fantastic images, but
they aren’t sure they
want to hang them on
their mantle. That’s
when I know I’ve
reached someone.”

—Jan Rattia

Maximum Exposure

Gay photographer Jan Rattia on shooting male strippers and his new teaching gig in Houston.

By Marene Gustin

Jan Rattia was born into a Baptist family in Caracas, Venezuela.

"It was a very religious household in a male-centric culture," he recalls. "I think I always knew I was gay, but I didn't come out to my family until I moved to America for college."

"When I was young, I was very into music and played several instruments," he adds. "My dad and my maternal grandfather and my older brother were photographers, and I got my first camera at 15."

Since September, 44-year-old Rattia has served as director of education at the Houston Center for Photography (HCP). He specializes in using photographic portraits to explore sexuality and immigrant issues, and he is perhaps best known for his Tease exhibit that showcases male strippers.

When deciding which college to attend in 1994, Rattia chose a music program at North Greenville University, a private Baptist school in South Carolina.

"After a while, I realized music wasn't going to be very lucrative," Rattia says. "So I switched to international business."

What followed was almost a decade of corporate teaching and business consulting, until he realized his heart wasn't in it and what he really wanted to do with his life was become a photographer. Rattia moved to New York City and graduated from the International Center for Photography, a premier institution for photography and visual art.

"After New York," he says, "I moved to Atlanta to be with my boyfriend, Jason Edwards. That's how I started my migration south."

His next stop was Houston in 2016, where Edwards also moved to finish his residency at the Texas Medical Center.

"My understanding of Texas was very limited," Rattia says. "But I found Houston to be very interesting, with its diversity and thriving art scene."

One of his first destinations in Space City was the Houston Center for Photography (HCP), which he was already well aware of.

"I took a selfie in front of the HCP sign," he says with delight. "One year later, I was showing my Tease exhibit there, and a year after that, I started teaching there." Last September, he was promoted to director of education. He calls his work at HCP a perfect fit for his life.

Rattia began working on Tease before he moved to Texas. It came about because he wanted to make a visual contribution to the conversation.

"When I was looking for something to com-

ment on through a series of photos, I thought of male strippers," Rattia recalls. "I actually had a friend who ran a strip club for gay men, and he kindly introduced me to some of the dancers. I was thinking they would be more background, but before I shot the first dancer, we had lunch and I got to know him."

Rattia says the dancers were very different than the stereotype.

"Most of them are straight, though they clearly like the attention of other men," he says. "And they have very diverse lives. Some are MBA candidates, pilots, businessmen, and even doctors." →



Smoke and Mirrors, 2012



Playing by the Rules, 2016

Showing the strippers as real people going through the backstage routines of getting ready to perform by pumping and primping and shaving, the dancers became the focus of the portraits. For two years, he traveled across the country shooting male strippers from Miami to New York City, creating a body of work that is both intimate and evocative. The project resulted in his first solo exhibit in New York City at ClampArt in 2016. There was also a beautiful book created for that Tease exhibit, and last year Rattia brought Tease to Houston for the show at HCP as part of his Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship.

At the time, the *Houston Free Press* called the exhibit “modernly mythical and rather orphic in nature, asking for a viewer to see beyond the title and profession of the person at hand.”

“People say these are fantastic images,” says Rattia, “but they aren’t sure they want to hang them on their mantle. That’s when I know I’ve reached someone.”

Rattia says many of the strippers became friends that he stays in contact with.

Other series of portraits, some in moody black and white and others with vibrant colors, can be seen at the Cindy Lisica Gallery and on his website, JanRattia.com.

Rattia and Edwards have been partners for four-and-a-half years, although they’ve known each other longer. The couple resides in the Museum District (which is very convenient to both HCP and the Texas Medical Center) and they have a “very friendly” cat named Maia.

Due to Rattia’s passion for photography and Edwards’ medical residency, the couple has relatively few hobbies. But Rattia says they enjoy riding bikes along Houston’s bayous when the weather isn’t too hot.

“I used to love motorcycles, but I don’t have one anymore,” Rattia says. “Houston streets are not very motorcycle-friendly, and having a partner who deals with brain injuries, well . . .”

Rattia says he also enjoys cooking, but not South American cuisine.

“I worked in an Italian trattoria in college,” he explains. “It was a family-run eatery, and I learned a lot about Italian cuisine. To this day, I can call up the owner and ask a question when I’m cooking Italian.”

His father has passed away and his mother still lives in Venezuela, although he hasn’t been back to visit in a long time.

“We all love to travel, so last year she went to Cartagena, Colombia, and Jason and I went to visit her there,” he says. “My family is fine with my being gay now. Despite their religious beliefs, they came around.”

“But I’m no longer a member of the Baptist Church, and that’s all I’m going to say.”

As for teaching art, Rattia says, “When I work, I hear the voices of my mentors. Having the opportunity to help someone develop their own vision is an amazing thing.”

Marene Gustin is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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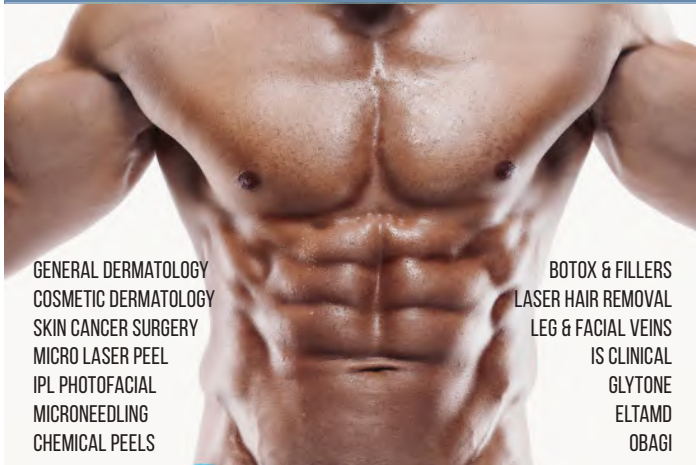
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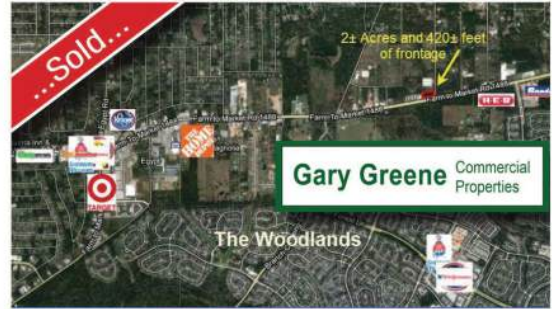
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Fluidity in Motion

Gender-bending dancer to reprise
viral TV performance in Houston.

By Don Maines
Photo by Adam Rose

A lauded, landmark LGBTQ performance will enjoy a live encore when the national tour of *So You Think **You** Can Dance Live! 2018* hits Houston on November 23.

Contemporary dancer Darius Hickman will reprise his role in the gender-bending duet to Irish singer-songwriter Damien Rice's ballad "It Takes a Lot to Know a Man," which Hickman performed with professional female dancer Taylor Sieve on the August 27 episode of the Fox series.

Hickman began the number wearing androgynous false eyelashes, heavy makeup, low-riding white corset, and a billowing chiffon skirt. Quickly, his prancing was interrupted by Sieve, who was dressed in men's dancewear. She wiped away Hickman's lipstick, kicked off his skirt, and covered him in a T-shirt and pants, symbolic of the competing male-female dynamics of a queer person navigating today's society. However, Hickman pushed through the performance, ending on a triumphant note of self-expression. →





Versatile Performer

Hickman is shown dancing a cha-cha routine to "I Like It Like That," with fellow Top 10 contestant Magdalena Fialek.

ADAM ROSE

One *SYTYCD* judge praised the performance as "a masterpiece."

About 13,000 fans have viewed that performance on YouTube.

"Its message is very simple," says Hickman, in a recent telephone interview from Los Angeles, where he was rehearsing for the tour. "Obviously, it is an amazing piece for society and for myself. It's the common idea of society placing you in a box and restricting people. You should be comfortable to express yourself in whatever way, because it's what's on the inside that counts—how you treat people versus your exterior."

Hickman had never heard of Rice or the song, but he agrees that it made perfect sense for openly gay, Emmy Award-winning choreographer Travis Wall to fashion the dance for Hickman.

"I have always been free-spirited," he says, eschewing toxic masculinity that would war against his feminine side. "I wear whatever I want to wear. It could be sequins, mesh, glitter, or however I am feeling."

Wall helped elevate Hickman from the show's gay black guy with a rough childhood to a true contender by choreographing "It Takes

a Lot to Know a Man" for him.

"My childhood was definitely unstable," says Hickman, explaining that he never knew his father, and his mother abused

drugs. Meanwhile, living with his aunt, he suffered physical abuse and recoiled from watching his aunt being attacked by her partner.

Dance was Hickman's "lifesaver," he says. "I started at age 13, performing in an arts middle school. My mom was out of prison by then, so she also tried making up for lost time."

Hickman, who is 19 and single, completed a year of ballet at Butler University in Indianapolis before winning fame on *SYTYCD*.

The national tour features Hickman along with his fellow Top 10 finalists, including Jensen Arnold, Hannahlei Cabanilla, Genessy Castillo, Evan DeBenedetto, Jay Jay Dixonbey, Magdalena Fialek, Chelsea Hough, Cole Mills, and Slavik Pustovoytov.

"I am excited about coming to Houston so I can meet people who have reacted to my

"I wear whatever

I want to wear.

It could be sequins, mesh, glitter, or however

I am feeling."

—Darius Hickman

performances on *So You Think You Can Dance*," he says. "I can't believe the response. I have seen my fans on Instagram, but now I will get to meet them in person."

The tour promises to get up close and personal with fans by recreating some of the hottest show-stopping routines from *SYTYCD*'s 15th season, as well as original pieces choreographed specifically for the live show.

So You Think You Can Dance Live! 2018 is directed by Raj Kapoor, with dance routines overseen by Emmy-winning star choreographer Mandy Moore.

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Tickets: [ReventionMusicCenter.com](https://www.ReventionMusicCenter.com)

Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



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Farm to ‘Phantom’

Gay thespian Rob Lindley reflects on his journey from small-town Iowa to the Hobby Center stage.

By Jenny Block

The small Iowa towns where actor Rob Lindley grew up didn’t even have movie theaters.

Now, Lindley lives in the big city of Chicago and is starring as Monsieur Gilles André in Cameron Mackintosh’s new touring production of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s classic 1986 musical, *Phantom of the Opera*.

The tour’s next stop is Houston, where *Phantom* runs November 7–18 as part of Broadway at The Hobby Center’s 2018-19 season.

Lindley, 45, says his father was a minister in the United Methodist Church, which meant moving every seven or eight years to a new congregation.

It wasn’t until Lindley attended Central College in Pella, Iowa, that there was finally a movie theater nearby. But his sights were set on something bigger—namely, the Windy City.

“It was where I would go for field trips and shows,” Lindley says, adding that growing up gay in a small town always made him feel like “a



Fresh Perspective

Prior to being cast in Cameron Mackintosh’s touring production of *Phantom of the Opera* (l), out actor Rob Lindley (inset) hadn’t even seen the show.

MATTHEW MURPHY; INSET: COURTESY BROADWAY AT THE HOBBY CENTER



rainbow fish out of water.”

With a theater degree in hand from Central College, Lindley headed to Chitown and enrolled in the Conservatory at Second City.

Lindley says he gained the confidence needed to pursue musical theater thanks

to “having that one drama teacher in middle school” who told him, “You’re really good at this.” He’s also glad that members of his father’s church encouraged him to sing solos in the church choir.

His first job out of college was touring with a children’s theater company. Then, after finishing his training at Second City, he joined one of the nation’s longest-running musical improv groups, Baby Wants Candy. The audience would provide performers with the title of a make-believe show, and they would improv the singing, dancing, and acting right →

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FARM TO 'PHANTOM'

continued from previous page

then and there, as a full-scale musical. Lindley also taught for several years in the music department at Second City. He still returns to Second City occasionally to perform with Baby Wants Candy between his other gigs.

Lindley admits he is not what is known as a "triple threat"—a performer talented in acting, singing, and dancing. Acting and singing are second nature. But dancing? Not so much.

"Although my dancing could be threatening," he laughs. "I don't dance very well."

Lindley performs in shows that require what he calls "park and bark," where you "stand and sing pretty." Of course, in *Phantom*, everyone dances during "Masquerade."

"Of all the things in the show, that was the thing that stressed me out the most," Lindley says. "Luckily, I had a very kind and patient dance captain. This is where you'll see me sweat."

"I dance beautifully in improv shows," he adds. "You'll never see me in *42nd Street* or *Billy Elliott*."

Interestingly, Lindley was somewhat unfamiliar with *Phantom of the Opera* prior to being cast in the show. "I knew the music but had never seen it until my first day. I grabbed a ticket and went in to see it. I happened to be sitting with some friends, and I kept saying, 'What's going to happen next?'"

This also gave him an opportunity to "beg, borrow, and steal" from the actor he would replace. But because he had no preconceived notions, Lindley says he brought a "fresh energy" to the work, and he could not be more thrilled to have that opportunity.

"My character doesn't enter for the first 10 minutes of show, so during the overture I'm in the dressing room," he says. "Sometimes, I'll just turn to my dressing room mate and say, 'I'm in *Phantom of the Opera*,' or I'll be on the phone and I'll be like, 'I have to go. I have to be in *Phantom*.'"

Lindley says he believes *Phantom* has lasted for so many years because it can mean so many things to so many people.

"Certainly the awkward outsider from a small town can relate to the recluse phantom," he says. "I certainly think most of us can relate to a feeling of being an outcast and misunderstood. I can't say that I deal with my feelings the same way he does. But I certainly find myself drawn in by his story night after night."

As one might imagine, Lindley is a consummate professional, but that doesn't mean he hasn't had an onstage mishap or two. During one performance of *Phantom*, when he is supposed to say another character's name, he said his own character's name instead.

"My eyes went like saucers," he says. "And then, not slick at all, I corrected myself." His "loving cast" won't let him forget that fateful

performance. "They've all started saying, 'In André's world, everyone is André.'"

Lindley's Chicago credits include *Fun Home*, *Secret Garden*, *Angels in America: Parts 1 & 2*, *Caroline or Change*, and *Carousel*. He has also appeared at Long Wharf Theater in Connecticut, Asolo Repertory Theatre in Florida, and Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC—and he's even earned a Joseph Jefferson Award for his directing work.

Touring with *Phantom of the Opera* is a full-time job, and then some. But Lindley still manages to produce concerts in Chicago, including a cabaret show during the holidays. As for his theater bucket list, Lindley says although he is honored to have appeared in *Angels in America* and *Fun Home*, *Sunday in the Park with George* would be at the top of that list.

This will be Lindley's first time in Texas, despite the fact that his parents own a vacation home here. With any luck for Houston theatergoers and Lindley's folks, he'll fall in love with the Lone Star State.

What: *Phantom of the Opera*

When: November 7–18

Where: The Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

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Jenny Block is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

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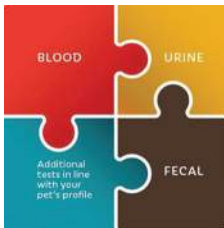
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They Will Rock You

'Bohemian Rhapsody' stars Rami Malek, Joseph Mazzello, and Gwilym Lee discuss the new Queen biopic.

By Gregg Shapiro

Photo by Alex Bailey



The Show Must Go On 

Gwilym Lee (Brian May) and Rami Malek (Freddie Mercury) star in Twentieth Century Fox's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, opening in theaters this month.

First things first: for all of those who are concerned about the way Freddie Mercury's homosexuality is depicted in Bryan Singer's Queen biopic *Bohemian Rhapsody*, you can relax. From the minute you first see Mercury, played brilliantly by Rami Malek (complete with prosthetic teeth), there is no doubt that the king of Queen was, in fact,

a queen. Yes, his relationship with "fiancée" Mary Austin (Lucy Boynton) gets a fair amount of screen time. But so do his same-sex attractions—from being cruised by a trucker outside of a men's room to his relationships with manager Paul (Allen Leech) and later his lover, Jim (Aaron McCusker).

Now that that's settled, it's safe to say

that, as biopics go, *Bohemian Rhapsody* does a respectable job of telling Mercury's story and giving the audience insight into the history of the band itself. The backstory of "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "We Will Rock You" are worth the price of admission alone. I had the honor of speaking to Malek, as well as Joseph Mazzello and Gwilym Lee (who play Queen band →



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THEY WILL ROCK YOU

continued from previous page

members John Deacon and Brian May, respectively) while they were in Miami shortly before the movie opened in theaters this month.

Gregg Shapiro: I'd like to begin by getting the obvious questions out of the way first. Would you each please name your favorite Queen song and album?

Jospeh Mazzello: "Somebody to Love" is my all-time favorite. And this is a boring answer, but *A Night at the Opera* is such a masterpiece that, all told, I'd have to say it's my favorite album.

Gwilym Lee: Yeah, probably the same. But I really like the first album, *Queen*, just because you hear them working out who they really are. You hear them as a really young, slightly naïve band that sounds a lot like other bands of that time because they're still trying to find their unique sound. There's a lot of Led Zeppelin influence, but there's something quite pure about it as a rock band.

Rami Malek: As an album cover, maybe to flip this a little bit, I like *News of the World*.

The robot!

RM: Yes, the robot, which they're currently touring with. We watched so much archival footage, and to hear them talk about "We Will Rock You" and "We Are the Champions" [both from *News of the World*] as something they always thought about as a pair, and a true audience-participation song that's featured so heavily in the film—I've got to pay homage to that.

Yes, there's that great scene in the studio where we see the genesis of the song. Prior to making *Bohemian Rhapsody*, where did Queen rank on each of your lists of favorite bands?

GL: It's pretty high up there. Their songs are so universal. You hear them everywhere growing up. Sometimes you have to remind yourself that they wrote the songs that they did. I think people are going to watch this film and be shocked [by what they] learn. "Oh, they wrote that one as well!" What's been lovely about doing this project is going back to the origins of their songs—seeing how they evolved, and the imagination that it took to come up with such unique songs.

JM: I made a little student film when I was in high school, and I put "Another One Bites the Dust" at the end of it over the credits. Then Queen just started popping up for me. I directed a film, and every day before going to the set, to pump myself up, I'd listen to "Somebody to Love." Then it was in college where I feel like I found a new level of appreciation for them and I became a Greatest Hits fan. Every new song I heard by them was my new favorite song. Doing this movie changed everything. There were

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songs I didn't think about too much, or [that initially] seemed like one of their mediocre songs. But when you learn how to play it, the intent behind it, why they wrote it, how all four of them wrote hits—when you get all of that knowledge, it takes on a whole new meaning for you. I literally walked in this room singing.

Yes, I heard you singing “Somebody to Love.”

RM: We got this question on the set a lot when we'd be playing a song, take after take. I was a production assistant on a music video once where I was like, “If I ever hear that song again, I'm going to do bad things.” But that never happens with Queen. Collectively we've all said this without talking about it. We've been listening to Queen non-stop in a way that some might think is odd—or some might think is totally understandable.

That speaks to the power of the music.

RM: It does. Hearing Bowie with Queen and Freddie doing those kinds of operatic warm-ups that he ended up incorporating into the music was revolutionary to me. Then you get involved in the story behind the making of “Under Pressure” and how things came about with them. How inspired and spontaneous they were together is something I find so fascinating.

JM: After I was done shooting, I was like, “What songs didn't we cover? What songs didn't I get to know?” That was the rabbit hole I went down. You're loving so much of it that you want to learn more and more, and be able to take it in as a fan of the music rather than having the responsibility of performing it.

You hope that that's what a movie like this will do, to get people to go and do the research.

GL: So many people that we've spoken to who have seen the film say that the first thing they do is go back home and watch the Live Aid footage, which I think is great. Everyone needs to see it. It's such an iconic and historic moment. We watched it hundreds and hundreds of times in preparation for the film. I still watch it to this day.

There's a scene where Freddie plays piano upside down and backwards, which made me wonder if each of you plays a musical instrument.

JM: Only upside down. *[Laughs]*

RM: I looked at the piano, and it's been a mystery to me my whole life. That's the one thing people forget about Freddie: the guy was a virtuoso. Taking piano lessons, it took quite a while for me to learn how to play “Bohemian Rhapsody” or “We Are the Champions.” But at one point in the script where Freddie's playing upside down as well, I felt like [he was telling us], “If you're going to make my story from this point of view, I'm going to throw everything at you.”

GL: I played a little bit of acoustic guitar, but



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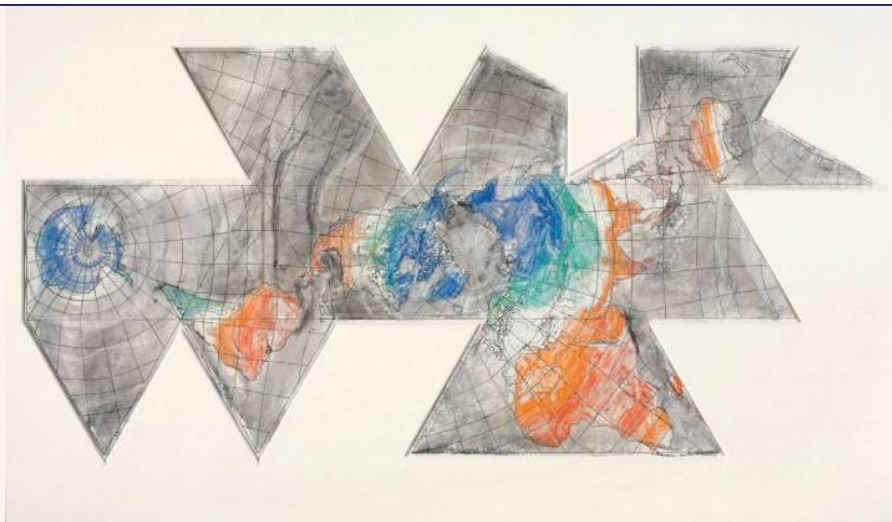
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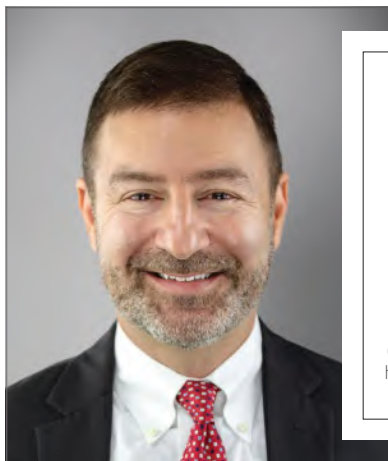
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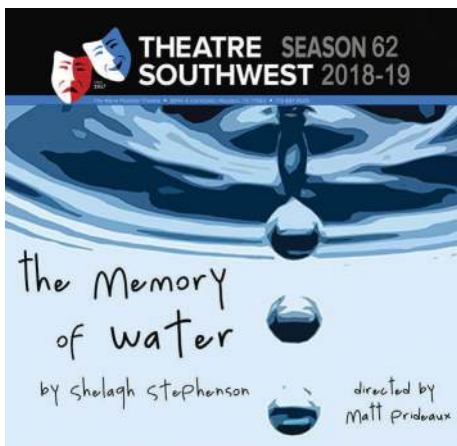
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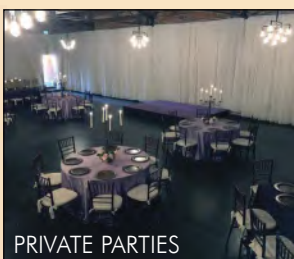
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THEY Will Rock You

continued from previous page

nothing to the level of Brian May's genius. We all put in a lot of work. We got grafted pretty hard trying to play our instruments.

Joseph and Gwyllim, what were the challenges of playing living people, as in the case of John Deacon and Brian May, respectively?

JM: It literally never leaves your mind every time you play a real person. As an actor, you want to go into any job giving it your absolute all and everything. It just feels like there's this extra motivation when you have this intense responsibility to the actual person you're playing—to their family and, in this job, to the Queen fan base, which is massive. We hear from them all the time, they're so invested in this. Every day you walk on set—it doesn't matter if you're tired, or what's going on in your personal life—you always keep that in the forefront of your mind, and it focuses you in a way you can't even imagine.

GL: You have to stay on guard. You have to stay on your game. It can be overwhelming, but it forces you to put in the hours.

RM: I looked forward to having Brian May [visit the set]. It just elevated me.

It didn't make you nervous?

RM: It could have. But he stepped on the scene and he was warm. He was taking pictures. There's such humility and class in the man. He made us feel like it was a privilege to have us telling his story.

JM: He was taking videos on his cellphone of us doing Live Aid. We were like, "That's not how this works. [Laughs] We're trying to impress you!" It was a cool moment for us.

What do you think Freddie Mercury would think of Bohemian Rhapsody?

RM: It's hard enough emulating him in any way, or trying to fill those shoes. It took me quite a while to come close in this film—to begin to ponder what this man was thinking. Ultimately, I think what the film does really well is that it doesn't spend too much time going into the darker places, the illicit places. We do that so we can show just how grand and big his life was.

Full.

RM: Rich and complex and full. I think celebrating the magnificence of the man was all we hoped to achieve. I just hope there's a moment where he's like, "Well, that was colorful and enjoyable. I hope you all had a real good time."

GL: It's nice to be reminded of him. He was a celebrator of life; an incredible individual. It's nice to remind the world of him. We need people like Freddie Mercury.

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.

Unity and Diversity

Out Houston minister Michael Gott leads one of the nation's largest Free Thought communities.

By Shirley Knight

Rev. Michael Gott says being raised in a fundamentalist Christian church impacted him in two important ways. One was the positive foundation of love he experienced, and the other was his need to experience healing after being excluded because of his sexual orientation.

The 51-year-old Gott, who is originally from rural Oklahoma, adds that what he's learned as a gay man, which he might not have learned otherwise, is compassion.

"When we talk about inferred privilege, I have every privilege offered in Western society except that one," Gott says. "I am an able-bodied, white, Christian male. This has been the one thing that has excluded me from all of those conferred privileges and rights, and it opened my eyes to all the other people who are excluded in so many ways. So because I'm gay, I have a huge heart for minorities, for the underdog, and for the underprivileged and underserved.

"When we get locked into a single perspective on the world, we're in trouble," Gott continues. "That's why minority voices are so important—particularly LGBTQ voices in spiritual communities. We've been a burr under the saddle of a lot of churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques, but now it feels like (at least in the West) we're reaching this place where voices are being heard, the right questions are being asked, and the right arguments are being made."

In September 2017, Gott became senior minister at Unity of Houston, one of the largest New Thought communities in the U.S.

"We're inclusive," Gott says. "We do not teach that our path is the only path to the divine. Philosophically, we're much more aligned with some of the Eastern religions—Hinduism and Buddhism particularly—in that we recognize the oneness of all life, the interconnectedness of all life."



Gott Faith?

Rev. Michael Gott, senior minister at Unity of Houston, has a passage from Paul's epistle to the Romans tattooed on his arms: "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed."

Unity of Houston traces its origins to 1919, when Bertha Miller began hosting study groups in her home on Rutland Street in the Heights. Unity moved to its current campus, west of the Galleria, in 1960 when the area was on the outskirts of town.

"I'm happy to say there are now quite a few LGBTQ-affirming churches in Houston, and that's a fabulous thing," Gott says. "What sets us apart is that we're not a gay church. We have a large LGBTQ membership, and we have a large African-American membership, and we have a large Hispanic membership. That's my favorite thing about our community: our diversity."

Gott says his intention, as Unity of Houston evolves, is to "remain rooted in that philosophy of inclusion and celebration of all life and all people," while at the same time focusing on "engagement, including one-on-one and small-group connections."

Unity of Houston hosts numerous events, groups, and guest speakers. The groups that meet on any given day have names such as The Artist's Way, Living Room Conversations, A Course in Miracles, Peacemakers, Animal Kinship, and Latinas Unidas. "My vision is that people find community here, they find teaching here, they find teachers here, and they find a

continued on page 86



**"To be doing this in
drag makes it a dream
moment for me, and I
am representing the
brand of Miss Gay
Texas America
with something
entirely new."**

—Regina Blake-Dubois

A Very Mary Christmas

Miss Gay Texas America stars in 'A Drag Christmas Carol' at the Obsidian Theater.

By Don Maines

Photo by Michael Andrew Voight

Don we now our gay apparel for a home-grown show-in-the-making called *A Drag Christmas Carol*.

The gender-bending "jukebox musical" is set to premiere November 29 at Obsidian Theater in the Heights, starring the reigning Miss Gay Texas America, Regina Blake-Dubois as herself.

Co-director Kelsey McMillan says the show also boasts openly gay Houston performer Wyatt Whitson as both Winchester and Lady Gaga, who is the Ghost of Christmas Present in this update of the Charles Dickens classic about Ebenezer Scrooge.

"Our Scrooge is an ultra-conservative politician, Beauregard Flint, who pushes a 'Keep Christ in Christmas' omnibus bill that screws everybody," McMillan says. "Our Bob Cratchit character is his daughter, Chastity, who is liberal and a lesbian. She is pregnant with a child coming into the world. The journey our Scrooge takes is to find an open mind."

Production numbers of holiday classics will feature Blake-Dubois, who serves as the Jacob Marley character from the 1843 Dickens novella, conjuring ghosts to visit the politician in his dreams.

"Because it is a modern interpretation, we wanted to incorporate drag characters, and it was really important for us to get a local queen to play herself. [Otherwise] we wouldn't have done it," McMillan says.

Other LGBTQ cast and crew members will include Scott Lupton as both Blacklung and Dan, stage manager Sara Denton, sound designer Jarred Popoff, and costume designer Eddie Edge (with Caroline Harrell).

In Obsidian's script, the late Freddie Mercury of Queen is the Ghost of Christmas Past, while the Ghost of Christmas Future is revealed as three handmaidens from Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

McMillan traces the origins of *A Drag Christmas Carol* to her meeting with Obsidian's artistic director, Tom Stell, and playwright Rhett Martinez to consider what show the theater might perform for the holidays.

"All the good Christmas shows are already being done at other theaters, so we discussed ideas for a new show that would highlight our amazingly talented actors," she says. "We thought of doing a cabaret, but it would be nice to have a through-line, and to enjoy this really collaborative process of creating a show that could be performed every year, possibly."

Martinez "went and wrote the script," says McMillan. "We are up to draft number two, and Rhett will be in rehearsals with us to update it and bring in some of the actors' own personalities."

"The script is peppered with all-recogniz-

able holiday classics," McMillan says, including "Santa Baby" performed by representatives of tobacco, oil, and gun lobbies.

"You can hum along or tap along to all of the music," says Ryan Barrett, whose drag persona is Regina Blake-Dubois.

"I love Christmas," he adds. "It is always my favorite time of the year, probably for as long as I can remember. To be doing this in drag makes it a dream moment for me, and I am representing the brand of Miss Gay Texas America with something entirely new. I love the energy of this project and the family we're making and the opportunity to be 'out' on stage. It is giving me lots more confidence."

Meanwhile, Blake-Dubois continues to host *The Broad's Way*, her weekly show at Michael's Outpost in Montrose. It's the gig that caught the attention of the creators of *A Drag Christmas Carol*, explains McMillan, whose co-director, Stell, also plays Beauregard Flint.

Haley Hussey portrays Chastity. Rounding out the cast are Arianna Bermudez, Danielle Bunch, Kyle Stephens, Caleb Wyrick, Madison Mapes, and Sammi Sicinski, who is the wife of the playwright. Sicinski also played Lulie in *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche* for Boiling Point Players in 2015.

The musical director is Kiefer Slaton. Zoe Casseday is the assistant stage manager. The set designer is Nolan LeGault, and Allen Titel designed the lighting.

What: *A Drag Christmas Carol*

When: November 29–December 15

Where: Obsidian Theater,
3522 White Oak Drive

Tickets: ObsidianTheater.org/tickets

Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



Standing Out

Houston comedian Keisha Hunt strives to be a voice for LGBTQ people.

By Lourdes Zavaleta
Photo by Christopher Allen

Keisha Hunt says her stand-up comedy career began on a dare.

"Right after I graduated high school, I went to my friend's comedy spot, and she called me on stage," recalls Hunt, now 38. "I was nervous and didn't know what to do, so I mimicked Cleo, the TV psychic. I got some laughs, so I decided to do it again."

Hunt, an out lesbian from Houston, is now a celebrity in her own right. Her jokes have landed her spots on NBC's *Last Comic Standing*, Bill Bellamy's *Who's Got Jokes?* and *Jamie Foxx Presents: America's Funniest Comics*. In 2013, she made her mark as the first female champion of Miller Lite's annual "Stand Up. It's Miller Time" competition that helped kick-start the careers of Bernie Mac, Cedric the Entertainer, and Sheryl Underwood.

After winning the Miller Lite competition, Hunt took home a grand prize of \$10,000 and was featured in *Complex* magazine.

When Hunt isn't competing or touring the country, she is a regular performer at two local comedy joints, the Houston Improv Comedy Club and The Secret Group. A self-described pint-sized tomboy, Hunt stands at four feet eleven inches tall. On stage, she often pokes fun at her height, androgyny, and experiences with dating women.

"Y'all looking at me like, 'She said her name is Keisha, but that ain't no damn Keisha. Who is that? Somebody let their son up there,'" Hunt said as she introduced herself at an all-women comedy showcase at the Joke Joint in March. "Ladies, even though I look like this, don't ever confuse me with a man. I don't take out the

trash; that's for dudes."

Hunt describes her humor as personal and family-oriented. Her mother, father, and 13-year-old son provide the inspiration for much of her material. By focusing on her inner circle, Hunt keeps controversial subjects, such as politics, out of her act.

"I try to stay away from politics because I just want to make people laugh," Hunt says. "I touch on Trump every once in a while, but that's just because I have to. Some people can find humor in politics, but other people, like me, get angry."

Hunt also regularly "freestyles"—concocting humorous scenarios that audience members may have faced based on their appearance.

"I like to feed off of my environment," Hunt says. "I can create a story based off of what I'm looking at. Some people think I'm weird, but if I write stuff down, it's not always genuine.

The person I choose to make jokes about usually enjoys it, but I try not to be too harsh on them."

On September 3, Hunt celebrated her birthday by headlining Gay Shame Parade, The Secret Group's bi-monthly stand-up show featuring "gays, probable

gays, and people we wish were gay." Hunt says the performance was one of her most memorable because the audience responded so well to her and other LGBTQ comics.

As a queer comedian, Hunt aims to be a voice for those who are not yet out.

"I'm an out-and-proud lesbian, and it's so good to be free," Hunt says. "Of course, we still have a lot to work on, but times are changing.

Representation matters. If you can, come out of the closet, for goodness' sake."

Growing up, Hunt was a class clown. In high school, her theater teacher introduced her to the art of comedy by putting on a *Saturday Night Live* VHS tape.

After realizing that stand-up comedy might also pique her interest, Hunt went out and saw live performances by Martin Lawrence, Eddie Griffin, and Andrew Dice Clay.

"I got bit," Hunt says. "After seeing all of those great comedians, I knew I wanted to do that, too."

Hunt's first-ever performance was attended by black comedy legend and well-known civil-rights activist Dick Gregory, who sat in the front row. When she asked Gregory for career advice, he simply told her to adjust her mic for future performances. Although she wishes she had gotten more out of him, Hunt says Gregory's presence at the show inspired her to continue pursuing comedy.

Although she feels she hasn't reached her full potential, Hunt says the most rewarding moment of her career was performing for U.S. service members based in Iraq in 2007. She says the best part about being a comedian is raising people's spirits.

"I look at stand-up as a form of ministry," Hunt says. "People have different ways of being reached, and comedy is one of those ways. Some people just need a laugh, and I can do that for them. That's my favorite part."

The Secret Group will host Gay Shame Parades on November 11 and 26.

For more, visit Facebook.com/KeishaHunt.

Lourdes Zavaleta is a staff writer for *OUTSMART* magazine.



Rhythms of Love

Rudy Villarreal and Edward Domingue's ceremony featured the sounds of Villarreal's former music students—and a surprise mariachi band.



Going to the Chapel

Edward Domingue (l) and Rudy Villarreal were married at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, where they are both members and Domingue has served on the board for seven years.

By Marene Gustin

Photo by Kirk Surber Photography

When Edward Domingue and Rudy Villarreal exchanged vows in January, the ceremony was beautiful enough to make angels sing. And sing they did.

For both men, the music was what made their special day.

Villarreal, a retired music teacher, says 10 of his former students, ages 35 to 47, came in from all over the country to sing at the couple's ceremony.

"While they only had one day to practice together, the beautiful sound that they were able to create was amazing," he says.

The strains of "Pachelbel's Canon" resonated in the sanctuary at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church (RMCC) as the couple looked on. Both Rev. Troy Treash and Rev. Michael Diaz officiated the nuptials, and the entire congregation of 150 guests broke out in applause as Domingue and Villarreal were pronounced husband and husband.

But there was still more music in store for the happy couple.

"My nephew and his family surprised me with a gift of the mariachis," Villarreal says. "I did not know they were going to be a part of the reception at the Sam Houston Hotel. When we walked into the dining room and they introduced us for the first time as a couple, the mariachis started up. I actually started to cry. The mariachis reminded me so much of my deceased grandmother who raised me. It was as if she was there."

The grooms' parents are also deceased, so Villarreal's sister gave him away. Domingue's aunt did the honors for him, and his brother served as his best man.

After the rehearsal on the night before the wedding, family and friends were having nibbles at the couple's home when they got a big surprise.

"All ten of the girls who sang at the wedding were straight," Villarreal says. "We asked everybody to give us \$20, and we gave them back twenty ones. Then we loaded everybody onto a bus that took us to Hamburger Mary's. But we parked in back and went in that way so the guests still didn't know where they were—until they got inside and saw the drag queens. It was hilarious, and they loved the surprise."

Villarreal says the wedding party and the four drag performers probably wound up making about \$1,000 each.

The gorgeous wedding took a year and a half to plan, but the romance has been going for almost 12 years. Back in 2006, Domingue walked into a party at Villarreal's apartment,

and the host was instantly smitten. Their first date involved Villarreal betting Domingue that he could cook dinner using whatever was in Domingue's refrigerator and pantry that evening. It was a bet that Villarreal lost.

"Eddie said there was no way I could make a meal with what was in his refrigerator," Villarreal recalls. "I assured him that I could make a meal out of anything. Eddie proceeded to bet me that I could not. Then I opened his refrigerator and pantry and realized I had lost the bet. Beer and breadsticks does not make a meal."

Subsequent home-cooked meals have gone better.

Once the Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality, the couple began talking about tying the knot. Villarreal popped the question at a friend's house in New Orleans, dressed only in his birthday suit and holding out a Tiffany box. It was a proposal Domingue couldn't refuse. He started crying before he could say yes. In addition to the ring, Villarreal says, "He also got lucky that night."

They chose RMCC for the wedding venue since both are members there, and Domingue has been on the church's board for seven years. They were very lucky that the church had just reopened after the devastating Harvey floods. None of their vendors were LGBTQ-specific, but they report that everyone they worked with seemed excited about a gay wedding, including The Cake Lady Bakery. They did use a wedding planner for the big day so that they could focus on the festivities, but they also had an elaborate spreadsheet for the planner to follow.

Early the next morning, the pair left for seven sun-filled days in Maui where they explored the island and their new marriage. Back home in the Heights, Villarreal still teaches music lessons and Domingue plays in the Montrose Softball League Association. The couple enjoys dining out at Backstreet Cafe and Américas—a big improvement over the beer and breadsticks from their first date. They are so proud of their marriage that they framed their license and have it hanging in the home they have shared for the last four years with their fur-baby Vido, a miniature Goldendoodle. (And yes, Vido was in the wedding. He was the ring bearer.)

The couple is planning a big party for their first anniversary, and Vido will certainly have a part in that, too.

Marene Gustin is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine. *More WEDDING GUIDE* →



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Backyard Bliss

Amy Johnson (l) and Sharon Ferranti didn't want to hassle with finding a venue, so they exchanged vows outside their Spring Branch home.

Seizing the Moment

Sharon Ferranti and Amy Johnson wanted to marry because they fear *Obergefell* will be overturned.

By Henry V. Thiel

Photo by Julye Newlin Productions

Sharon Ferranti and Amy Johnson met on November 15, 2016, at the Double Digit recovery meeting at Lambda Center in Houston.

Johnson, a registered dietitian and account manager at Sysco Corp., says she had seen Ferranti around and knew her name, but they had never officially met. Ten days later, they shared their first kiss.

"I was still in the closet when I met Sharon, and she was 14 years older than me," says Johnson, a 43-year-old San Antonio native. "My gay guy-friend warned me about her before I was to meet her for coffee. He told me, 'Be careful around the lesbians at Lambda.



They tend to gossip a lot, and you can't just be all casual about it because Sharon is a real lesbian.' I remember thinking to myself, 'Challenge accepted.'"

They had a typical "recovery" coffee date at Agora. "The whole time I thought she was really adorable, but I didn't know if she was gay, so I didn't know if it was actually a date," says Ferranti, a 58-year-old Amarillo native. "But the longer we talked, the more I could tell she was sort of 'extra' happy about our meeting. I admit, I took a chance and flirted with her a bit. She didn't seem to mind."

The more time they spent together, the more the question, "Is Amy really gay?" began to scare

them. There were even tears. They decided that no matter how scared they were, they were in love, and that was all that mattered.

Ferranti and Johnson say they've learned that the secret to their happiness is plenty of laughter and communication. "Don't let one single thing linger if it's bothering you," Ferranti says. "Handle it now, and handle it truthfully."

"The moment when I knew that Amy was the one for me was when I realized she loved my family as much as she loved me," Ferranti says. "But it was when [Supreme Court] justice [Anthony] Kennedy retired that we realized that it's a scary time in this country, and that we might lose the right to marry. So we decided to tie the knot sooner rather than later."

"For me, I think it was when Sharon touched my knee with her knee during our first coffee date," Johnson says. She remembers thinking to herself, "Wait a minute, something's happening here."

"But it was during a phone call from Sharon, just checking in to make sure everything was okay, that I knew I hadn't felt that way with anyone else, ever," she adds.

"Amy proposed to me," Ferranti says, smiling. "It was during an ordinary evening when my 82-year-old mother, Dorothy, and my brother, Jay, were with us. Amy walked into the living room, turned off the television, got down on one knee, and said, 'I'm in love with

you; I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Will you marry me?'"

"She told me later that she wanted to propose to me with my family present because she knows that marrying me means marrying them, and because she wanted to make a family with me," Ferranti adds.

They planned their wedding in just two months.



"We wanted to have full control over everything," Johnson says, "and since we didn't want to hassle with finding a venue, we decided to get married in the backyard of our Spring Branch home. Also, Sharon is an independent filmmaker, and her vision for our wedding was to have the ceremony at night because it would be beautiful. And it was."

They were married on September 2, 2018, by their friend Dan Foreman and Reverend Lynette Ross. Foreman's husband, Mike Svatt, was the flower person.

"It was a celebration of marriage equality as well as a celebration for us," Ferranti says.

"The best part of the day was being with our joined families," she adds. "My mother sat in the front row, my brother walked me down the aisle, Amy's sisters were by her side, and family members that traveled from as far away as Minnesota attended."

Holding hands, they told each other, "I vow to follow my heart, and to follow yours, because I trust my heart when it comes to you."

The brides used Erasure's "Sacred" as their entry procession music, and instead of rice, guests threw birdseed as the couple ran to Ferranti's Jeep.

They used LGBTQ vendors including Alan Conover from Hue Salon, who styled their hair, and Julye Newlin Productions for photography and production.

The newlyweds honeymooned in Fredericksburg, where they hiked Enchanted Rock and indulged Johnson's passion for all things World War II by staying at the Hangar Hotel, where they watched planes take off and land from the observation deck.

Henry V. Thiel is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine. He loves weddings.

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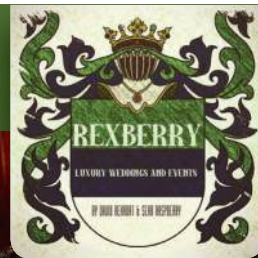


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The Notorious R.G.G.

Queer Latino poet Roy G. Guzmán on his new anthology, 'Pulse/Pulso: In Remembrance of Orlando.'

By Gregg Shapiro

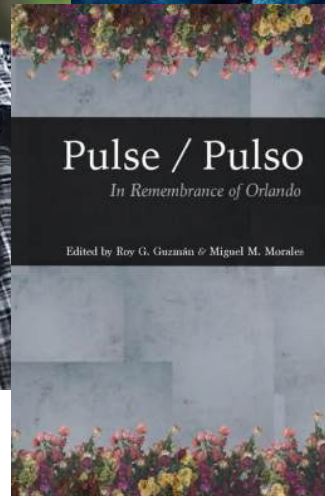
Co-edited by queer writers Roy G. Guzmán and Miguel M. Morales, the breathtaking poetry anthology *Pulse/Pulso: In Remembrance of Orlando* (2018, Damaged Goods Press) is a literary tribute to the 49 lives lost (and 53 wounded) at Orlando's Pulse nightclub in June 2016. Featuring the work of 18 poets, including Caridad Moro-Gronlier, Chen Chen, Baruch Porras-Hernandez, Monica Palacios, James A.H. White, and Tessara Dudley, *Pulse/Pulso* is a powerful, poetic memorial to lives lost and forever changed on that fateful night. Guzmán, who is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Minnesota, spoke with OUTSMART about the anthology, challenges the editors encountered in the publishing process, his own writing, and more.

Gregg Shapiro: Do you remember where you were when you first heard about the shooting at the Pulse nightclub?

Roy G. Guzman: Yes, I definitely do. I was having a hard time sleeping and woke up in the middle of the night to use the restroom. I checked my phone, and at first I couldn't believe what I was reading on Twitter. The shooter was still inside and authorities couldn't say how many people had been killed. Pictures of cops and people who'd been at the club were being shared. I'll never forget those images. I remember going back to bed and, in the dark, trying to catch a glimpse of my boyfriend at the time. I started to cry. Many of us will never forget that night.

You grew up in South Florida. Had you ever been to the nightclub prior to the shooting?

I have been to lots of clubs in Orlando, but never to Pulse.



Powerful Postscript

Roy G. Guzmán (above) says he and his co-editor, Miguel M. Morales (I), encountered a "blatant disregard for queer and trans people of color" while trying to find a publisher for *Pulse/Pulso*.

Did you write any poems in response to the tragedy?

My poem, "Restored Mural for Orlando," was borne out of those chaotic days. There was so much I was trying to contend with. I was afraid. Like many others, I too was grieving. At first, I felt this ineffable sense of misery. I had already finished my second year in the MFA program. I'd speak to my friends in Miami and we'd exchange our disbelief. About a day after "Restored Mural for Orlando" appeared on NPR's *Latino USA*, my friend D. Allen contacted me about the possibility of

turning the poem into a chapbook that would also have a Spanish translation, which Marco Antonio Huerta completed. For the next year or so, we were able to raise over \$2,000 for the victims and for Pridelines, an organization in Miami that was incredibly supportive of me when I was struggling with my queerness. The chapbook has also been taught in several colleges around the country.

What can you tell me about the process of soliciting work from poets for the anthology? →

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THE NOTORIOUS R.G.G.

continued from previous page

The anthology was originally supposed to come out through a publisher that has since gone defunct. After reading “Restored Mural for Orlando,” they solicited me to become an editor, but I told them I couldn’t take on such a project without a co-editor. I am so grateful that, after a few heart-to-heart exchanges, Miguel came on board. From the beginning we decided we had to publish work exclusively by queer and trans people of color, since we were seeing more straight white writers take lots of space. We made an extensive list of authors we wanted to solicit, with the intention of accepting poetry and short nonfiction pieces. We also made sure the call for submissions wasn’t just soliciting work from our acquaintances, and that connected us to many people we didn’t know. We read submissions in Spanish, although none of those made it to the final round.

You describe how the process of finding a publisher for the anthology was marked by “elitism, classism, and a blatant disregard for queer and trans people of color and indigenous peoples.” Did this come as a surprise to you?

I can sometimes be a gullible Gemini. Or too idealistic. It’s not that I didn’t imagine we’d face these challenges; it’s more that we were struck by the severity of so many microaggressions. Editors questioning the validity of the anthology, questioning why we’d chosen certain pieces, wanting to reroute the entire project, questioning Miguel’s Puerto Rican background, because most of the victims were Puerto Rican. Editors telling us the anthology wasn’t long enough, that it wasn’t academic enough, that it needed more content from established voices, that everything that had to be said about Pulse had already been said and that that chapter was over. Editors telling us that a writer responding to a tragedy doesn’t automatically make it publishable, as if Miguel and I had never edited anything before.

It was cruel and disheartening. Above all, we believed in the work and had to apologize to our contributors for the time it took us to find a home for the anthology. Miguel and I learned so much about community through this process.

Poets have a long history of being vital voices in times of crisis; there are numerous anthologies addressing the AIDS crisis, race, and war. Can you say something about the healing that can occur from reading, as well as writing, poetry? Someone said that poets are the new journalists. While I can agree with the spirit of that statement, I’ve been lucky to see all the places I hadn’t thought poetry could walk into.

I know reading and writing poetry became highly restorative for me. It can still move me in ways that other things rarely do. I also think poetry anthologies, in particular, serve an important place in literature by showing us and exemplifying new forms of community, visibility, accountability, responsibility, history, and the future. I’ve seen people cry after reading a poem. I’ve seen how poetry can change a person’s life. It’s like a second birth.

When did you start writing poetry?

I started dabbling in poetry back in high school. During my freshman and sophomore years, I attended William H. Turner Tech in Miami, and there I met some fellow rockers. We’d write fan poetry inspired by the Smashing Pumpkins—you know, the kind of poetry one writes before inevitably reading Nietzsche. [Laughs] The title of one of my poems was something like “We Are the Machines of God.” [Laughs] I’d carry a wallet with a metal chain strapped to my belt loops. That’s when I first read Amy Tan and James McBride, and connected so much with their work. That’s also when I started writing poems inspired by Emily Dickinson. I guess you can say Emily became my first patron saint in English. Rubén Darío was the first poet whose work found my heart.

Are you strictly a poet, or do you also write prose?

I am probably 85 percent poet. I like how coming up with that random percentage is suddenly making me feel like an impostor! [Laughs] I write a lot of academic essays and have published book reviews—and long Facebook posts. [Laughs]. I took a fiction workshop and a few nonfiction classes for my MFA degree. I am in awe of prose writers’ relationship to productivity. I love writing short stories, and I’ve written a few, but afterward I feel like going on a long vacation. [Laughs] I also have a complicated relationship to genre, because I’ve seen how it stifles one’s creativity and understanding what the subject matter actually wants for itself. I’m always suspicious of genre.

What can you tell me about your forthcoming debut poetry collection?

At the moment, the collection is titled *Catrachos*, and Graywolf Press will be publishing it in the spring of 2020. Immigration, violence, queerness, poverty, racism, language, despair, and hope are some of the themes I look at. Florida is the setting for many of these poems, as is Honduras, my birthplace. I want these poems to grieve with you, to dance with you, to confide in you, and to listen to you. I feel incredibly grateful to get to write and share this work.

Gregg Shapiro is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.



Q-Music: Solos and Sides

Cher, John Lennon, Joan Jett, Paul Weller, and more.

If you had the misfortune of suffering through *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, you might not think it would be possible for anything good to come from such a debacle. But you'd be wrong. **Cher**, who played Sophie's grandmother Ruby and performed the song "Fernando" as a duet with Andy Garcia, may be the only one who survived the wreck as a winner. For her new album **Dancing Queen** (Warner Brothers), her first studio recording in five years, Cher reinterprets 10 ABBA songs with mostly delightful results. Though not a particularly original concept (Erasure beat her to it by 26 years with its EP *Abba-esque*), Cher's *Dancing Queen* still has plenty to recommend. Her versions of the title track, "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!" "SOS," and "Fernando" are reverential and faithful to the originals. Some of the renditions, including "The Winner Takes It All" and "Waterloo," have enough variation that we can give Cher credit for making the songs her own.

When **John Lennon** first sang the words "Imagine there's no countries/It isn't hard to do/Nothing to kill or die for/And no religion, too," he probably couldn't have foreseen the state of the world almost 50 years later. Lennon's words, so meaningful when people first heard them, have gained significance since the time of his senseless murder in 1980. With this ultimate edition of **Imagine** (Geffen/UMe), listeners are reminded anew of the timelessness and seriousness of Lennon's sixth post-Beatles album. Available in a variety of formats (two Blu-rays and four compact discs), there's more *Imagine* here than you ever imagined: both the final and raw studio mixes of the album, outtakes, extended album versions, ultimate mixes, quadrophonic mixes, and "elements mixes from master multitracks." The album itself features some of Lennon's most

unforgettable and timeless songs, including the title cut, "Gimme Some Truth," "Jealous Guy," "Oh My Love," and the musical McCartney massacre "How Do You Sleep?"

At this point in time, **Paul Weller** has been a solo artist longer (25-plus years) than he was with his bands The Jam (seven or so years) or The Style Council (five years, give or take). Over the course of his solo career, Weller has released some true masterworks, including his



first two in the early '90s and *Saturn's Pattern* in 2015. Weller's newest album, **True Meanings** (Parlophone), definitely ranks among his best. Aptly named opener "The Soul Searchers" and "Mayfly" are good examples of the brand of blue-eyed soul that Weller has been perfecting for years. "Gravity" might be the most gorgeous song in Weller's canon. The political "Books" makes a strong statement (complete with sitar), and Weller pays powerful tribute to a legend on "Bowie." The meditative "May Love Travel with You" could only be written and sung by someone who has lived and experienced life to the fullest. The oversized deluxe-edition package includes five bonus tracks—two instrumental versions and three remixes.

Produced by Nick Lowe, *Howlin' Wind*, the first album by **Graham Parker** and The Rumour, preceded Paul Weller and The Jam's first album by almost a year. A few years later, Parker would embark on a solo career that yielded the masterpiece *Squeezing Out Sparks*,



as well as *The Up Escalator*, *Another Gray Area*, and *The Real Macaw*, among others. Beginning in the early 21st century, Parker fully embraced the country aspect of his trademark pub-rock sound, recording a few albums for the insurgent country label Bloodshot. **Cloud Symbols** (100%), his 24th studio album, balances his various influences, as you can hear on

"What Happens When Beauty Fades?" "Love Comes," "Girl in Need," "Is the Sun Out Anywhere," and "Ancient Past."

Ostensibly the soundtrack to the **Joan Jett** doc of the same name, **Bad Reputation**



(Legacy/Blackheart) also serves as an updated and expanded compilation of the various phases of Jett's lengthy and legendary career. The album includes songs by The Runaways ("Cherry Bomb" and "Wasted") and Joan Jett and The Blackhearts ("Do You Wanna Touch Me," "I Hate Myself for Loving You," and covers of "Crimson and Clover," "Rebel Rebel," and "I Wanna Be Your Dog"). Additionally, there are songs by Bikini Kill and Feminazi, and the previously unreleased track, a cover of The Replacements' "Androgynous" performed by Jett, Laura Jane Grace, and Miley Cyrus.

Permanent Green Light, led by queer singer/songwriter/bassist Michael Quercio



following the break-up of Paisley Underground band The Three O'Clock, released only two full-length albums in the early 1990s, but that doesn't mean that they aren't deserving of a retrospective such as **Hallucinations** (Omniore). It's easy to hear how they might have been overlooked the first time around, as they bear no resemblance to the grunge-fest that was taking place when they first arrived on the scene. Fortunately, with this 16-track set that pulls from its eponymous debut, as well as the follow-up *Against Nature*, we have another opportunity to get acquainted with PGL via standout numbers such as "We Could Just Die," "(You & I Are the) Summertime," "Wintertime's A-Comin'," Martha Raye, "The Truth This Time," and the acoustic "Marianne Gave Up Her Hand."

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

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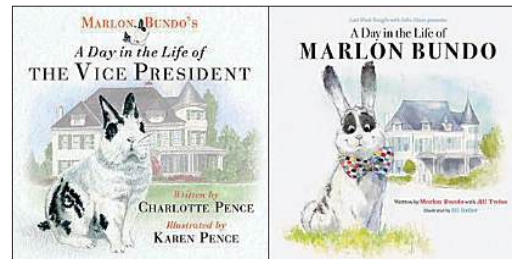
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▼ Charlotte Pence (daughter of vice president Mike Pence)

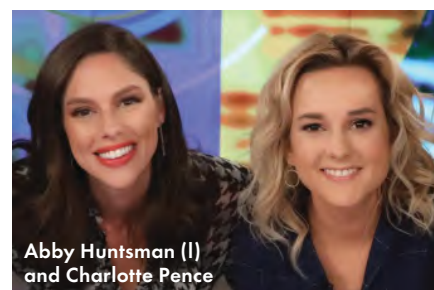
(The View, 10/16/18, ABC)

Abby Huntsman: The last time you were on [The View] with us, you brought your bunny, Marlon Bundo, who inspired your children's book [Marlon Bundo's A Day in the Life of the Vice President]. But as the book was being released, John Oliver also put out a competing book [A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo] about a bunny



who falls in love with another male bunny . . . I guess to take a shot at your father's views on homosexuality. How did that make you feel?

Charlotte Pence: I saw it as a net positive thing. Our book was giving money to charity, and John Oliver's book was also giving money to charity. And I actually ended up buying John Oliver's book as well, cuz I wanna support those charities, too. I was surprised by it, but at the end of the day we have two books about my bunny giving money to charity, so it's not a negative thing.



▼ Rupert Everett

(Popcorn with Peter Travers, 9/5/18, Kyle Buchanan)

Re: Everett plays Oscar Wilde in the new film The Happy Prince; he also directed and wrote the film.

Oscar Wilde, for me, is a kind of patron saint figure, almost actually a Christ of the gay liberation movement. And since I'm a part of that, and it's been a part of my career, and I've been a gay man negotiating a career in a largely heterosexual boys club, he's been for me a kind of Christ figure. And I felt that's what I could really put everything of myself into when I made the film—this kind of passion of Oscar Wilde, really, which is what my film is. It's a deathbed story, with laughs.



Patron Saint?

Rupert Everett as Oscar Wilde in the new film *The Happy Prince*.

Lady Gaga

(10.22.18, Twitter)

*Re: the Trump administration's plan to legally redefine gender
"as a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth."*



Lady Gaga ✓

@ladygaga



While today you might feel unheard or unseen, know that this is not the reality of humanity. This is another display of leadership being driven by ignorance. [#TransRightsAreHumanRights](#)

[#WontBeErased](#)

3:16 PM - Oct 22, 2018

♡ 30.1K 💬 9,404 people are talking about this



Lady Gaga ✓

@ladygaga



The government may be living in an alternate universe, but we as a society & culture know who we are and know our truth and must stick together and raise our voices so we can educate them about gender identities. [#TransRightsAreHumanRights](#)

[#WontBeErased](#)

3:08 PM - Oct 22, 2018

♡ 66.7K 💬 19.4K people are talking about this



Stick Together

Lady Gaga (seen here at the Grammy Awards in January):
she knows the reality of humanity.



Tracey Ullman as Angela Merkel

(Tracey Ullman's Show, 10/14/18, HBO)

*Putin
bare-chested on that
horse says an awful lot
for a country with
no gays.*



A Sandwich?

Vladimir Putin (c) sandwiched between Tracey Ullman as German chancellor Angela Merkel (l) and Tracey Ullman as Tracey Ullman.





'The Trans Generation'

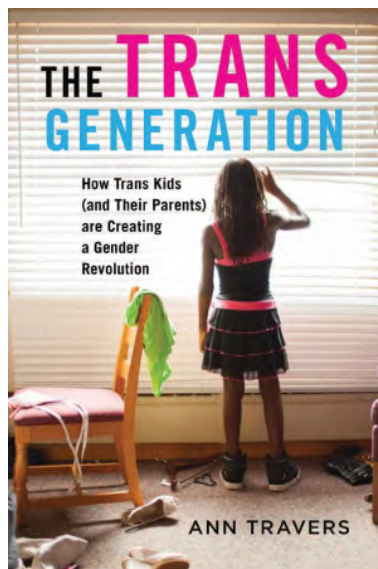
How trans kids (and their parents) are creating a gender revolution.

Death Checks In David S. Pederson



In 1947, being gay could get a man in trouble. But Milwaukee detective Heath Barrington knew there'd be more anonymity for him and officer Alan Keyes at the posh Edmonton Hotel in Chicago. With plenty of entertainment nearby and a live show with a band inside the hotel, Heath even offered to purchase a tuxedo for Alan. That's when Barrington met haberdasher Victor Blount at an upscale men's clothing store. • A nice weekend getaway would be plenty of time for a romantic rendezvous—had Heath left work alone. But when Blount was found dead in the back room of the clothing store with "W" scrawled on the floor in his blood and a spool of green thread in his hand, a weekend was also long enough to solve a crime. • This noir whodunit is a worthwhile getaway with that old-black-and-white-movie feel that you know you love, and it's sweetly chaste, in a late-1940s way. If you can make it through the tedious parts and you love noir mysteries that are more on the light side, check out *Death Checks In*. Bold Strokes Books (boldstrokebooks.com).

—Terri Schlichenmeyer



The Trans Generation: How Trans Kids (and Their Parents) Are Creating a Gender Revolution

- by Ann Travers
- 2018
- New York University Press (nyupress.org)
- 261 pages
- \$25



Author
Ann
Travers

Boy or girl? That's a common-enough question, if you're an expectant parent. You might've even wondered it yourself: will you need pink things or blue, and what name will you choose? For generations, those have been exciting decisions for prospective parents, but in *The Trans Generation*, Ann Travers asks if those decisions are prudent ones. Maybe letting the child decide would be a better choice.

Fifty-six years ago when Travers was born, the delivery-room doctor unwittingly caused a lifetime of hurt: "It's a girl," he said—causing Travers to spend years trying to "untangle" what that meant. That is part of what drives this book, the other part being the desire to improve the lives of trans kids through understanding.

Getting to that point is harrowing: 95 percent of transgender kids in one study felt unsafe in their schools. Many report that physicians misunderstand kids who are gender-nonconforming. Trans

kids attempt suicide and/or self-harm at very high rates and, says Travers, "many grow up hating their bodies." Most employ several kinds of coping mechanisms to live their lives.

In writing this book, Travers reports interviewing a wide variety of trans kids from the U.S. and Canada—19 in all, ages 4 to 20, plus 23 parents. The children mostly came from middle-class families, which allowed them privileges such as better access to medical care and chances to change schools if they needed to do so. And some of the children Travers interviewed lived in poverty, their stories illustrating how being a trans kid can be socially and medically isolating, and how lack of access to needed resources can affect their well-being.

Parents, of course, can also affect that well-being, but it takes a "phenomenal amount of care, advocacy, and activism to push back against cisgendered environments"—schools, sports,

binary-only bathrooms, social activities, medical facilities, and politics. It takes a willingness to learn, listen, and lean in.

The Trans Generation is one heavy-duty book that's not just for parents, but for teachers, advocates, and loved ones as well.

Writing with a bit of a scholar's voice and borrowing from some relatively dense science and law studies, Travers' eye-opening chats with trans kids turn out to be the most helpful, useful, and even entertaining parts of this book. Those quotes from the mouths of babes, as they say, give insights that adults will find to be wise and thoughtful, even monumental. While a few of the stories are heartbreaking, the singular interview with a 16-year-old who made her own hormone treatments in her high school's science lab will give you hope for the future.

Even though you could be forgiven for skipping right to the interviews, you'd be missing out. The thicker parts of *The Trans Generation* are worth further reflection and are deeply instructive on pronouns, on gender fluidity, and on being trans in a cisgender-based society. That kind of serious and weighty information should make this book the right choice.

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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UNITY AND DIVERSITY

continued from page 69

place to share their gifts," Gott says.

Gott also emphasizes that his goal is to "teach practical tools in-depth."

"I want people to feel like they're not just coming for spiritual entertainment, but they're actually receiving spiritual principles that they can apply in their lives for personal transformation, for greater success, health, wellness, wholeness, and well-being in every area of their lives," he says.

Gott, a singer, songwriter, and pianist, moved to Houston in 2010 to lead a choir workshop. After joining Unity of Houston as assistant minister and choir director, he became senior minister 10 days before Hurricane Harvey hit. "It was a trial by water," Gott recalls.

Sister churches in Texas were affected, along with 100 homes of Unity members. "We had an incredible, automatic mobilization—not only a desire to help, but actually helping," Gott says. "It was really humbling and beautiful to see. I'm grateful for this community and the way it responded."

Unity of Houston became a clearinghouse for financial gifts from New Thought churches all over North America. The congregation raised \$400,000, which it distributed in direct grants to individuals and other churches.

"Early on, when it was still raining and we were stuck in our houses feeling so hopeless and helpless, my partner, John Moore, suggested that one thing I could do because of my musical abilities and connections was to hold a benefit concert," Gott recalls. "We raised \$100,000 that night. The event was live-streamed, and we had over 12,000 views."

Prior to moving to Houston, Gott says he knew very little about the city. "I came here without any preconceived notions, and I have fallen completely in love with this city," Gott says. "There is something so real, so authentic. There's a depth of culture and community here. There's a commitment to the arts and the culture. The diversity is just huge and powerful and beautiful in this city. I think there's kind of a 'get 'er done' mentality that just feels very friendly and accessible. I love that sense of hard work and collaboration and cooperation, and I think we really witnessed that after Hurricane Harvey."

Before Gott became a minister, he was primarily known for his music. "Each song has its own way of being revealed," Gott says about his creative process, "but it starts with a very strong emotional center."

One of his most impactful songs is titled "There Is Only Love," which he wrote when he was relatively new to the New Thought movement.

"As I was learning what this teaching meant, my first minister told me that what we really teach is that everything really is the love of God being expressed," Gott says. "I know that song has been sung as babies were being born, it's been sung as people were dying, it's been sung at weddings. It's been translated into several languages. I'm really grateful for that one."

Gott believes music is important because primitive humans used repetitive vocalizations—precursors to songs—before they even had words. "So music activates really old, deep, deep parts of our brain. It's tied with emotion. What music does, I think, is activate the truest part of ourselves, and it helps us know ourselves."

Looking ahead, Gott says, "I'm incredibly humbled and enthralled and excited about the future of this community and this ministry. I keep saying that something is happening here. It's an intuitive, emotional sense of the potential in this community to do good in people's lives, and it's so real to me. I'm grateful and excited to be the leader of this community at this time."

For more, visit MichaelGott.com or UnityHouston.org.

Shirley Knight is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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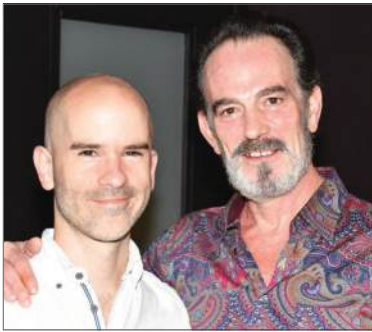
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SIGNOUT

continued from page 96

You have also been reevaluating your time commitments and life goals. You will want to use your time much more wisely throughout 2019. Saturn, your ruling planet of structure and discipline, will be helping you to get clear about what works, what has value, and what doesn't. This may be a time where you start your own business or take a greater leadership role at work. Near the end of the month, you will be ready for some rest and retreat before the December holidays begin. Yoga, meditation, or tai chi can be very helpful during your time of retreat.

AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18). Career, long-term security concerns, and social obligations continue to be active through this month. This is a recurring theme as Venus, planet of commitment, and Mercury, our communicator, are both retrograde in your career sector. You have been reexamining these parts of your life under a microscope. You have been restless and less patient than usual, but some of this will lighten up by

midmonth as it becomes easier to sleep. Friends and social organizations require more time in your life as we get closer to the end of the month. This can be a good time for you to take an active role in a community-based organization. Money spends easily at the end of the month, so don't overspend for the holidays!

PISCES (February 19–March 20). You have been in a laid-back time, selectively choosing where you expend your energy. But during November (beginning as early as the 8th) you'll have more get-up-and-go than you have had for a while. You are going to be more outspoken and ready to act on your impulses. This may show up as a career opportunity, a chance for more education, or a trip to expand your personal horizons. Your enthusiasm should sustain you through the holidays and beyond. Community organizations are needing your leadership talents. Go in with your own agenda, and others will follow your lead.

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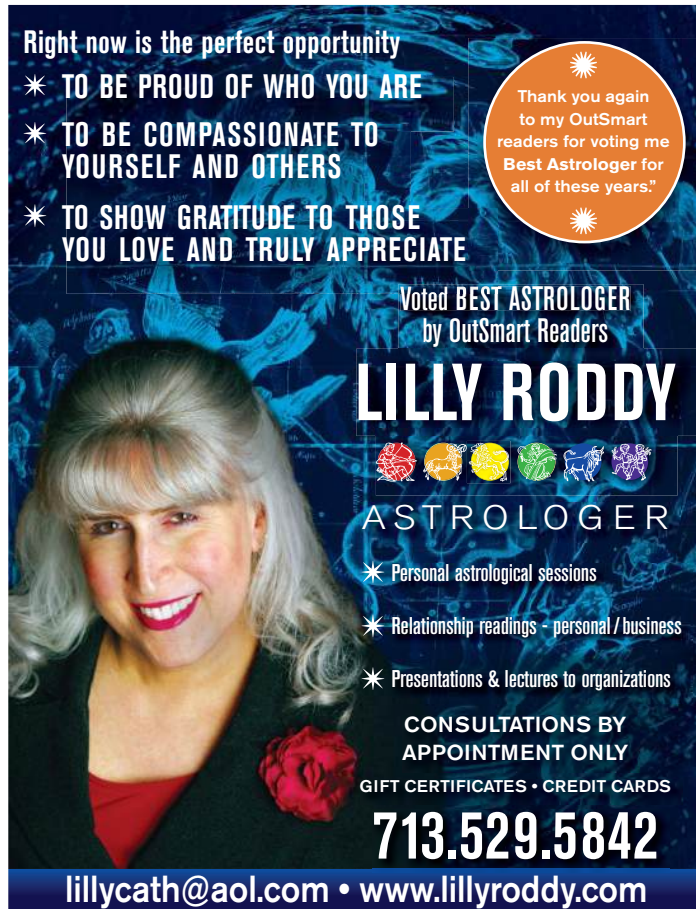
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Drama-Free Spaces?

You'll likely be seeking that over the holidays.

We are still under the influence of this sluggish retrograde, so keep working on existing projects and avoid starting anything new. Mercury, our planner and organizer, goes retrograde on November 11 and remains retrograde until mid-December. The Thanksgiving holidays will have people seeking familiar, comfortable, and drama-free spaces. Everyone is more sensitive than usual during the holidays. Positive days this month are the 6th, 7th, 9th, 11th, and 27th. Some difficult days are the 16th, 19th, 24th, and 26th.

ARIES (March 21–April 19). Relationships, partnerships, and renegotiations are the main topics for this month. You have been reworking the relationships that have not been as positive as you had expected. If they don't improve, you will be letting go of them. You are wanting more intimacy with your partner so that your trust can deepen. You are also focusing on your career goals and expectations, and your long-term security. You are looking for more clarity in your career and in your partnerships. You are still willing to negotiate until mid-December, when you will be ready to make some decisions. Take your time.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20). You continue to be in a highly energized, competitive, and possibly challenging time. Relationships and interactions with others are the main points of action for you this month. In your positive relationships, you are feeling more open and connected. You have little or no patience for any relationships that are negative. At work, you are willing to take on a leadership role and step out of your box. You are feeling self-assured and confident. This may challenge others, even if that is not your goal. This is a big time of change for Taurus with Uranus, the planet of reinvention, traveling through your sign for the next seven years. You are looking for something that stirs your passion.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21). Your ruling planet, Mercury, goes retrograde on November 11 in your area of relationships. You will have the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and exes, and recall moments from the past. You will also want to focus your energy on completing ongoing projects—and avoid starting new ones until after mid-December. Work is more demanding after midmonth. You won't be very

patient during this time, and you may not sleep very well. Pay attention to your health routines and how you treat your body, especially toward the end of the month.

CANCER (June 22–July 22). You are in a creative cycle and taking yourself less seriously than usual. You have been hanging out at home or with friends and family, trying to keep your environment as peaceful as possible. You are more nostalgic than usual, and you are drawn back to the past. This will last through the holidays. You are closely examining how you use your time and personal resources. If you are not getting the results you want, you may withdraw and wait for a better time. You are redefining and restructuring your relationship needs and goals. Be open to new ideas and approaches.

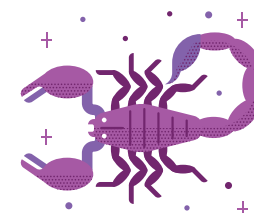
LEO (July 23–August 22). Home and family are on the marquee this month! You are making your home a very comfortable reflection of who you are. With both Venus, planet of love, and Mercury, planet of communications, retrograde in your home and family arena, you are remodeling, considering moving, dealing with some family drama, or attempting to free yourself from your leftover emotional baggage. You are more willing than ever to let go of the past and move forward. Toward the end of the month, you will lighten up some as you enter a more playful time. Reconnecting with your children can help reactivate that part of you! Relationships are demanding this month, so you may want to avoid getting too involved if you can.

VIRGO (August 23–September 22). You are reconnecting with your past this month with Mercury, your ruler, going retrograde. This is very strongly connected to your home and family. This energy continues to be strong through the holidays. This can be a very nostalgic time when you can really enjoy the comforts of family bonds. For those who didn't have that reality, create your own positive memories and let the past rest. Relationships take over your focus after midmonth, when you'll need to put some energy into renewing those bonds. You are being more constructive with your talents. You are looking to work less and be happier!

LIBRA (September 23–October 23). As this month opens, you are concentrating on your

finances and long-term security. This is an ongoing theme that will continue through 2019. You are in a rebuilding mode as you develop clearer ideas about the direction you want to go. You are getting your finances in shape and taking care of problems that have been limiting for you and your lifestyle choices. You are speaking your mind, especially after midmonth. Co-workers may be harder to get along with, and you certainly won't have as much patience. Try not to get distracted from that larger goal of financial security.

SCORPIO (October 24–November 21). What a busy couple of months it has been for you Scorpios! You have had Venus retrograde in your sign, and on November 11, Mercury, our communicator, goes



retrograde in Scorpio as well. And now it's your yearly birth cycle, where you examine the past and set new goals for yourself. You are looking to add some spark and interest to your life and to your work. You continue to be in a cleaning-out phase, letting go of what you have completed. You are wanting to live more in the moment, and you are making plans for that to happen. Finances take some of your focus by midmonth. This can be a time to consider investing yourself or your resources into something that really reflects your personal interests.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21). As the month begins, you are in a period of rest and retreat as you gather up your forces. This all shifts by the middle to the end of the month. Jupiter, your ruling planet of expansion, enters your sign on November 8 for the next year. This should create opportunity, optimism, and openings for travel, education, or promotion in your work. Jupiter was last here in your sign between November 2006 and December 2007. Family comes into play at the end of the month. They will need your leadership!

CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19). November is a more socially active time for you to promote your services, get involved with business organizations, and reconnect with friends.

continued on page 95

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On September 29, the Executive & Professional Association of Houston hosted a Military Ball benefiting the Lone Star Veterans Association's LGBT Affinity Group. Pictured are **Shawn Kuehn, Anson Klaber, Captain Adam Harmon, Brooks Ballard, Iris Rodriguez, Kevin Doffing, Jack Berger,** and **Roy Alvarez Jr.**



On September 30, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus hosted its 2018 Equality Brunch at Hotel ZaZa. Pictured are **Parker Sheffy, Constable Alan Rosen, Ana Andrea Molina, Kandice Webber, Bill Baldwin, Jim Taylor, Bryan Hlavinka,** and **Mike Webb.**



On September 30, the Human Rights Campaign Houston hosted Guess Who's Coming to Dinner at the home of Ken Ng and Charles McFerrin. Pictured are (front row) **Krisa Benskin, Jesse Diaz, Ken Ng;** (middle row) **Shandi Sellars,** and **Sara Hyder;** and (back row) **Ed Finger, Charles McFerrin, Marcus de Guzman,** and **Tom Jackobs.**



On Oct. 1, Equality Texas hosted a briefing and training on how to get out the vote at the University of Houston. Pictured are **Maria Gonzalez, Lou Weaver, Teri Sullivan, Sabrina Lee, Michelle Aiello, Jenna Barley, Erin Eriksen,** and **Rebecca Robertson.**



On October 3, Stages Repertory Theatre hosted OUTSMART Night, featuring *Swimming While Drowning*. Pictured are **Reginald G. Choyce, Kenn McLaughlin, Emilio Rodriguez,** and **Stanley Andrew Jackson III.**



On October 4, the Harris County Democratic Lawyers Association hosted its October luncheon, featuring Kim Ogg, Lina Hidalgo, and Terry O'Rourke at Churrascos River Oaks. Pictured are **Barbara Radnofsky, Mike Doyle, Lina Hidalgo, Terry O'Rourke, Kim Ogg,** and **Steven Duble.**



On October 6 and 7, the Diana Foundation hosted its 2018 Country Dinner Weekend at Neon Boots and La Griglia. Pictured are **Leslie Jackson, Nathan Wright, Mike Leibbert, Tony DeAnda, Michael Grover,** and **Ciro Flores.**



On October 11, the Montrose Center hosted Out for Good 2018 at The Ballroom at Bayou Place. Pictured are **Ann Robison, Judge Steven Kirkland,** and **District Attorney Kim Ogg.**



On October 12, the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum hosted a History Hullahaloo and Soiree at the Houston Heights City Hall and Fire Station. Pictured are **Amy Waltz-Reasonover, Debra Waltz-Reasonover, Judy Reeves, Jade Esteban Estrada,** and **Kenneth Black.**



On October 14, the Alley Theatre hosted ActOut featuring Twelfth Night. Pictured are **Eric Bradley, Aaron Dupont, Brendon Rios, Wanderson Rezende, Brandon Weinbrenner;** (seated) **Lauren Pelletier,** and **Tina Berry.**



On October 14, the John Palmer Art Gallery hosted its 2018 Artist Empowerment Brunch. Pictured are **John Palmer, Timmy Martinez, Januari Leo,** and **Ryan Lindsay.**



On October 13, PFLAG Houston celebrated its 40th anniversary at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. Pictured are (front row, from left) **Jane Smith, Blake Weisser,** and **Kathy Sinclair;** (middle row, from left) **Gail Rickey, Norma Graves, Susan Upchurch,** and **Rev. Don Sinclair;** (back row, from left) **Pat Rickey, Dick Graves, Kyle Young,** and **Irv Smith.**

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