

# Outsmart

JULY '18

HOUSTON'S LGBTQ MAGAZINE

outsmartmagazine.com



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## PRIDE SUPERSTARS

JASMINE  
BRANCH  
AND  
CHRISTINA  
WELLS

Pg.48

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## SUPER DARIO

GAY HOUSTONIAN  
TO RUN 155 MILES  
IN SEVEN DAYS  
FOR ENDANGERED  
WILDLIFE

Pg.40

Plus

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JUAN PABLO  
DI PACE  
ON THE  
HOUSTON'S  
SYMPHONY'S  
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TRIBUTE

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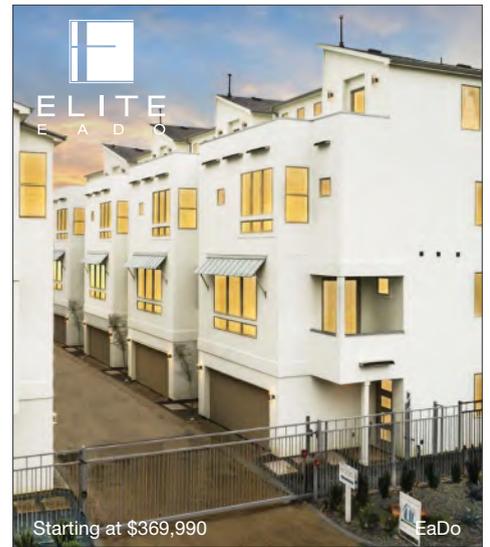
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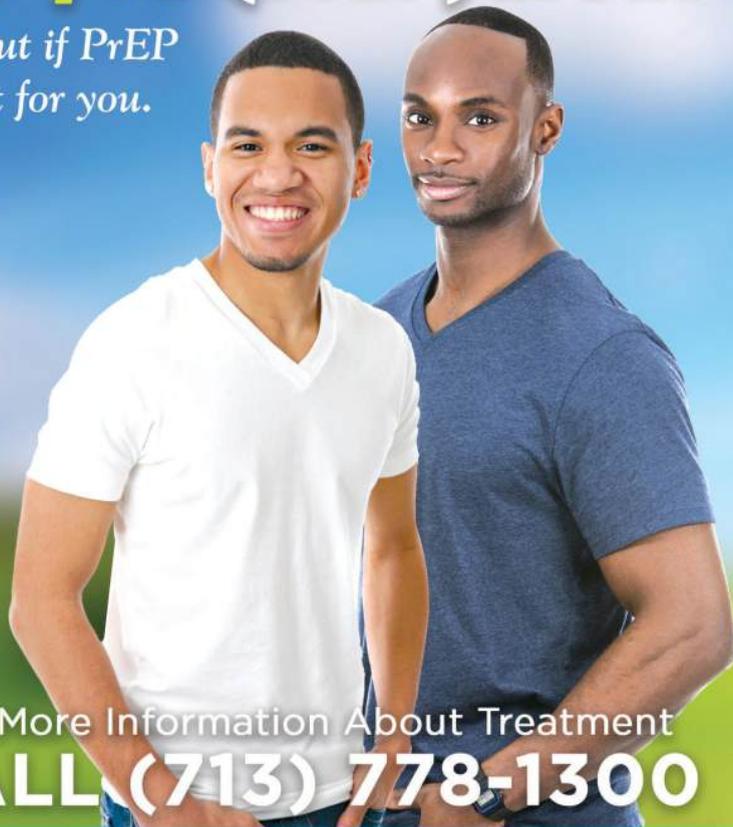
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www.OutSmartMagazine.com

**Subscriptions:** \$30/12 Issues, \$58/24 Issues

OUTSMART is published monthly. Estimated readership in Houston and surrounding areas is 60,000. OutSmart Media Company is not responsible for claims and practices of advertisers. The opinions and views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the staff or management of OUTSMART. Inclusion in OUTSMART does not imply sexual orientation. ©2018 by OutSmart Media Company. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited. Unsolicited material is accepted. No manuscript returned without SASE.



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**In** the wake of Hurricane Harvey, OUTSMART postponed our 2017 Gayest & Greatest Awards so that we could instead tell the stories of the storm's LGBTQ heroes and survivors. Last month, we were recognized by the Houston Press Club for last October's "Heroes of Harvey" issue, capturing a second-place Lone Star Award for magazine layout.

It was one of three Lone Star Awards we received this year. OUTSMART also captured second-place honors in the magazine-article category for our July 2017 cover story about Harris County district attorney Kim Ogg, as well as in the magazine-column category for a piece by contributor Kristopher Sharp about the deadly impacts of Texas' anti-LGBTQ adoption and foster-care law.

While we are certainly honored, much of the credit for these awards should go to those in the community who made them possible: the heroes of Harvey themselves, who stepped up and made great sacrifices to help others in need; Ogg, who bravely opened up publicly for the first time about her personal journey to becoming the nation's highest-ranking

openly LGBTQ law-enforcement official; and Sharp, who is himself a survivor of the broken Texas foster-care system and has gone on to become a fierce activist and scholar.

And speaking of heroes, in this issue we profile Dario Mariani, a gay Houstonian who plans to run the equivalent of six marathons in seven days across Mongolia's Gobi Desert, to benefit endangered wildlife in the Galapagos Islands. Ryan Leach's cover story seems especially timely given that Mariani is a Venezuelan immigrant who fled political unrest in his homeland.

Elsewhere, as part of our "Out for Change in 2018" series, writer Marene Gustin profiles Harris County judicial candidate Beau Miller, who would be among the first openly HIV-positive elected officials in Texas.

Also on the subject of firsts, writer Lourdes Zavaleta tells the love story of George and Barbara Dugan, the first transgender couple to be featured in the three-year history of our Wedding Guide.

Meanwhile, writer Don Maines interviews trans woman Janet-Fierce Andrews, a regular performer at

Hamburger Mary's who was recently crowned Miss Gay USofA. Maines also profiles 2018 Houston Pride SuperStar winner Jasmine Branch, and provides an update on 2016 Pride SuperStar winner Christina Wells, who recently appeared on *America's Got Talent*.

Finally, since I mentioned our annual Gayest & Greatest contest at the top, I'll leave you with a quick reminder that the nomination round for this year's Readers' Choice Awards runs from July 1 to July 14, followed by voting from July 15 to August 15. Check out [OutSmartMagazine.com/GG2018](http://OutSmartMagazine.com/GG2018).

—John Wright



ON THE COVER

**SUPER DARIO**  
Gay Houstonian to run 155 miles in seven days for endangered wildlife. Pg.40

Photos by Ashkan Roayaei  
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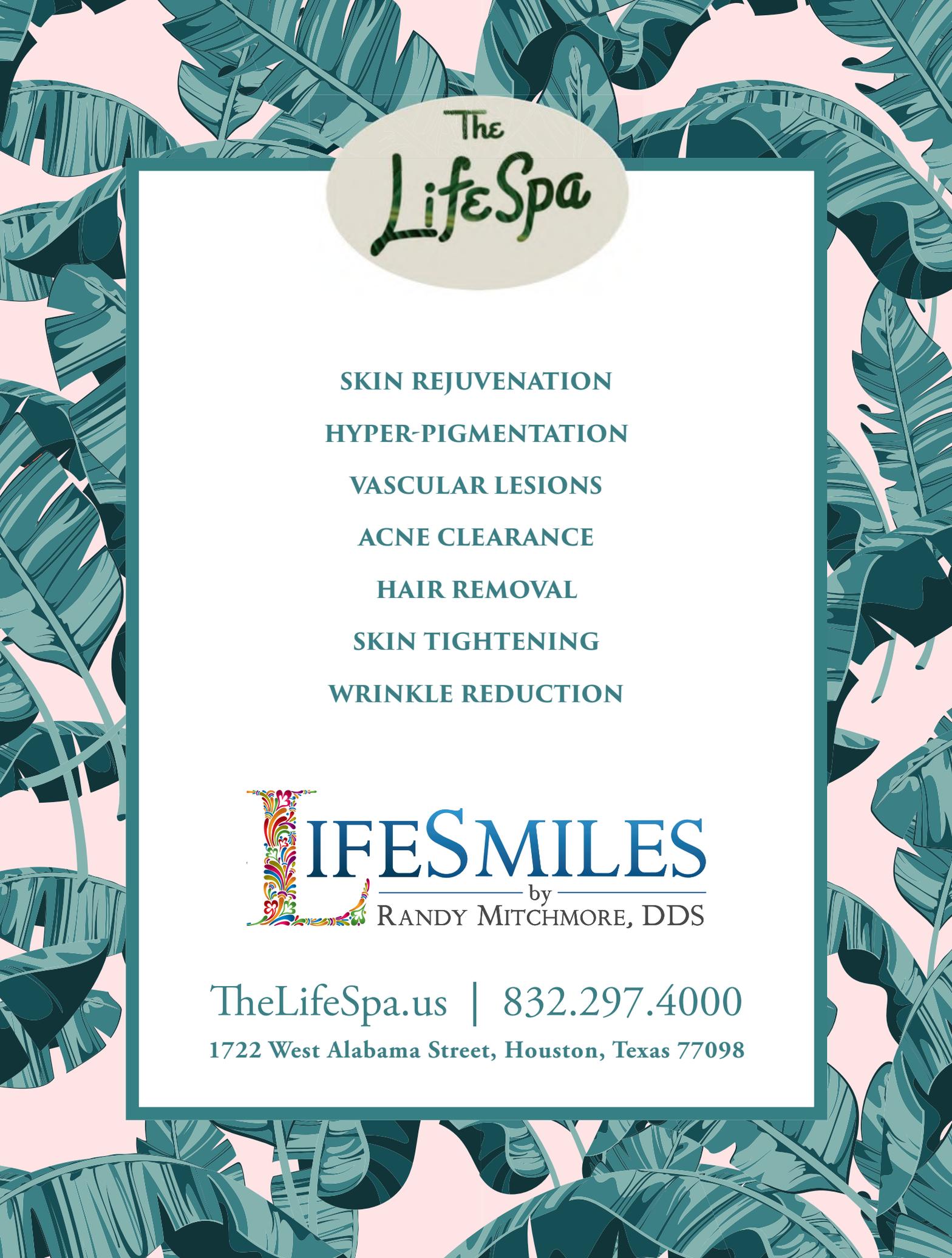


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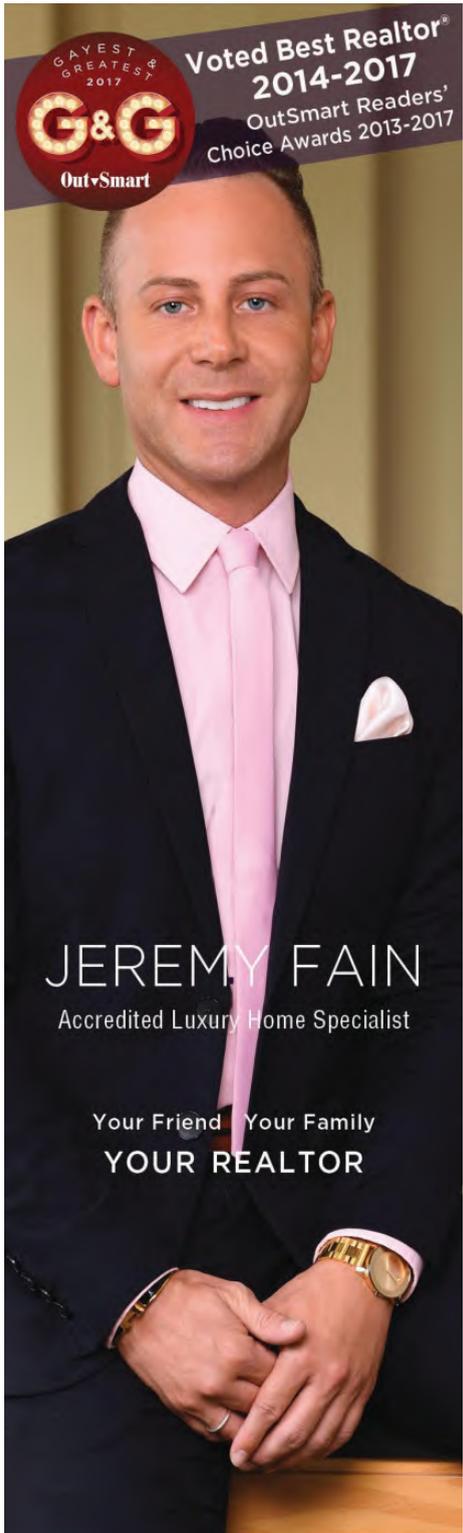


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# High Court Ducks on LGBTQ Equality

Justices side with anti-gay baker, but sidestep key issues.

By Lisa Keen

Keen News Service

Things appeared to be winding down June 4 on the live blog at [Scotusblog.com](http://Scotusblog.com), a website popular with U.S. Supreme Court journalists and observers. Whenever the court issues decisions, [Scotusblog](http://Scotusblog.com) has seasoned journalists posting, within seconds, the quick details of the news: what case has been decided, which justice wrote the decision, and what is the result—whether the court affirmed or reversed the lower court's decision.

On June 4, LGBT legal activists were awaiting a decision in one major LGBT case: *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*. And they were hoping to see the words “affirmed.” The Colorado Civil Rights Commission had ruled that Jack Phillips, the owner of a bakery in Colorado, could not use his religious beliefs to circumvent a Colorado anti-discrimination law. Phillips had done just that when he refused, in 2012, to sell a cake to a same-sex couple for their wedding reception.

Many court observers believed the court's most veteran member, justice Anthony Kennedy, would be the author of the *Masterpiece* decision. He has written most of the court's important LGBTQ-related decisions in recent years, and he has frequently been the tie-breaking vote in favor of equality.

Supreme Court decisions are typically announced from the bench, starting at 10 a.m., by the justice who wrote the decision. The decisions are announced in order of seniority, so Kennedy—if he had a decision to announce—would be last. With 29 decisions pending, there was no guarantee that *Masterpiece* would even be announced that day. In fact, in past years, LGBTQ-related decisions were almost always announced on the last day of the court's session at the end of June.

Just before 10 a.m., [Scotusblog](http://Scotusblog.com) noted that the press office had just brought out paper copies of the day's decisions in “two boxes.” This is Supreme Court press code for “probably two decisions, maybe three.” But reporters can't see the paper copies until the court has started announcing the decision from the bench.

At 10:02 a.m., the first decision announced was from justice Sonia Sotomayor, in a bankruptcy case. The next decision would



## Split Decision

LGBTQ protesters gather outside the Supreme Court building in Washington DC as they await the decision in *Masterpiece Cakeshop*. Although justices affirmed the “dignity and worth” of gays, they ruled narrowly in favor of a Colorado baker who refused to serve a same-sex couple.

then come from either Sotomayor or any of the more senior members of the bench. At 10:07 a.m., Kennedy announced a decision in a case involving sentencing.

At 10:12 a.m., [Scotusblog](http://Scotusblog.com) noted that the court was suddenly diverting from protocol regarding seniority. Justice Samuel Alito, one of the more junior members, announced a third decision in another sentencing case.

Then two minutes later, a fourth decision was announced.

“We got *Masterpiece*,” [Scotusblog](http://Scotusblog.com) reported. “It is by Kennedy and it is reversed.”

Not Kennedy “affirmed,” but Kennedy “reversed” the Colorado Civil Rights Commission's ruling against the bakery. And only justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor were in dissent.

## The stunning complexity of it all

The longer one watches the U.S. Supreme Court, the more one feels trepidation about predicting outcomes. But the outcome in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado* brought a new level of unpredictability to Supreme Court decision-making, particularly for LGBTQ people.

Yes, many court observers opined last December that the questions Kennedy asked and the remarks he made during oral arguments seemed to indicate he was leaning away from the pro-LGBTQ trend he had previously established. He admonished a member of the

Colorado Civil Rights Commission—the body that initially ruled against the bakery—for remarks that Kennedy said showed “hostility to religion” and were disrespectful of Phillips' religious views against same-sex marriage. He also wondered aloud why the gay couple that was turned away at the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* didn't just go to another bakery.

But even with that backdrop, it was a stunning result to have Justice Kennedy, who is regarded by many as the court's champion of equality, rule against the LGBTQ community's position in a case critical to upholding what few laws we have to prohibit discrimination against LGBTQ people.

It was stunning, too, to see that two other justices who typically take pro-LGBTQ legal positions—justices Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan—vote with Kennedy and the court's conservatives.

But then LGBTQ activists and legal analysts began to study the details of Kennedy's decision, and the view transformed.

The 7-2 majority had not ruled that business owners' religious views give them a free pass to violate civil-rights laws that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. Rather, they ruled only that, in their judgment, the record showed there had been significant hostility shown by the Commission for Phillips' religious views.

According to Kennedy's majority opinion,

*continued on page 17*

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- ▶ **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%). Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or don't go away.

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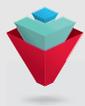
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BIKTARVY is a complete, 1-pill, once-a-day prescription medicine used to treat HIV-1 in adults. It can either be used in people who have never taken HIV-1 medicines before, or people who are replacing their current HIV-1 medicines and whose healthcare provider determines they meet certain requirements.

**BIKTARVY does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS.** HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS.

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

- dofetilide
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**Tell your healthcare provider all your medical conditions, including if you:**

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- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
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**Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:**

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- 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.

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

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the First Amendment’s guarantee that people shall have free exercise of religion means that the government (in this case, the Colorado commission) cannot “act in a manner that passes judgment upon or presupposes the illegitimacy of religious beliefs and practices.”

The Supreme Court “set aside” and “invalidated” the rulings against Phillips, and said the greater issues in the case—concerning religious beliefs and civil-rights laws protecting LGBTQ people—would have to be “resolved in the future.”

The striking thing about how the majority handled the case, however, was that it could have easily resolved its concern about the Commission’s “hostility” by merely issuing a brief order. Instead, it provided an 18-page majority opinion that spelled out the Supreme Court’s concern that gay people be treated with “dignity and worth,” that laws “can, and in some cases must” protect them, and that their efforts to be treated equally must be given “great weight and respect” by the courts.

Kennedy, Breyer, Kagan, and three conservative members—chief justice John Roberts and justices Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch—signed on to this language.

“Our society has come to the recognition that gay persons and gay couples cannot be treated as social outcasts or as inferior in dignity and worth,” the opinion states. “For that reason the laws and the Constitution can, and in some instances must, protect them in the exercise of their civil-rights. The exercise of their freedom on terms equal to others must be given great weight and respect by the courts.”

Jenny Pizer, law and policy director for the LGBTQ civil-rights group Lambda Legal, said this paragraph could have “great significance.”

“It is dicta,” she explained, referring to the fact that the paragraph was not a ruling on the matter at hand—the way the Commission handled the complaint against the baker. But, she said, it is “a strong statement of how Kennedy is thinking about this question, and probably how he’s engaging the other justices.”

“He got Roberts, Alito, and Gorsuch to join that language,” Pizer said.

Shannon Minter of the National Center for Lesbian Rights agreed.

“The decision is so narrow that almost everything in the opinion is dicta, including that statement. But it’s still powerful,” Minter said.

It’s also powerful to realize that any of the conservative justices could have concurred in the judgment in favor of the bakery without signing on to Kennedy’s opinion.

That’s what justice Clarence Thomas did. He wrote his own opinion, concurring in the majority’s judgment but saying he thought the baker should have won on the First Amend-

# Court Won’t Hear Anti-Gay Florist’s Case—Yet

## LGBTQ expert blasts justices.

By Lisa Keen  
Keen News Service

The U.S. Supreme Court on, June 25, vacated a Washington Supreme Court decision that said a florist violated state law when she refused to sell flowers to a same-sex couple for their wedding, claiming that she was exercising her religious beliefs.

In doing so, the justices sent the case back to the state supreme court for “further reconsideration in light of” the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 4 decision in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*.

The Alliance Defending Freedom, which represented the florist in the *Arlene’s Flowers v. State of Washington* case, portrayed the announcement as a step forward for its client. And Lambda Legal expressed frustration at the court’s unwillingness to decide the big issue looming in this case and others: whether a business person can claim a First Amendment right to free exercise of religion to justify violating a state law prohibiting



Shannon Minter



Jenny Pizer

discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations.

“Today’s decision is immensely frustrating and disappointing,” said Jenny Pizer of Lambda Legal. “The Supreme Court should simply have reaffirmed long-standing constitutional principles that freedom of religion is not a license to discriminate. Laws requiring businesses to be open to all do not conflict with the Constitution. It is past time to put to rest these proliferating attempts to

continued on page 97

ment issue. Thomas said cakes constitute an “expression” and that Phillips’ creation of cakes makes him an “active participant” in the weddings where his cakes are served. Therefore, said Thomas, the baker’s refusal to create a cake for a same-sex couple is protected by the First Amendment.

“By forcing Phillips to create custom wedding cakes for same-sex weddings,” Thomas wrote, “Colorado’s public-accommodations law ‘alter[s] the expressive content’ of his message.”

It is worth mentioning here that neither the Colorado law nor the Commission that enforced that law required Phillips to “create custom wedding cakes for same-sex weddings.” The Commission merely said that if Phillips was going to sell wedding cakes to male-female couples, he must sell them to same-sex couples.

The cake designs shown on Masterpiece Cakeshop’s website illustrate that the vast majority of the wedding-cake designs Phillips offers have neither religiously oriented symbols or male-female images. They include flowers and swirls.

And, as Justice Ginsburg explained in her dissent, the gay couple that sought a cake from the Masterpiece Cakeshop “simply requested a wedding cake: They mentioned no message

or anything else distinguishing the cake they wanted to buy from any other wedding cake Phillips would have sold” to a male-female couple.

“What matters is that Phillips would not provide a good or service to a same-sex couple that he would provide to a heterosexual couple,” Ginsburg wrote. The gay couple was “denied service based on an aspect of their identity that the State chose to grant vigorous protection from discrimination.” Ginsburg, joined by Sotomayor, said she would have affirmed the lower court decision.

And thus, three justices have put their cards on the table: Thomas would give a First Amendment-based pass to business owners who wish to discriminate against LGBTQ people, but Ginsburg and Sotomayor would not.

It will take another case—one untainted by other issues, such as hostility toward religion—to decide the matter.

“The outcome of cases like this in other circumstances,” said Kennedy, writing for the majority, “must await further elaboration in the courts, all in the context of recognizing that these disputes must be resolved with tolerance, without undue disrespect to sincere religious beliefs, and without subjecting gay persons to indignities when they seek goods and services in an open market.”

## COMMUNITY

Photos by Dalton DeHart and Edgardo Aguilar



On June 21, the Alley Theatre hosted ActOut featuring *The Cake*. Pictured are **Whitney Spencer, Jeremy Bredehoeft, Damon Price, Robert McMillan, Candice D'Meza, Dean Crane, Jesse Crane, Sam Ferrigno,** and **Tina Berry.**



On June 15, The T.R.U.T.H. Project hosted "Feel My Pride Too" at the Midtown Arts and Theater Center. Pictured are **Ryan McMasters, Erica Nicole, Ava Marshall, James Just, Brenden Winkfield, Brittany Jones, D. Maurice, Sampson McCormick, Sir Preston, Kevin Anderson,** and **Rayla Crawford.**



On June 9, the Montrose Softball League Association hosted closing ceremonies at Jones Plaza. Pictured are 2018 Jerry Award recipient **Nick Alvarado** and previous recipients of the Jerry Award.



On June 3, Neon Boots hosted an event for HIV Long-term Survivors Awareness Day. Pictured are **Tom Lindstrom** of Walgreen's, Houston City Council Member **Robert Gallegos, Bruce Turner,** and **Amber David.**



On June 18, Guava Lamp hosted a Sing Out and Proud Edition of *The Floor Is Yours*. Pictured are **Morena Roas, Stephanie Nwachukwu, Steven Shannon, Krystal Chellekalo,** and **Joey Guerra.**



On June 17, Michael's Outpost hosted the Daddy of Montrose competition. Pictured are **Seanyboy McCabe, An'Marie Gill, Ryan Ripcord, Nuke Anthony,** and **Shelly Montrose.**



On June 6, Guava Lamp hosted a scholarship benefit for This Side of the Rainbow, a summer camp for LGBTQ teens. Pictured are **Amy Greedy, Dixie Wrekt, Michael Leshner, Jeanie Low,** and **Michael DeVoll.**



On June 19, Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams hosted a happy hour mixer with Lambda NextGen and the Executive and Professional Association of Houston (EPAH). Pictured are Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams staff, and representatives from Lambda NextGen and EPAH.



On June 5, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State hosted an annual meeting and panel discussion at United Way. Pictured are **Mustafaa Carroll, Nancy Friedman, Evan Mintz, Rev. Lisa Hunt,** and **Rabbi Steven Morgen.**



On June 14, Dr. Forrest Roth hosted "Dysport & Drag," a kickoff of Pride Week. Pictured are **Salvador Munoz, Kristie Whitmire, Valerie Browning, Dr. Forrest Roth, Jennifer Swisher,** and **Fadia Conroy.**



On June 10, Bunnies on the Bayou distributed funds to beneficiaries at Guava Lamp. Pictured are Bunnies and beneficiaries.



On June 5, Hamburger Mary's hosted a benefit for the Gulf Coast Archives and Museum. Pictured are (front row) **Robert Graham, Judy Reeves, Ty Burns, Veronica Strutts,** and **Alton Howard;** (second row) **Whitney Cox,** and **Lady Shamu;** and (back row) **Wesley Hess** and **Bruce Reeves.**



On May 30, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce hosted a pre-NGLCC Conference gathering and Supplier Diversity Manager Panel at 3 Greenway Plaza. Pictured are **Bryan Cotton, Alicia Greene, Kelly Hejtmanck, Tammi Wallace, Brian Hall, Layle McKelvey,** and **Gary Wood.**



On June 1, Pride Houston hosted Latin Heat at Neon Boots. Pictured are **Lo Roberts** and **Jeremy Fain.**

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### 'Buyer and Cellar'

*Life in the Babs cave.*



**T**his witty one-man play by Jonathan Tolins tells the fantasy about an out-of-work gay actor who takes a job hanging out in Babs' (yes, that one) basement, which is basically like a shopping mall just crammed full of everything. Barbra Streisand actually does have an underground "mall" full of her collectibles on her property in Malibu, but we don't think she has

anyone working there. Anyway, in the play, young Alex finally gets to meet his idol when she comes down to the cellar to see her stuff, and the two strike up a friendship.

Opening night is July 14, and there will be a Babs Buyer and Cellar Bash before the show with hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and a raffle for two airline tickets. After the show, the Babs Bash continues with

dessert and a song-and-photo-op with "Babs." Tickets are \$75, and raffle tickets are \$100 each. Get your tickets online early, and don't let it rain on your parade.

—Marene Gustin

#### Buyer and Cellar

• July 14–August 12  
• [mainstreettheater.com](http://mainstreettheater.com)  
(See feature on page 75.)

📻 Radio   ★ Performing Arts   📁 Art & Photography   + Other Things   📅 Save The Date

<p>1</p> <p><b>The Great American Trailer Park Musical</b> thru 22 ★ A stripper on the run hides in a trailer park. <a href="http://stagetheatre.com">stagetheatre.com</a></p>	<p>2</p> <p><b>The Dinner Table</b> 📁 thru 21 An exhibit by Delita Martin. <a href="http://artleaguehouston.org">artleaguehouston.org</a></p>	<p>3</p> <p><b>Biorythmn: Music &amp; The Body</b> + thru 31 Make music with your body. <a href="http://thehealthmuseum.org">thehealthmuseum.org</a></p>	<p>4</p> <p><b>Happy July 4th!</b></p>
<p>5</p> <p><b>Ambiente Amor</b> 📁 thru Aug 24 An exhibition by Felix Lopez. <a href="http://clarkeassoc.com">clarkeassoc.com</a></p>	<p>6</p> <p><b>9 to 5: The Musical</b> ★ thru Aug 4 Dolly Parton's fun musical. <a href="http://islandetc.org">islandetc.org</a> (See page 22.)</p>	<p>7</p> <p><b>First Saturday Arts Market</b> + Summer hours: 6 to 10 p.m. <a href="http://firstsaturdayartsmarket.com">firstsaturdayartsmarket.com</a> <b>An Evening with Bill Engvall</b> ★ This funnyman is also a Galveston native! <a href="http://thegrand.com">thegrand.com</a></p>	<p>8</p> <p><b>Willy Wonka</b> ★ thru 22 Chocolate, anyone? <a href="http://stage-right.org">stage-right.org</a> <b>Tamarie Show: Field Trip!</b> ★ thru Aug 12 She's back! And she's on a metaphysical journey. <a href="http://catastrophictheatre.com">catastrophictheatre.com</a></p>

9

**Our Texas** + A Russian summer bizarre at the Cultrual Center. [ourtx.org](http://ourtx.org)

10

**Bucky Miller: Two Raccoons** 📺  
thru Mar 31, 2019 Part of the Art on the Lawn series. [camh.org](http://camh.org)

11

**Space City New Music Festival**  
★ 12, 13, & 15 Musical styles from around the world. [matchouston.org](http://matchouston.org)  
**Art in the Cistern** 📺 thru Jan 13, 2019 Site-specific art by Carlos Cuz-Diez. [buffalobayou.org](http://buffalobayou.org)

12

**Concept; Queerdom: An HTX People Project** + Film screening and discussion. [lawndaleartcenter.org](http://lawndaleartcenter.org)  
**Kids Camp** ★ thru 14 For children with substance abuse in their families. [councilonrecovery.org](http://councilonrecovery.org)

13

**10th Annual Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Summit** + &14 [txtns.org](http://txtns.org) (See page 22.)  
**Hayfever** ★ &14 A Noël Coward comedy. [companyonstage.org](http://companyonstage.org)

14

**The Music of George Michael** ★ [houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org) (See page 22.)  
**Buyer and Cellar** ★ thru Aug 12 [mainstreettheater.com](http://mainstreettheater.com) (See opposite page and page 75.)

15

**Culture Club and The B-52s** ★ Summer tour. [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net) (See page 24.)

16

**The Music of David Bowie** ★ A Houston Symphony concert in The Woodlands. [woodlandscenter.org](http://woodlandscenter.org)

17

**Mike + Doug Starn: Big Bambú—This Thing Called Life** 📺 thru Sept 3 An installation made up of 3,000 bamboo poles. [mfah.org](http://mfah.org)

18

**Routine Fables** 📺 thru 29 Sculpture poems by Elaine Bradford and Sara Cress. [lawndaleartcenter.org](http://lawndaleartcenter.org)

19

**Ed Asner in 'A Man and His Prostate'** ★ The Mary Tyler Moore Show actor stars in this funny one-man play. [matchouston.org](http://matchouston.org) (See page 24.)

20

**All-Beethoven Concert** ★ The Houston Symphony's one-night only concert. [houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org)  
**A Treasure Trove of Gilbert & Sullivan** ★ thru 22 Featuring Trial by Jury. [gilbertandsullivan.org](http://gilbertandsullivan.org)

21

**Dixie's Tupperware Party** ★ Southern hilarity with a side of plastics. [thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com) (See page 24.)  
**Apollo 13** ★ The movie with a live score by the Houston Symphony. [houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org)

22

**Cary Leibowitz: Museum Show** 📺 and Aug 26 Works of texts. [camh.org](http://camh.org)

23

**Peacock in the Desert: The Royal Arts of Jodhpur, India** 📺 thru Aug 19 The history of India's extraordinarily vibrant culture through some 250 objects. [mfah.org](http://mfah.org)

24

**Stars Align Tour** ★ Rockers Jeff Beck, Paul Rogers and Ann Wilson. [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net)  
**July Happy Hour** + Lambda Nextgen Houston meet-up for LGBTQ professionals. [lambdanextgen.com](http://lambdanextgen.com)

25

**2018 Houston Opioid Summit** + thru 27 A summit to create awareness and save lives. [councilonrecovery.org](http://councilonrecovery.org)

26

**Hall & Oates and Train** ★ The Toyota Center rocks. [houstontoyotacenter.com](http://houstontoyotacenter.com)

27

**Houston Shakespeare Festival** ★ thru Aug 4 *Hamlet* and *The Comedy of Errors* have free performances at Miller Outdoor Theatre. [uh.edu/shakespeare/season](http://uh.edu/shakespeare/season)

28

**Sistas: The Musical** ★ & 29 Friends find solace in sisterhood and music. [ensemblehouston.com](http://ensemblehouston.com) (See page 22.)

29

**Pentatonix** ★ Their summer tour brings them to The Woodlands. [woodlandscenter.org](http://woodlandscenter.org) (See page 24.)



31

Save the Date

August 11 & 12  
**Houston Black Heritage Music & Arts Festival** 📺 Guest speakers, artists, poets, performances, and musical guest entertainers. [houstonblackheritagefest.com](http://houstonblackheritagefest.com)

More CALENDAR →

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## Calendar of Events

*continued from previous page*

### **Sistas: The Musical**

Now thru July 29

# Thru 29

This musical is the final offering of Ensemble Theatre's current season, and it closes out on a high note. Five friends come together for grandma's funeral and must select a song to sing at her memorial. Through that frame, the actresses belt out an evening of music from blues to hip hop that mirrors the emerging power of African-American women.

[ensemblehouston.com](http://ensemblehouston.com)

### **9 to 5: The Musical**

July 6 - August 4

# 6-Aug. 4

Dolly Parton's fun musical, based on the classic 1980 film about girl power, is a hilarious story of female friendship and revenge. Parton wrote the songs and they are toe-tapping fun. Opening night is July 6 and is a fundraising gala night sponsored by VJ Tramonte and Joe Tramonte Realty.

[islandetc.org](http://islandetc.org)

### **10th Annual Texas Transgender Nondiscrimination Summit**

July 13 & 14

# 13 & 14

This annual two-day event will be held at the University of Houston this year. Texas colleges and universities wishing to include transgender rights in institution policies should attend this strategy-sharing summit. Learn what works (and what doesn't) in changing policies on campus to protect transgender faculty, staff, students, and allies. Make connections with those already doing this work. Learn from their successes and experiences.

[txtns.org](http://txtns.org)

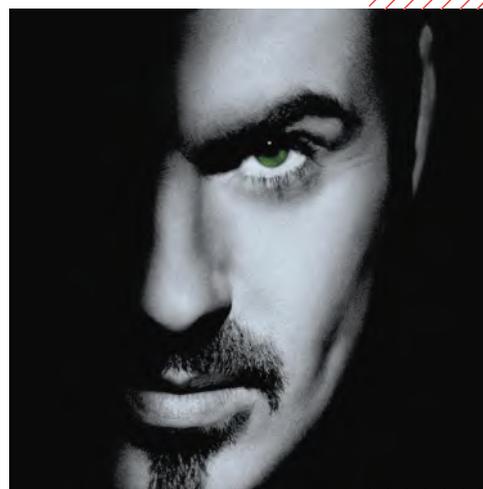
### **The Music of George Michael**

July 14

# 14

Wake me up before you go-go! You'll be singing along as the Houston Symphony pays tribute to George Michael by playing all his greatest hits. Juan Pablo Di Pace, the hot Latin actor and singer, will be the featured vocalist. You might know him as Fernando on Netflix's *Fuller House*.

[houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org)



More CALENDAR →

# SWIMMING WHILE DROWNING

by Emilio Rodriguez

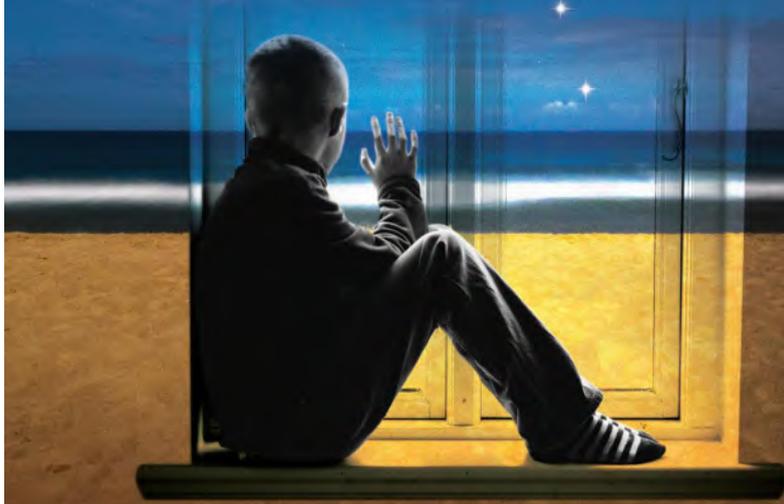
October 3 - 21, 2018

**Angelo and Mila are fifteen and homeless.**

Angelo is a dreamer and Mila is a street-wise hustler, but when they become roommates at a shelter for LGBTQ teens, they build a fragile bond that inspires them to reach for understanding and self-acceptance. Emilio Rodriguez's poetic coming-of-age story celebrates the healing power of hope and the beautiful mystery of being a teenager.

directed by Alice Gatling

**INDIVIDUAL TICKETS GO ON SALE AUGUST 1**



**the Great American Trailer Park Musical**  
 music & lyrics by David Nehls  
 book by Betsy Keiso  
 Extended through July 22, 2018

**RING OF FIRE**  
 THE MUSIC OF JOHNNY CASH  
 created by Richard Maltby, Jr.  
 conceived by William Meade  
 adapted from the Broadway production by Richard Maltby, Jr. and Jason Edwards  
 July 11 - September 2, 2018

**Sister's Summer School Catechism**  
 GOD NEVER TAKES A VACATION!  
 written by Maripat Donovan and Marc Silvia  
 August 1 - September 9, 2018

**SWIMMING WHILE DROWNING**  
 by Emilio Rodriguez  
 October 3 - 21, 2018

**THE ULTIMATE Christmas Show (abridged)**  
 by Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor  
 November 7 - December 23, 2018

**PANTO STAR FORCE**  
 by Ryan Schabach and Elizabeth A.M. Keel  
 November 21 - December 30, 2018

**WHO'S HOLIDAY!**  
 by Matthew Lombardo  
 December 5 - 30, 2018

**the River Bride**  
 by Marisela Treviño Orta  
 January 23 - February 10, 2019

**NSFW**  
 by Lucy Kirkwood  
 February 13 - March 3, 2019

NSFW: Not Safe For Work. Content material which the viewer may not want to be seen accessing in a public or formal setting such as at work.

**LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS**  
 book and lyrics by Howard Ashman  
 music by Alan Menken  
 March 6 - April 28, 2019

**Murder for Two**  
 A NEW MUSICAL COMEDY  
 book and music by Joe Kinosian  
 book and lyrics by Kellen Blair  
 April 24 - June 16, 2019

**Sex with Strangers** 🗨️💋  
 by Laura Eason  
 May 22 - June 9, 2019

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## Calendar of Events

continued from page 22

### The B-52s

July 15

15

This will make you feel old: it's the 40th-anniversary summer tour for The B-52s! And they're bringing Boy George and Culture Club along for the ride. Get your '80s groove on and head out to the Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land, and get you some karma, karma chameleon.

[smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net)

### Ed Asner in *A Man and His Prostate*

July 19

19

If you love Ed Asner (and who doesn't?), you don't want to miss his one-man show coming to Houston this month. *A Man and His Prostate* is based on Asner's friend who faced the cancer, and although the subject matter is serious, this is a funny play. "It's mostly jokes all the way, or building up to a joke," Asner says. At 88 the Emmy Award-winner is still going strong, but this is a rare opportunity to see his stage work up close and personal.

[matchouston.org](http://matchouston.org)

### Dixie's Tupperware Party

July 21

21

She's baaaack! It's Southern hilarity with a side of plastics as Dixie Longate, the number-one seller of Tupperware in the country, talks trailer trash and drinking while selling plastic bowls. Yes, you can actually buy them during the show. Her favorite item she hawks, she says, is the Rectangular Cake Taker. "Sure, you can carry a cake in it, but it holds 34 Jell-O shots just as well," she explains. "I take it to church with me and it gets me right through the sermon."

[thegrand.com](http://thegrand.com)



### Pentatonix

July 29

29

The three-time Grammy Award-winning group's summer tour brings them to The Woodlands in July. They perform with special guests Calum Scott (who is openly gay) and Echosmith. The Texas a cappella quintet formed in 2011, but they already have 14.5 million YouTube followers. If you're a fan of the *Pitch Perfect* films (they had a cameo in the second one), then you'll love this concert that will have you humming along. Two of the band members, Mitch Grassi and Scott Hoying, are openly gay.

[woodlandscenter.org](http://woodlandscenter.org) ■



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# Two Words: F--k Giuliani

Trump's crazy, sleazy lawyer passes judgment on Stormy Daniels.

**D**o whatever it is you do to prepare yourself for crazy crap, because some-damn-body has opened up the weird spigot full blast.

Last month, we learned that Ambien can make you a racist, and that it probably also makes your inauguration crowd appear larger than it really is. We also learned that our president went to North Korea with all the good intentions of a flaming dumpster possum.

We learned that WalletHub ranked Texas 47th on its list of the safest states to live in. The study compared various safety indicators across all 50 states, examining data on assaults, mass shootings, thefts, murders, traffic fatalities, climate disasters, catfish attacks, feather boa accidents, Christmas-decoration glitter overdose, lethal whiffs of Eau de Redneck, and more.

Texas came in 47th, just above Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi. So, not only are we unsafe, we are surrounded by places even more risky than we are. That's not comforting in the damn least.

I don't think this study included the fact that there are 157 different kinds of snakes in Texas, and 151 of them can kill you out of nothing more than spite. It also did not include all of our "Hold my beer and watch this" moments, but I think we'd have taken first place in that. And don't forget that more people in Texas are killed watching Monster Truck Pulls than there are monster trucks.

However, we did take first place in the number of uninsured citizens. Thanks, Governor Abbott!

And we learned that Rudy Giuliani is a sumbitch. Last month, he gave me a vicious case of the rage. Honey, I was so mad that I could have talked water into a boil at 40 paces. I could have gotten a speeding ticket while I was parked.

Aside from a few damns and hells, I don't cuss much because Momma still has a bar of soap and can catch me from behind. However,



I found myself strongly inclined to grab my hot-pink megaphone, go stand in my front yard, and holler as loud as I can, "F--k Giuliani! Just f--k that rotten sumbitch!" at all my Republican neighbors until they called the police and had me arrested so I could go to jail and get local newspaper headlines so the whole damn town would know that we should f--k Giuliani. It was a plan. I had a plan.

First they tell me that Rudy, an impotent old man, decided to poke a stick at Kim Jong-un. *The Wall Street Journal* reported, "President Donald Trump's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, said North Korean leader Kim Jong-un got 'on his hands and knees and begged' for their summit to be held after Mr. Trump canceled it in May."

I don't know if Kim has a megaphone and Republican neighbors, so he's probably going to bomb something. I've got my plan, he's surely got his.

Then it got worse. Rudy decides that he should pass judgment on Stormy Daniels.

"The business you were in entitles you to no degree of giving your credibility any weight," Giuliani said of Daniels. "Explain to me how she could be damaged. I mean, she has no reputation. If you're going to sell your body for money, you just don't have a reputation. I may be old-fashioned."

Giuliani also said he respects porn stars,

but not "the way I respect a career woman or a woman of substance or a woman who isn't going to sell her body for sexual exploitation."

He's a sleazy lawyer, y'all, and he's looking down on a porn star? It is common knowledge among the clergy that lawyers don't get to look down on anybody.

No, Rudy, you're not old-fashioned. You're just bat-crap crazy. Sane people don't even think like that, much less say it out loud. I mean, you gotta dump two levels of the Hierarchy of Needs to get to Rudy's place. Honey, B.F. Skinner couldn't find him with a one-lane maze and a pound of gouda.

Look, John "Get Off My Lawn" McCain is just a crazy old man. Rudy is eight shades of gray past that. Rudy is at the "it's irresponsible to put him on teevee because somebody is gonna get hurt" level.

And think about this: you've got a shyster lawyer questioning the morals of a porn star? Really?

F--k Giuliani.

Happy July, when steering wheels are so damn hot that you drive with potholders.

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

In adults with HIV on ART who have diarrhea not caused by an infection



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Mytesi is a prescription medicine that helps relieve symptoms of diarrhea not caused by an infection (noninfectious) in adults living with HIV/AIDS on antiretroviral therapy (ART).

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Mytesi is not approved to treat infectious diarrhea (diarrhea caused by bacteria, a virus, or a parasite). Before starting you on Mytesi, your healthcare provider will first be sure that you do not have infectious diarrhea. Otherwise, there is a risk you would not receive the right medicine and your infection could get worse. In clinical studies, the most common side effects that occurred more often than with placebo were upper respiratory tract (sinus, nose, and throat) infection (5.7%), bronchitis (3.9%), cough (3.5%), flatulence (3.1%), and increased bilirubin (3.1%).

For Copay Savings Card and Patient Assistance, see [Mytesi.com](http://Mytesi.com)

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### IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION

This is only a summary. See complete Prescribing Information at [Mytesi.com](http://Mytesi.com) or by calling 1-844-722-8256. This does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment.

### What Is Mytesi?

Mytesi is a prescription medicine used to improve symptoms of noninfectious diarrhea (diarrhea not caused by a bacterial, viral, or parasitic infection) in adults living with HIV/AIDS on ART.

**Do Not Take Mytesi** if you have diarrhea caused by an infection. Before you start Mytesi, your doctor and you should make sure your diarrhea is not caused by an infection (such as bacteria, virus, or parasite).

### Possible Side Effects of Mytesi Include:

- Upper respiratory tract infection (sinus, nose, and throat infection)
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- Cough
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- Increased bilirubin (a waste product when red blood cells break down)

For a full list of side effects, please talk to your doctor. Tell your doctor if you have any side effect that bothers you or does not go away.

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

### Should I Take Mytesi if I Am:

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- Studies in animals show that Mytesi could harm an unborn baby or affect the ability to become pregnant
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- This drug should only be used during pregnancy if clearly needed

#### A Nursing Mother?

- It is not known whether Mytesi is passed through human breast milk
- If you are nursing, you should tell your doctor before starting Mytesi
- Your doctor will help you to decide whether to stop nursing or to stop taking Mytesi

#### Under 18 or Over 65 Years of Age?

- Mytesi has not been studied in children under 18 years of age
- Mytesi studies did not include many people over the age of 65. So it is not clear if this age group will respond differently. Talk to your doctor to find out if Mytesi is right for you

### What Should I Know About Taking Mytesi With Other Medicines?

If you are taking any prescription or over-the-counter medicine, herbal supplements, or vitamins, tell your doctor before starting Mytesi.

### What If I Have More Questions About Mytesi?

For more information, please see the full Prescribing Information at [Mytesi.com](http://Mytesi.com) or speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

To report side effects or make a product complaint or for additional information, call 1-844-722-8256.

### Rx Only

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Mytesi comes from the *Croton lechleri* tree harvested in South America.

Please see complete Prescribing Information at [Mytesi.com](http://Mytesi.com).

NP-390-10



# Untangling Finances in a Divorce

Same-sex couples face new issues, thanks to marriage equality.

**W**hile many relationships start out in a state of pure bliss, over time, as is often said, the honeymoon comes to an end.

If you are going through a divorce, there are some things you'll need to know about untangling your finances as you and your partner go your separate ways.

Now that same-sex marriage is legally recognized under state and federal law, gay spouses can run into the same issues that opposite-sex couples face.

There are a long list of factors to consider when divorcing—everything from who gets parental rights to how property and other assets are divvied up. As you try to come to an agreement with your former spouse, there are a host of legal issues that can come into play.

One of the biggest factors is when the marriage took place. This can have an impact on how assets are divided, as well as other decisions such as whether someone will receive alimony. For instance, the longer the marriage lasted, the more weight it carries when a judge is determining how—or if—a non-earning or lower-earning spouse will receive financial support.

Unfortunately, because some states, including Texas, have only recognized same-sex marriages since 2015, even if you've spent 20 or more years with your partner, the actual length of the relationship could be a moot point.

The same holds true when it comes to child-custody arrangements, if applicable. In this case, there are many criteria that can be considered, such as whether a child was adopted. And even if both spouses have shared equally in raising a child (or children), it is possible that the "non-legal" parent will no longer be allowed to continue a relationship with them.

While divorce laws vary by state, there are some basic common factors that guide a court's approach to financial decision-making during



a divorce—whether it pertains to same-sex or opposite-sex marriages. In addition to how long the marriage lasted, key factors will typically include how each of the spouses contributed financially to each other (and to their family, if applicable), and what property is considered to be either separate or "co-mingled."

Likewise, if any type of estate planning has been put in place to facilitate the transfer of wealth between partners, this, too, could be understood as a "statement of intent" when spouses are dividing marital property in a divorce.

In some cases, same-sex couples may have a partnership agreement in place that was drafted prior to their legally recognized marriage. In this instance, if the couple later gets divorced, financial matters and other issues may need to be dissolved in the same type of proceeding.

According to one Texas divorce attorney, many same-sex couples in the Lone Star State can benefit from the creation of a domestic partnership agreement. This is because courts will tend to look at such agreements when resolving disputes, determining the status of beneficiaries, and other key items.

Another legal arrangement often used by same-sex couples is the cohabitation agreement. This is considered similar in many ways

to a prenuptial agreement, except that it is for couples who choose not to get married. This type of agreement can address a number of important issues, such as the division of property upon separation, as well as post-relationship financial-support obligations.

Going through a divorce can be difficult. But just like with other tough situations, it is beneficial to look forward and plan ahead. One of the top priorities here can be to put an updated financial plan in place that reflects your current situation as well as your future goals.

When doing so, it can be advantageous to work with a financial professional who is not only knowledgeable in financial planning, but also someone who has experience working in the LGBTQ community. That way, you can be assured that your adviser is up to date regarding same-sex marriage laws and other key factors.

*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@jpl.com](mailto:grace.yung@jpl.com).*

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# The Suicide Epidemic and LGBTQ Youth

With U.S. rate at 30-year high, it's time to protect the most vulnerable.

There's probably no eerier, more terrifying feeling than entering a silent room to check on someone's welfare and finding them dead by their own hand. Imagine discovering a lifeless body with its face frozen in death, the eyes staring but seeing nothing. It's the stuff of nightmares and horror movies—but all too real.

At one time, such an event might have seemed like a freak occurrence unlikely to effect the average person's life, but that's not the case anymore. Suicide is an epidemic in America that is now at a 30-year high, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Suicide is now the second-leading cause of death in the U.S., behind motor-vehicle accidents.

The recent tragic deaths of fashion icon Kate Spade, 55, and travel and food guru Anthony Bourdain, 61, catapulted suicide into the nation's consciousness. People from all strata of society—and especially the LGBTQ community—are at risk.

Most of what is known about suicide in the LGBTQ community comes from the research of youth issues. The American Association of Suicidology's latest statistical analysis of 2016's 44,965 victims contains no data on sexual orientation or gender identity. The various agencies studying suicidal behavior in LGBTQ youth maintain that suicide is the second-leading cause of death among young people ages 10 to 24. LGB youth are three times more likely to seriously consider suicide (and five times more likely to attempt it) than their heterosexual counterparts. A study of transgender people revealed that 40 percent had made a suicide attempt, and that 92 percent of those people tried to take their own lives before age 25.

Researchers, psychologists, and others involved in mental-health care believe that LGBTQ



The tragic deaths of Kate Spade, above, and Anthony Bourdain could spark an increase in the suicide rate, which is already at a 30-year high.

youth are more susceptible to suicide because of bullying that includes verbal and physical abuse, little support from family and friends, low self-esteem, and the stress associated with minority status. As a result, LGBTQ youth are more likely to turn to alcohol and other drugs to tackle feelings of chronic hopelessness and worthlessness, which only exacerbates the underlying problems. Older LGBTQ people who remember experiencing the same problems in their youth may still suffer the consequences as adults.

On June 7, the Centers for Disease Control reported that the 2016 statistics reflected a 30-percent increase in suicides among Americans ages 10 or older since 1999. The release of the report announcing the spike ironically

coincided with the deaths of Spade on June 5 and Bourdain on June 8.

The 2016 analysis showed that white men ages 45 to 64 made up the largest percentage of suicides, and has shown the largest increase. Of the 44,965 deaths, the breakdown was as follows: males, 34,727; females, 10,238; whites, 40,164; non-whites, 4,801; adults over age 65, 8,204; adults ages 45 to 64, 16,196; and people ages 15 to 24, 5,723.

California had the most suicides in 2016 with 4,294, followed by Texas with 3,488 and Florida with 3,143. The District of Columbia, Vermont, and Delaware had the fewest suicides, with 40, 118, and 119, respectively. Regionally, the South recorded the most suicides with →

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– Iris Rodriguez



## IRIS RODRIGUEZ

For over 2 decades, Iris has been on the front lines as a decorated firefighter, a soldier in the U.S. Army Reserves, and an advocate for many women's and LGBTQ organizations.

For more information on where Iris likes to hang out, check out [www.mygayhouston/discover](http://www.mygayhouston/discover)

My Gay  
HOUSTON

*continued from page 30*

17,593, and the Northeast had the fewest with 6,078. The West recorded 11,516, and the Midwest had 9,778.

At 51 percent, firearms represented the most common method of suicide in 2016, followed by hanging and other suffocation at 26 percent, and poisoning at 15 percent. Suicides by hanging and suffocation showed a dramatic increase of 52 percent compared to other methods in a study of statistics from 1999 to 2010, according to a U.S. National Library of Medicine report. Suicides using firearms remained level during those years, while poisoning increased by 19 percent.

Both Spade and Bourdain committed suicide by hanging, and their deaths could spark an increase in the suicide rate if trends from previous years continue. Crisis-prevention hotlines are already reporting more calls.

A study by Columbia University noted that when actor Robin Williams, 63, hanged himself in 2004, suicides rose by 10 percent in four months. A similar increase was noted in 1962 when actress Marilyn Monroe, 36, died from barbiturate poisoning. The phenomenon is known as "suicide contagion," believed to be the result of massive media coverage of celebrity suicides. Most U.S. newspapers and other media abstain from publishing news about suicides unless it involves celebrities or politicians, at least in part because of the danger of copycat suicides.

In the days following media coverage of suicides, people who are thinking about suicide may be more likely to act on the impulses. Research by mental-health professionals shows that suicide victims often show no signs of despair, and have no history of mental illness. The suicides of both Spade and Bourdain took family and friends by surprise.

LGBTQ youth are arguably the most vulnerable group because they are less likely to be aware of resources, or they don't have the ability to access them. Youth who lack strong support from family, peers, or adults such as school officials are particularly at risk. Research indicates that crisis-prevention services such as hotlines can be effective interventions for youth in trouble.

Any youth experiencing suicidal thoughts can call The Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386. Anyone who is aware of a youth in crisis can also call Trevor Project counselors for advice. A compassionate, trained counselor will answer, "What's going on?"

Adults who are in crisis can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Adults concerned about other adults can also speak to the counselors.

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



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# Anti-Trans Rhetoric Fuels Anti-Trans Violence

Dallas woman among 12 trans people killed in U.S. this year.

Ever since the Republican Party, conservative organizations like the Family Research Council, and white fundamentalists began their political attacks on transgender people in 2014, I have been concerned that their rhetoric would lead to an uptick in anti-trans violence in the U.S.

Sadly, my fears have been realized. The Republican Party of Texas gleefully joined the anti-trans jihad by using blatant lies to bamboozle voters into overturning the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance in November 2015, and then attempting to pass the unjust Senate Bill 6 during the 2017 Texas legislative session.

Meanwhile, trans people continue to be brutally murdered, including 12 so far this year in the U.S.—with the majority of victims being people of color. Last year, we lost four trans Texans to anti-trans violence, and this year's total now includes Carla Patricia Flores-Pavon, a 26-year-old from North Dallas. She was robbed and strangled to death in her apartment by a man she had met online. Dallas emergency crews responded after a caller reported someone running from Pavon's apartment. They transported the unconscious victim to a nearby hospital, where she subsequently died.

Jimmy Eugene Johnson, a 24-year-old from the Houston suburb of Seabrook, has been charged with murder in Pavon's death after being apprehended during a traffic stop in Walker County, where police found some of Pavon's possessions in his vehicle. His bond has been set at \$500,000, and there is the possibility that the charges against him will be upgraded to capital murder.

Just three days after Pavon's May 9 murder, I was in Dallas to participate in a vigil organized by the Organización Latina de Trans en Texas (OLTT) at the Cathedral of Hope, where I was stunned to hear that a kayaker had



## Say Their Names

Carla Patricia Flores-Pavon of North Dallas (top) was found strangled in her apartment on May 9. Jimmy Eugene Johnson (below right), of Seabrook, is charged in her murder. Three days after Pavon's death, the body of Nicole Hall (below left) was found in a Dallas creek. Her death has been classified as "unexplained."

discovered the severely decomposed body of a black trans woman floating in White Rock Creek.

The deceased was later identified as 39-year-old Nicole Hall, who was considered a matriarch in the Dallas trans community. Her death was classified as "unexplained," pending further investigation by the Dallas County coroner and the Dallas Police Department.

A May 26 vigil was held for Hall as the Dallas and Texas trans community awaited information as to how she died.

The Texas transgender community will also be keeping an eye on the prosecution of Johnson in the Pavon case.

As someone who has been an advocate for this community for 20 years, I have seen some serious miscarriages of justice happen when →



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## UNAPOLOGETICALLY TRANS

*continued from page 34*

it comes to the prosecution of trans murder cases, and I have learned to watch skeptically as the legal process plays out.

We had one miscarriage of justice in March. Mark Daniel Lewis, the accused killer of Kenne McFadden, was indicted for manslaughter in November 2017. Lewis admitted that he shoved an alcohol-impaired McFadden into the San Antonio River and allowed her to drown in April of last year, just as state lawmakers in Austin were debating the odious anti-trans SB 6.

For some unexplained reason, Bexar County prosecutors decided to marry the manslaughter case against Lewis to his bond revocation hearing—instead of presenting the relevant facts about his failure to register as a sex offender to get his bond revoked, and then handling the manslaughter case separately. As a result, state district judge Joey Contreras, a Republican, ruled that McFadden’s death didn’t rise to the level of criminal conduct, which allowed Lewis to walk.

The San Antonio trans community was justifiably outraged, and Emmett Schelling, executive director of the Texas Education Network of Texas (TENT), slammed the decision. The local community put outgoing Bexar County District Attorney Nico LaHood on blast for the botched proceeding.

“This is not acceptable. San Antonio needs to know how Kenne has been let down by their local government. Our elected officials need to be better educated and free of even the suggestion of bias,” Schelling said. “When someone is dead at the hands of another person, a response of some kind through our justice system is and should be expected. Kenne McFadden and her family only saw delay, then denial of it. Nobody’s loved ones should have to suffer like that. Kenne McFadden deserved better. San Antonio deserves better. We all do.”

Contreras subsequently lost a May 22 runoff in the Republican primary for his judicial seat.

So in light of that San Antonio case, you can understand why the folks in the Dallas trans community and across the state are nervous about what will happen when Jimmy Eugene Johnson finally faces the judicial music for Pavon’s murder. Will justice be served for the Pavon family and all who loved Carla? Or will this just be another case in which the perpetrator gets a slap on the wrist for killing a transgender person?

We can only hope that Johnson gets the punishment he deserves after he gets his day in court.

*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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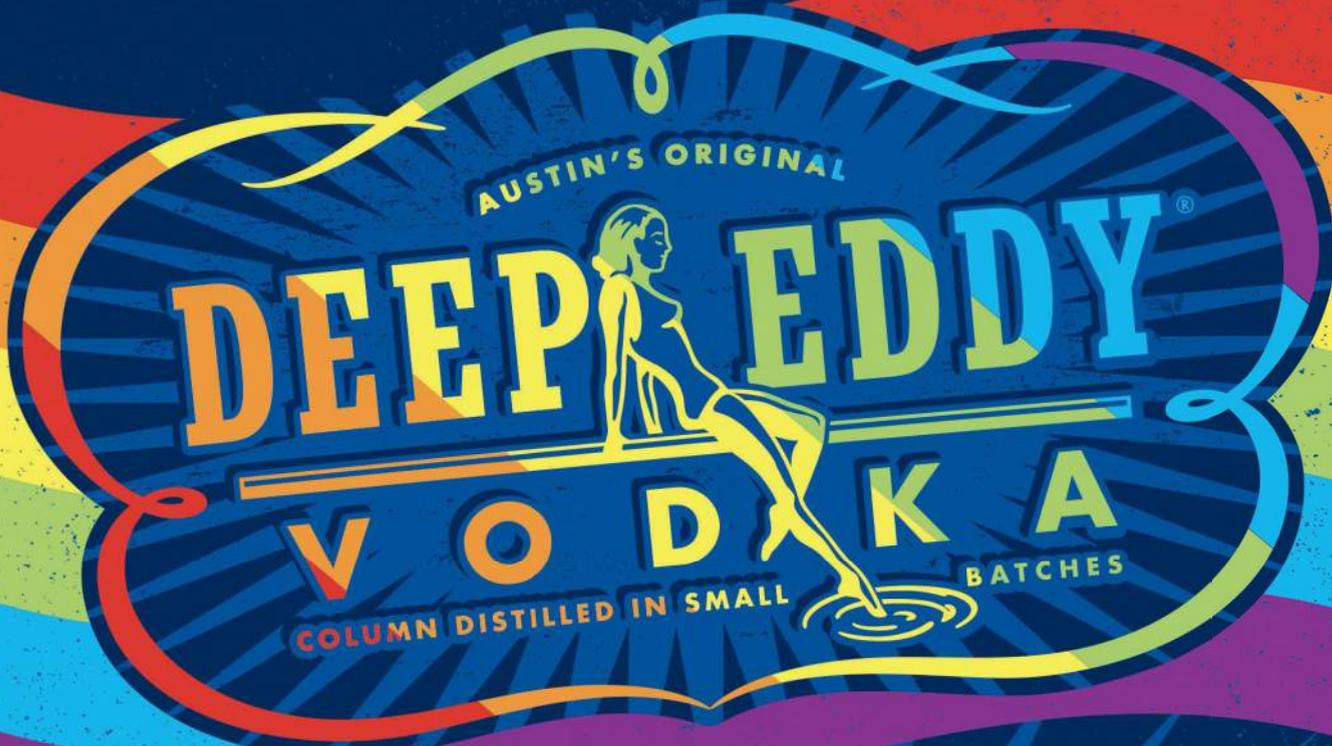
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# THE AMAZING RACE

Gay Houstonian Dario Mariani's  
ultra marathon in the Gobi Desert.

By **Ryan M. Leach**

Photo by Ashkan Roayae

**D**ario Mariani will do something extraordinary at the end of July. Mariani, a gay Houstonian from Venezuela, will run the equivalent of six marathons—or 155 miles—in seven days. And he will do so in temperatures ranging from 60 to 95 degrees, and at elevations of 3,000 to 6,000 feet, across the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.

Mariani says he has effectively been training for years to compete in this “self-sustained foot race” known as the Gobi March.

“I will carry my own gear, food, and water with me through the entire race,” Mariani says. “There are seven stages and approximately a marathon a day, except the last day where we’re doing a 10K. We camp at night until we cross

the finish line. The only thing provided is water, campsites, and medical services.”

Mariani’s matter-of-fact tone might lead one to believe that the Gobi March, known as an ultra marathon, is an everyday occurrence. But even for an Ironman finisher like Mariani, this event is in a league of its own.

In fact, only 235 people from across the globe—from Afghanistan to Taiwan—will participate. Of those, only 21 come from the United States. Mariani will be the only Houstonian (and the only Venezuelan) in the race.

#### **From Caracas to Lubbock**

If you encountered the 30-year-old Mariani on the street, you might guess that he is an endurance athlete based on his lean physique, casual

shoulder-length hair (usually twisted into a man-bun), and his penchant for wearing athletic gear. What the typical observer might not guess is that Mariani also holds a bachelor’s degree in petroleum engineering from Texas Tech University, which he earned in 2012. The journey that brought him to Texas (and now Mongolia) started in his home country of Venezuela.

“I chose to go to Texas Tech for a few reasons,” Mariani says. “I was accepted on a scholarship program where I was assigned an industry mentor. My mentor was a former petroleum engineer with Texaco. It was a great opportunity. Also, things with the Venezuelan government were growing increasingly tense and unstable.” →



**Reaching for New Heights**

Mariani, who completed his first Ironman competition in Denmark in 2016, will carry a 20-pound backpack across 6,000-foot elevations of the Gobi Desert, sleeping in campsites with only water and medical services provided.



become part of the family.”

After Mariani graduated from Texas Tech, he and Cross became roommates. “Mark would get up early in the morning religiously and go running,” Mariani says. “I could hear him. I didn’t understand how he did that. I was always a swimmer growing up, and had never really tried running. I had gained a lot of weight in college. I stopped swimming, but I didn’t stop eating like a swimmer, so I was looking for something to help me get back into shape.”

“When Dario first moved to Houston, he couldn’t run a mile,” Cross recalls. “He was an excellent swimmer. I knew he swam the Orinoco River in Venezuela, but he had never given running a chance. The first time he went running at Memorial Park, he walked the majority of the loop.”

Schultz also remembers that first run. “He showed up in Vans because he didn’t own actual running shoes,” she says. “He made it about a quarter of a mile, but I think he was hooked because less than a year later he was doing a triathlon. So, needless to say, he’s come an incredibly long way.”

**Out for Good**

By 2013, Mariani was regularly completing sprint triathlons and looking at longer races. However, one thing still lingered in the background: he had not come out to his parents who remained in Venezuela. When they happened to be visiting during one of his races, he looked forward to having them in Houston to cheer him on.

“I introduced them to my boyfriend at the time as ‘my friend,’” he says. “I am not sure if they picked up on it, but they didn’t show up to see me race. I was really disappointed.”

In 2015, Mariani visited his family during a trip to Ecuador. He was dating someone new, and he finally revealed he was gay to his parents and brothers. His siblings showed him love and support right away. His parents’ reaction was not as ideal. Mariani leaned emotionally on his friends and brothers during that difficult time. He also looked to racing as a distraction.

In 2016, Mariani finished his first full Ironman competition in Copenhagen, Denmark. The race included a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 22.6-mile run. His close friends were there, cheering him across the finish line.

**B**eginning in 1999, Venezuelans have suffered under an authoritarian government led by former president Hugo Chávez, who died in 2013. Chávez was succeeded by the current president, Nicolás Maduro, who has governed in a similar manner.

It was during the Chávez presidency that Mariani grew up in the town of Puerto La Cruz. He graduated high school in 2005 before moving to Caracas, where he studied chemical engineering at the Universidad Simón Bolívar. His mother also studied chemical engineering, and his father is a pediatrician. Mariani was heavily involved in student government at the university, and it was there that he noticed things changing for the worse with Venezuelan politics.

“2007 was when many freedom-of-speech violations started happening,” he says. “Chávez shut down radio and television channels that criticized the government. Then he started to mess with the universities because students were supporting a more liberal agenda. When that happened, he tried to pass laws

threatening the autonomy of the universities. Students took to the streets more and more. It became dangerous. Even peaceful protests would become violent, and cops would dissipate crowds using rubber bullets, expired tear gas, or even worse. There was a lot of anger and a lot of strife.”

On one occasion, Mariani was hit in the ankle with a rubber bullet. He was unable to walk without crutches for two weeks. It was around this time that he started applying for scholarships abroad at the urging of his parents and an American friend whose family was working in Venezuela. He was notified in June 2008 that Texas Tech wanted him to start in the fall. With his student visa in hand, Mariani left Caracas for Lubbock.

Mariani’s first meaningful connections in Texas included Houstonians Katherine Alvarado Schultz and Mark Cross. He met Cross through a mutual friend during a road trip to Houston, and Schultz soon thereafter. Mariani credits both friends with sparking his interest in running.

“I immediately loved Dario and decided to adopt him,” Schultz says. “Since then, he has

**“The funds raised will go toward shark research and protection in the Galapagos. I wanted to do something with a bigger impact.”**

— *Dario Mariani*

Training for an Ironman, a race completed in one day, can be a full-time job. Training for the Gobi March—approximately six marathons in seven days across the desert with a 20-pound backpack—requires even more commitment. Training increases gradually in intensity as the race draws closer. It requires a seven-day-a-week commitment at its height. Mariani alternates between long runs, weight training, and a lot of yoga. He is able to accomplish this through the help of his race sponsor, DEFINE—a gay owned, multi-disciplinary fitness studio that started in Houston.

“Athletes are busy people, with incredibly disciplined schedules,” says Henry Richardson, a friend of Mariani’s who is the founder and CEO of DEFINE. “The range of services that we offer would [normally] require going to multiple providers. Being able to complete all of your cross training under one roof saves time and money—something the competitive athlete can’t afford to waste.”

The two friends met when Mariani first moved to Houston. Richardson is a former collegiate diver who has expanded DEFINE to 20 locations across the country, and will soon become international.

“Dario is a phenomenal human being, and as a [gay man and former] athlete myself, I understand some of the stereotypes that can be put on us,” Richardson says. “I think this race is a beautiful metaphor for life and overcoming the challenges that we experience beyond just the physical. At DEFINE, we strive to continually be and become our absolute best for our team, our clients, and our community.”

Although there is much to be gained physically and spiritually for Mariani as he embarks on the race, there is also something else motivating his run. He is raising money to help the Charles Darwin Foundation’s work on the Galapagos Islands. In fact, it was Mariani’s support for the foundation’s work that inspired him to begin this journey. Friends of Mariani know him to be an avid fan of Shark Week on the Discovery Channel.

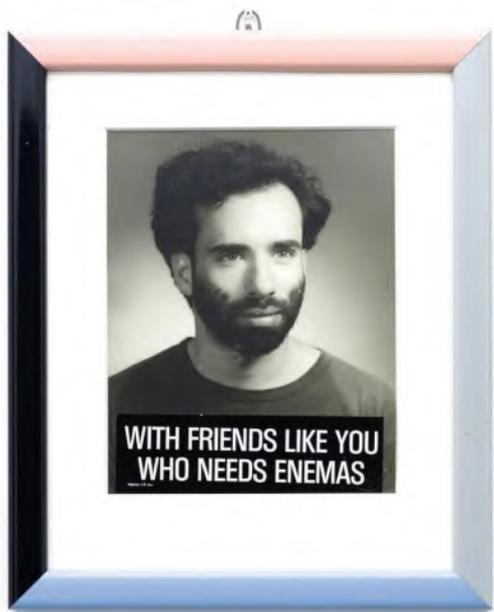
“Shark species are becoming increasingly endangered due to their fins being considered a delicacy in some cultures, and because they are misunderstood by others,” Mariani says. “The funds raised will go toward the foundation’s shark research and protection program in the Galapagos. When you’re doing something like this, you can’t just do a marathon.



I wanted to do something with a bigger impact.”

You can follow Mariani’s journey on Instagram @mayhemmariani. To donate, visit [donate.icfdn.org/npo/dario-supporting-cdf-shark-research-and-protection](http://donate.icfdn.org/npo/dario-supporting-cdf-shark-research-and-protection). For more about DEFINE, visit [DEFINEbody.com](http://DEFINEbody.com).

*Ryan Leach is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine. You can follow him on Instagram @ryan.michael.leach.*



# Savoring Candyass

Cary Leibowitz explores his gay, Jewish identities in CAMH exhibit.

By Andrew Edmonson

Photo by JKA Photography

**C**andyass is conquering the country, one state at a time.

He began his adventure on the West Coast in January 2017, debuting Cary Leibowitz: The Museum Show in San Francisco at the Contemporary Jewish Museum. In February 2018, he barnstormed to the East Coast, setting up that comprehensive career survey and solo museum exhibition in Philadelphia at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania. In March 2018, he unveiled his latest provocation, *I need to grow up and be taken seriously said the clown at the urinal, in lower Manhattan at Invisible Exports*.

In May, he launched his Lone Star offense by bringing *The Museum Show* to the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (CAMH), where it is on view through August 26.

"I consider Cary Leibowitz to be one of the most influential conceptualists on the planet," says CAMH director Bill Arning, who has closely followed the artist's work for three decades. "Every time he shows his work, young artists are filled with the possibilities of new ways of making works."

"Candyass is an urban legend in the art world," says Anastasia James, the curator of *The Museum Show*. "Everyone in New York knows who Candyass and Cary Leibowitz is."

With Candy Land colors, wry camp humor, and a healthy dose of kitsch, the New York-based artist has explored his gay and Jewish identities in a series of text-based works for the last three decades. While his work seduces

the viewer with its pop-art insouciance, it also plumbs the depths of darker emotions: the pain of growing up as a gay kid, bullied by others and targeted for being Jewish.

Writing in the *New York Times*, art critic Martha Schwendener observed of his work, "Mr. Leibowitz plays sleight of hand with art, history, and identity, suggesting that you use whatever materials are at hand, from self-deprecation to cheap ceramics. He describes himself as a 'loser'—and yet he's a gallery-represented artist with a second career in managing art auction houses. In this context, marginality and power are complicated. In true borscht-belt fashion, Mr. Leibowitz wickedly turns the tables, advising that when current politics and the odds are stacked against you,

you should make fun of the whole thing."

Leibowitz was born in New York City in 1963, and became fascinated by architecture at an early age. At 12, he wrote to stars he idolized, requesting headshots. He was blessed when Liberace, Angela Lansbury, and Judy Garland responded to his entreaties with autographed photos, which he treated like religious icons. (Forty years later, these same treasured photos made it into his retrospective at the CAMH.)

"There's always been a self-consciousness about being a Jewish kid growing up in the Connecticut suburbs," he remembers of his childhood.

One of his works on view at CAMH bluntly evokes the pain of that era:

FUCKED-UP  
JUNIOR  
HIGH  
SCHOOL  
GAY-BOY

"The miserableness of being 13 didn't get purged until I was 40," he recalled of that time.

In the early 1980s, he enrolled at the Pratt Institute in New York to study architecture, before changing focus and transferring to the Fashion Institute of Technology. Ultimately, he fled the big city for the University of Kansas at Lawrence, completing a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1987. "I had been a New Yorker all my life, and wanted to go someplace I hadn't been before," he told *Artnet*. "The Midwest seemed exotic." →





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**"I do think some of my art  
embodies a certain kind  
of gay sensibility, even if  
it is the sensibility of an  
eight-year-old and hard to  
define. Maybe it's camp."**

—Cary Leibowitz, aka Candyass

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After college, he moved to Boston and secured a gig at a picture-framing shop. In the early 1990s, his star began to rise in the art world as he landed solo exhibitions in New York, Paris, and Germany. In 1992, he was even invited to decorate the windows at Barney's on 17th Street in New York City.

"Generationally, when he came to the fore, it was a moment when identity politics were a new thing," Arning recalls. "His incredible humor, with the creation of Candyass, is one of the most fecund aspects of the work of the last few decades."

"The gay community at the time was upset with me for having this very narcissistic, depressive forum," Leibowitz recalls. "There was much more of a focus on Gran Fury, [the AIDS activist artist collective that was a part of] ACT UP. I don't think that I was part of the group. I've always been afraid of being part of a group."

Along the way, he won fans in high places, including the actress Fran Drescher, who is featured in a lively interview with Leibowitz in the catalogue accompanying the CAMH exhibition.

"I do think some of my art embodies a certain kind of gay sensibility, even if it is the

sensibility of an eight-year-old and hard to define," he told *Art in America* in 1994. "Maybe it's camp."

He also embraces kitsch. In fact, it led to the creation of his *Portrait of an 18th Century Lesbian Couple* series.

"I always shop in dollar stores and flea markets," he observed of the genesis of a series of ceramic figures that he came upon during a shopping spree.

"I suddenly realized that the figures were made by one person. They looked like same-sex couples rather than man and woman. I started writing on them as a series of 18th-century multiples." He has produced other multiples: buttons, mugs, pennants, and even pink-and-blue Candyass-branded "sissy footballs," available for purchase in the CAMH gift shop.

"I use color out of the [paint] can," he observes. "I try not to mix it. I buy four or five colors a year. I don't use too many dramatic colors at the same time. I don't want to be suckered in. I will use red, but sometimes I feel that it's a very seductive color."

Two years ago, he married Simon Lince, his partner for eighteen years. In his day job, Leibowitz serves as worldwide co-head of editions at the British auction house Phillips, where he prices art for auction. "Because I have this respectable, well-paid career, I don't need my art-making to support me," he told *Artnet.com* in April. "It gives me the freedom to keep making art the way that I want to make it."

*Andrew Edmonson has written about the arts for the Houston Chronicle, OUTSMART, the Houston Voice, and Houston Ballet News.*

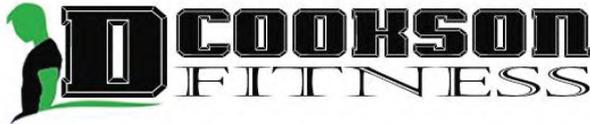


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**“I sang ‘Halo’ by Beyoncé, and that is when I felt like I had a vocal range and capacity and greatness. I felt like I pulled everybody into the song, including the judges. I thought, ‘I might just win this.’”**

*—Jasmine Branch*



# Wind Beneath Her Wings

Pride SuperStar winner JassyB credits her partner with reviving her singing career.

By Don Maines

Photos by Dalton DeHart

Louisiana's loss is Houston's gain, as this year's Pride SuperStar is Shreveport's own Jasmine Branch, whose stage name is "JassyB."

Branch moved to Baytown in March, just a few weeks before auditions to field 12 finalists for the 2018 Pride SuperStar competition at Rich's, where Branch was crowned the winner on June 14.

She arrived here on the wings of love.

"My partner brought me here," Branch explains. "Throughout the competition, she pushed me. She motivated me. She was my support system."

At the competition's grand finale, each of the three finalists sang two songs. Branch performed "Masterpiece" by Jessie J and "Can't Give Up Now" by the gospel duo Mary Mary's 2000. When Elise Zamora was announced as second runner-up, that left Branch standing with Mark Winburn.

Branch held both competitors in high esteem. "Elise is so genuine. She is very sweet and very caring. She made sure everybody was doing okay. Mark Winburn, wow! When I first heard him, I thought, 'You can sing like that?' He was my duet partner for duets week. We sang Sam Smith's 'Stay with Me.'"

In all seven weeks of competition, contestants had to master challenging themes, explains judge Jeremy Fain, a Houston relocation specialist, secretary of Pride Houston, Inc., and a former college music professor. Other judges in the *American Idol*-style competition were Michael Walsh and Ernie Manouse.

The performers began the competition by introducing themselves in song. Branch, for example, chose "Scars to Your Beautiful" by Alessia Cara.

"You should know you're beautiful just the way you are," Branch sang. "And you don't have to change a thing; the world could change its heart."

Caressing those lyrics, Branch thought of her father, who was murdered by two strangers in a senseless act three years ago in San Diego. "I'm just like him," she says.

Her father's murder, along with her stepmother's death from liver cancer eight months prior, "humbled me," says Branch. "It taught me to never take anything for granted again."

Branch, now 29, was living in Chicago with a partner who was both mentally and physically abusive. She returned a year or so ago to Shreveport, where she was her high school's go-to girl for singing the national anthem.

"Football games, ring-ding ceremonies, ROTC ceremonies: any time they needed someone to sing the national anthem, it was always me," she says. "I sang at many weddings and funerals. You can ask anybody there about me, and they will say, 'She's the girl that sings.'"

Branch was "emotionally bruised" following her breakup when she began corresponding

on Facebook with Jay Bergeron, a Baytown native who works in the area's chemical plants. "I hated myself. I didn't pursue singing; I didn't pursue anything. Jay helped build back my self-esteem."

Three times during their yearlong courtship on Facebook, Branch visited Bergeron in Baytown. The more they got to know each other, the more alike they seemed to be.

"We eat the same things. We are both kidless. We are identical," says Branch, who currently works as a Kroger cashier in Baytown. However, her sights are now set on a singing career.

During the competition's divas week, Branch says, "I sang 'Halo' by Beyoncé, and that is when I felt like I had a vocal range and capacity and greatness. I felt like I pulled everybody into the song, including the judges. I thought, 'I might just win this.'"

Branch planned to reprise "Halo" at last month's Houston Pride Festival that was held downtown in Hermann Square. That opportunity to showcase her talent is a prize she won in the Pride SuperStar competition, along with \$1,000, recording time, and a seat at the front end of Houston's ruby-anniversary Pride parade.

This month, Branch will jet to Dallas in hopes of winning an opportunity to compete on *The Voice*, the Emmy Award-winning singing competition on NBC. She hopes to mirror the success of Christina Wells, the 2016 Pride SuperStar, who recently won a standing ovation from the audience and all four judges on NBC's *America's Got Talent*.

"I love that girl," Branch says of the guest judge at this year's competition. "She really built up my confidence by showing that you can be good enough, even if you're not the prettiest, skinniest person ever."

*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*



## Power of Love

Jasmine Branch (l) says she was "emotionally bruised" following a breakup when she began corresponding with her partner, Jay Bergeron, on Facebook. "I hated myself. I didn't pursue singing; I didn't pursue anything. Jay helped build back my self-esteem."

**“[Pride SuperStar]  
ignited in me a  
creative desire to  
perform and make  
videos and become  
an actual artist  
who people want  
to go see.”**

*—Christina Wells*



# Still Shining

## 2016 Pride SuperStar Christina Wells wows judges on 'America's Got Talent.'

By Don Maines

**M**ore than 11 million TV viewers saw openly gay Houston singer Christina Wells get a standing ovation and a thumbs-up from all four celebrity judges on the June 5 episode of NBC's *America's Got Talent*.

"Now *that* girl can sing," said head judge Simon Cowell.

"We felt your soul," judge Howie Mandel told Wells.

So when will Wells' next round of competition be televised? It's a heavily guarded secret that even local fans of Houston's 2016 Pride SuperStar winner can't uncover.

"We don't have the schedule yet for when the next rounds will air," an NBC publicist teased *OUTSMART*. "What you can do is tell your readers to continue to tune in every Tuesday at 7 on NBC!"

While loose lips won't sink the ship coming in for Wells, last year's season 13 of *AGT* took about four months of audition rounds, quarter-finals and semifinals to air before concluding with viewers voting to award \$1 million and a Las Vegas performing contract to pre-teen ventriloquist Darci Lynne Farmer of Oklahoma City. The season 13 finale is scheduled for sometime in September.

When *OUTSMART* interviewed Wells last month by phone (with an NBC publicist listening in), she was sitting on cloud nine following the June 5 *AGT* viewing party at Spanky's Pizza in her hometown of Pasadena.

Her friends and family watched on big TV screens as Wells opened up to viewers

about how, as a teenager auditioning for a show at AstroWorld, she was rejected for being overweight.

The truth hurt, she said. "I wish they would have said I couldn't sing. Right? Like, 'You can't sing.' Then at least I could have been like, 'Okay, that's your opinion.' But I am fat. Like, I am. It's not an opinion. It confirmed my greatest insecurities. 'You're fat. It's not going to happen. It's time to go get a real job.' So I stopped singing."



### **SuperStar Mom**

Christina Wells, shown with her two sons, told *America's Got Talent* judge Simon Cowell that she wanted to "show my boys that nothing should prevent you from making your dreams come true."

On *AGT*, Wells belted out "I Know Where I've Been," a song the biracial singer had performed as Motormouth Maybelle in a 2015 production of *Hairspray* at Art Park Players in Deer Park.

That show was the catalyst for Wells entering the multi-week 2016 Pride SuperStar competition in Montrose.

The Pride Month competition "changed my life," Wells says. "It ignited in me a creative desire to perform and make videos and become an actual artist who people want to go see."

Wells capped off the Pride SuperStar competition by singing "I Am Changing" from the Broadway musical *Dreamgirls*.

In November and December of 2016, Wells portrayed Charilee Chess, "a gospel-singing, psychic manicurist" in *The Honky Tonk Angels Holiday Spectacular* at Stages Repertory Theatre.

More recently, she has launched a solo career on social media, sang live at Hamburger Mary's, and formed her own group, the Christina Wells Band.

Offstage, Wells is a single mother of two teenage sons, and she works as a registered nurse.

In an advance press clip from *AGT*, Cowell asked Wells, "What is the ultimate dream?"

"For me to show my boys that nothing should prevent you from making your dreams come true," she responded.

*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*

# Something *Fierce*

Houston's Janet-Fierce Andrews is crowned Miss Gay USofA.

By Don Maines

Photo by TiosPhotography.com

A transgender woman who moved to Houston four years ago to make a fresh start has been crowned the new Miss Gay USofA.

"I stayed on a friend's couch. It was the only option I had," says Janet-Fierce Andrews, who swept a field of 34 contestants at the national pageant held in Dallas May 20–25. "It's a long story, but I left my hometown of San Antonio with one suitcase and one bag. I had to sink or swim."

Needless to say, Andrews swam.

"Janet worked really, really hard," says Craig Henderson, the promoter for Miss Gay Texas USofA, the state preliminary that Andrews won last August at Rich's in Houston. At each pageant, Andrews dazzled the judges in expensive gowns and talent costumes, and she thrilled audiences with elaborate production numbers.

"There is just a connection or sense of purpose when I'm onstage," Andrews says. "Also, I'm in control. I am a control freak. I make my own mixes. I know exactly what I want to do."

Growing up in the Alamo City, Andrews was the center of attention in her family, which she never sees anymore. "When I was five years old, at family get-togethers I would always be dancing. I entertained at any opportunity at school or at church, which was the only extracurricular activity I had. I went to private schools, and I was homeschooled. For a while, I took ballet. I was very, very, very sheltered."

Her first exposure to female impersonation came in 2001, when her coworkers at a telemarketing call center in San Antonio took Andrews to a gay bar, The Saint, for a show starring the late Erica Andrews and Shady

Lady. "One of my first thoughts was, 'I can probably do that. I might can do it better.' The little kid in me imagined how I would look like Janet Jackson, because of her high cheekbones, and because I loved her music from the first time I heard it."

Andrews returned to The Saint on a Tuesday night and entered the club's weekly talent competition. "It was supposed to be a one-time thing, but the owner, Raphael Velasco, invited me to come back two nights later," she says. "On Thursday night, I met Erica. I went from being in a dressing room with amateurs to meeting this group of trans women who were tall and beautiful. It was a huge culture shock."

About 11 years older than Janet-Fierce Andrews, Erica Andrews was "already an established star" whose early career in pageantry included crowns as Miss Gay Texas USofA 1997 and Miss Gay USofA 1999.

"Erica became my drag mother. More importantly, she became my adoptive mother," says Andrews, who began transitioning in her 20s. "Erica took me under her wing; she took me into her home. She co-signed for me on an apartment. She would feed and clothe me. It was Erica who tipped me off to Sasha Fierce," the woke diva/alter ego of Beyoncé on her thumping 2008 *I Am . . . Sasha Fierce* album.

"She said I had to learn that choreography, which was very challenging. It became a global phenomenon," Andrews adds, explaining that her escalating fan base insisted that she add "Fierce" to her stage name.

When Erica Andrews died suddenly in 2013 due to complications from a lung infection, her drag daughter was devastated and heartbroken.

"Your drag family is really important," Andrews says. "My parents didn't accept me anymore, and I don't speak with or have any relations with them. I found myself thinking, 'This isn't the outcome I wanted,' and I decided to throw myself into my career full force by moving to Houston.

"I travel so much that people still ask me, 'You live in Houston?'" she adds. "But I left San Antonio in July of 2014."

Andrews works regularly at Hamburger Mary's in Montrose, sometimes sharing the stage with former Miss Gay USofA winners Tommie Ross, Lawanda Jackson, Lauren Taylor, or Raquell Lord. "These are some of the most seasoned, professional, kind cast members, so every show is a joy. Having them to learn from is so amazing to me."

Layla Larue of San Antonio, who was Miss Gay USofA 2004, performed with Andrews in her talent number at this year's Miss Gay USofA finals.

"The common denominator in all of these women is not just the titles or that they are outstanding entertainers," Andrews says. "They all have really good business sense. They are divas onstage, but offstage they are incredibly approachable. As a pageant girl, I try to be as humble as I possibly can, because it feels like yesterday that I was that little kid who was so in awe. I want to give off that same positive energy that [says], 'If I can do this, anybody can.'"

Andrews will crown her Miss Gay Texas USofA successor during a pageant with about 40 contestants at Rich's in August.

*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*





**“The sound is going to be huge. He was a brilliant musician, and the concert covers all eras of George Michael’s career.”**  
—*Juan Pablo Di Pace*

# By George!

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## Juan Pablo Di Pace, Houston Symphony team for George Michael tribute concert.

By Don Maines

**J**uan Pablo Di Pace singing “I Want Your Sex” with a full orchestra in Jones Hall? Where else but the Houston Symphony’s Music of George Michael concert on July 14?

“The sound is going to be huge,” says Di Pace, the gorgeous Argentina-born performer who played a dashing scoundrel (the self-made millionaire Nicholas Trevino) on the 2014 season of TNT’s reboot of *Dallas*.

Currently, on the Netflix series *Fuller House*, he’s Kimmy’s ex-husband, a race-car driver named Fernando Hernandez-Guerrero-Fernandez-Guerrero.

“You’re the most wonderful man!” says Kimmy. “In the whole wide world!” Fernando agrees.

Offscreen, Di Pace is a longtime fan of the late George Michael, who captured his attention as a child when he heard hits from the duo Wham!, which was Michael’s early-1980s partnership with Andrew Ridgeley. “He was a brilliant musician, and the concert covers all the eras of George Michael’s career.”

In 1987, Michael released his first solo album, *Faith*, to the delight of the Houston Symphony’s current director of popular programming, Lesley Sabol. However, listening to the bad boy of pop landed the young girl in hot water with her parents.

“I remember very distinctly going to a girls’ sleepover one weekend when ‘I Want Your Sex’ was playing nonstop on the radio,” Sabol says. “I was in about second grade. We didn’t know what the song meant. I went home singing it, and I got in big trouble.”

Michael famously encountered his own

trouble, with the law, when an undercover cop arrested him for “engaging in a lewd act” at a park restroom in Beverly Hills. Di Pace cheers how Michael handled the public vilification that followed.

“He actually took the piss out of it with a middle finger to the press,” says Di Pace, especially with his satirical video to the song “Outside.” It was so biting that the police officer who entrapped Michael sued him for the emotional distress allegedly stemming from Michael “mocking” him in the video. The multi-million-dollar lawsuit was ultimately dropped.

Di Pace says, “George Michael responded like the champion that he was. It really is a very private thing, and nobody should be forced to reveal his secrets to the world. Putting him in jail for something so dumb, it actually freed him to admit something he had been cagey about. He lived in a time when he obviously needed to be closeted in a certain way so that music executives could sell his music. The British press, in particular, was very tough on him.”

Di Pace lived for 20 years in Europe, performing in both England and Spain, before moving to Los Angeles five years ago. While portraying Danny Zuko in *Grease* in Italy and Tony Manero in a musical stage production of *Saturday Night Fever* in Madrid, he says, “It was always my dream to work in the States.”

His Hollywood credits include portraying Petros opposite Meryl Streep in 2008’s movie *Mamma Mia! The Movie*, and Jesus in the 2015 TV miniseries *A.D. The Bible Continues*, which was produced for NBC by *Touched by an Angel*

star Roma Downey and her husband.

“Acting has always been important to me, along with my music,” Di Pace says.

About his own sexual orientation, Di Pace says, “I am a free spirit.”

Sabol, who isn’t gay, says “The Music of George Michael” concert will appeal to a variety of fans—all of whom should be impressed that the Houston Symphony’s classically trained musicians can perform pop music as well. “They are putting their full hearts into it, and it is fun to see them let loose.

“His music, to me, is timeless,” she says. “Any generation can grasp his lyrics. [Our audience will be encouraged] to let their hair down, sing, and get up and dance.”

About George Michael’s sudden death on Christmas Day 2016, Sabol compares it to Anthony Bourdain’s suicide by hanging on June 8. “I have a list of artists I would love to work with, and both of them were in my top five. I had to cross their names off my list.”

It wasn’t until after Michael’s death, which was attributed to natural causes, that Sabol learned about the singer’s extensive philanthropy, which he performed in secret. “I was so thrilled to learn about his generosity, [and so were] my friends in the LGBTQ community.”

**What:** The Music of George Michael

**When:** 7:30 p.m. on July 14

**Where:** Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana Street

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*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*

# Far from the Tree

Judicial candidate Beau Miller is the political opposite of his tea-party father.

By Marene Gustin

**F**rom band geek to the judicial bench (hopefully), Beau Miller marches to his own drum—and it has proven to be an effective formula. Miller, a Democrat, is hoping his success will continue in November when he faces Republican incumbent Debra Ibarra Mayfield for judge of Harris County’s 190th Civil District Court.

“As an attorney, I know too many judges let their political views effect their jobs,” Miller says. “I want to make sure everyone has fair access to the courts.”

Miller hasn’t always been enamored of the law. He is a self-described band geek who played the trumpet while moving around the Southeast with his military family. He says his Navy-brat upbringing taught him to be outgoing, as he was constantly having to make new friends in school. But band was one way he could fit in easily. His music also earned him a scholarship to Louisiana State University. After graduating in 1995, he taught high-school music in Austin for three years before deciding to enroll in law school at the University of Texas.

“I grew up in a military, conservative, religious family,” Miller says. “Austin was an eye-opening experience. I wanted to expand my horizons. I wanted to learn more. Law school teaches you how to think. If you think about it, law and music both focus on practice and performance.”

After law school, he clerked for U.S. district judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa in the Rio



**Positive Pioneer**

If he wins in November, Beau Miller would be among the first openly HIV-positive elected officials in Texas.

Grande Valley before joining Bean & Bean LLP in Houston.

“They were my mentors,” he says of attorneys Frank and Melanie Bean. “I got my first trial experience there.”

He currently works at the Spagnoletti & Co. law firm in Houston, and his passion for music and arts education led him to become the

founder of Live Consortium, a nonprofit that fights AIDS/HIV stigma.

“I was diagnosed with HIV in 2006,” Miller says. “I was afraid to tell anybody.” It took him three years to tell his conservative parents about his status. But that was nothing compared to the conversation he would have with his father in 2015.

**Editor’s Note:** This article is part of “Out for Change in 2018,” a monthly series on LGBTQ candidates in Texas, who were the subject of our January issue. For more, visit [tinyurl.com/outforchange2018](http://tinyurl.com/outforchange2018).

Rick Miller, a retired Navy aviator, is the Texas state representative for District 26 in Fort Bend County. A tea-party Republican, he filed a bill in the Texas Legislature three years ago to repeal local ordinances prohibiting LG-BTQ discrimination. The story made national headlines when the younger Miller went to Austin to confront his father about the issue. The bill died, but it would be some time before father and son would speak again.

“It’s good now,” Miller says of their relationship. “We love each other unconditionally. Our politics are just different. We both learned a lot from that experience.”

But his father wasn’t exactly supportive when he told him he was running as a Democrat for judge.

“Harris County has been red for 20-plus years. Dad looked at that trend and tried to discourage me,” Miller says. But one person who was very supportive of Miller’s run is his husband, Patrick Summers, the artistic and music director of Houston Grand Opera.

“We met through a mutual friend,” Miller recalls. “It was a modern romance—phone calls and texts as he was conducting in San Francisco.” Several years later, when Summers was working in London, Miller flew over to surprise him with a marriage proposal on Waterloo Bridge. Summers said yes, and the happy couple was married last year at Snake River Ranch in Wyoming. They live in an apartment overlooking Hermann Park with their two King Charles Spaniels, George and Henry.

“Patrick could not be more supportive of the campaign,” Miller says. “He’s very interested in the process.”

As a first-time candidate, Miller credits the LGBTQ community with helping him navigate the political landscape. He attended a four-day training session for candidates put on by the LGBTQ Victory Fund, now led by former Houston mayor Annise Parker.

However, Miller isn’t overly worried about his sexuality or HIV status coming up in the campaign.

“I get along with Mayfield, so I don’t see her making this an issue,” he says. Republican governor Greg Abbott appointed Mayfield to the 190th Civil District Court in September 2017, after Patricia Kerrigan stepped down. Abbott had previously appointed Mayfield to the 165th Civil District Court, a seat she lost in the 2016 general election.

“Besides, that didn’t work out too well for



**“As an attorney, I know too many judges let their political views effect their jobs. I want to make sure everyone has fair access to the courts.”**

**—Beau Miller**

the Republicans with Kim Ogg,” Miller adds. He’s referring to the incumbent Republican district attorney Devon Anderson, who referenced his Democratic opponent Ogg’s sexual orientation during the 2016 campaign. Ogg won, becoming the nation’s highest-ranking openly LGBTQ law-enforcement official.

That win, for a Democratic lesbian in Harris County, bodes well for 2018 and Miller.

“I think we have a fantastic shot at winning,” Miller says. “I wouldn’t be running if I didn’t think we could win this.”

Miller is among five openly LGBTQ candidates seeking Harris County judicial seats who will be on the ballot in November.

*Marene Gustin is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*

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# Gay Since the Gilded Age

Historian says Galveston was Texas' earliest queer mecca.

By **Brandon Wolf**



**Pleasure Island** ©

Dwayne Jones, below, director of the Galveston Historical Foundation, is working on a book about the city's thriving LGBTQ scene in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

**I**f there was any city in Texas where gay life could thrive at the turn of the century, it was Galveston.

"Galveston was the largest city in Texas until almost 1900," says Dwayne Jones, the openly gay executive director of the Galveston Historical Foundation. "It was a port city, with a steady influx of various cultures. It had connections to the port cities of New Orleans and New York, and the kind of services available to gays in those cities eventually became available in Galveston—for example, the Turkish and Russian baths so popular in New York City."

Jones is collecting information about Galveston gay life in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and plans to publish a book about the subject.

"For the last 15 years, there has been an increased interest in regional and local LGBTQ history," Jones says.

He says Galveston had all the right ele-



COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

ments for gay life: transient sailors, vacation resorts, gambling, red-light districts, and the all-male worlds of Fort Crockett and even the local YMCA.

"Galveston was a very educated city, too," Jones says. It was also a famous resort town. The carefree vacation atmosphere, with its "what happens here, stays here" attitude, made it easier for gay life to exist discreetly.

Mulling this over, Jones says, "It's safe to assume that a gay community thrived here at the turn of the century, however quiet it was. So I've been poking around to find things from that era."

Jones gives an interesting example: "In 1887, there was a newspaper headline "QUEER FINDING AT THE HOSPITAL." At that time, Galveston's St. Mary's Infirmary was the largest hospital in Texas.

The news story tells of a black woman who died en route to the hospital in a wagon. →



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### GAY SINCE THE GILDED AGE

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Her name was listed as Tabitha Young in the city directory. During the inquest examination, doctors discovered she had deformed genitalia. They assumed she was intersex, and thus found her body to be “of medical interest.”

Jones began to research Young and found that she lived in an alley house and worked as a domestic. At one point, Young was arrested for assaulting another woman, and the newspaper described her as “being of mammoth proportions.” She died penniless and was buried in a pauper’s grave. The official death certificate, Jones discovered, listed her as “male.” He speculates that her deformed genitalia may have been a result of self-mutilation.

“Gender conflict goes far back in our culture,” Jones says, adding that if it hadn’t been for the medical team at the hospital, the story would have gone untold.

Jones also notes a late-1920s master’s thesis from the University of Texas in Austin. The author writes about the red-light district in Galveston and tells of one madam who identified as lesbian.

The thesis also speaks of male “social deviants” who cruised such areas as Trinity Church, the courthouse, and City Hall. Black gay men were believed to frequent railroad depots and beach hotels.

“Gay men were aware of each other and met for sex or entertainment. There were certain bars and restaurants where they met,” Jones says. Jones compares Galveston at the turn of the century to the New York City gay life that George Chauncey describes in great detail in his acclaimed 1994 book, *Gay New York*.

“At the turn of the century, gay people in Galveston were able to get what they wanted. The socially astute knew where to do it and how to do it,” Jones says.

Men from smaller Texas cities were not so fortunate. “[A Texas] district appeals court was in Galveston, and received many lower-court cases from outside Galveston. I’ve found numerous cases where middle-class white men from rural cities were tried for sodomy.

“Some Galveston men of wealth were lifelong bachelors, and often took extended trips to New York City. I still haven’t identified any prominent men of the time as gay,” Jones says. But he adds that they had no reason to assert their sexual orientation, and chose to live discreet lives.

Jones notes that as his research continues, “I’m much more astute than I was before. I’ve begun to see things pop up, and realize I may be exploring yet another hidden element of gay life back then.”

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

# Leading by Example

UTMB among three Houston-area facilities to receive perfect scores on LGBTQ healthcare.

By Kim Hogstrom



**Allies in Medicine** ©

Students in UTMB's new Allies in Medicine group, shown last year in Austin, are working to advance inclusion by providing extracurricular training programs on gender, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, romantic orientation, and other topics on the LGBTQ spectrum.

**T**he University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston was among three Houston-area healthcare facilities recognized as “leaders” by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) on its 2018 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI).

A “leader” designation is the highest available from HRC; these are facilities that received perfect scores of 100 on the 11th annual HEI, which was released in March and measures LGBTQ equality in patient care, employee needs, and community outreach policies and practices.

The other local LGBTQ healthcare “leaders” were the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical

Center and Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast. Only five other institutions in Texas were recognized as leaders by HRC this year.

“We at UTMB are so proud to be an HEI leader, we want to shout it from the rooftops,” UTMB project manager Ruth Finkelstein says. “UTMB has an active diversity council dedicated to harnessing the broad spectrum of ideas, experiences, and voices that characterize our community. The council is very important to us because inclusion is one of our core values.

“UTMB has always been ahead of the curve,” Finkelstein adds. “For some time, we were recognized as the leader in transgender

medicine nationally. There is a physician here, Dr. Walter Meyer, who started helping people transition in 1976—years before others recognized the need.”

In 2015, UTMB leaders gave the diversity council the HEI guidelines and set out to further excel, according to Finkelstein. In 2016, UTMB received its first “leader” designation. In 2017, UTMB received a “top performer” designation with a score of 95.

“We have discovered that the guidelines provide an outstanding tool for performing a gap analysis in LGBTQ care,” Finkelstein says.

Inclusion is so much a part of the fabric of UTMB that its medical students recently →

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## LEADING BY EXAMPLE

continued from previous page

initiated a vital new group called Allies in Medicine. The students are working to advance inclusion by providing extracurricular training programs on topics such as gender, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, romantic orientation, and other topics on the LGBTQ spectrum.

UTMB also has a dedicated LGBTQ patient navigator, Amy Barrera-Kovach, as well as an online LGBTQ resource center.

UTMB, Houston's VA Medical Center, and Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast were among 418 institutions nationwide recognized as leaders by HRC.

"[The VA hospital's] goal is to be a welcoming and inclusive healthcare environment for all veterans who served," says Dr. Deleene Menefee, the hospital's LGBTQ veteran-care coordinator. "Attaining HRC's leadership status means that we are striving toward best practices and reducing health disparities of any sort."

Rochelle Tafolla, vice president of communications and marketing for Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, says her organization has been "fully inclusive" for years.

"I can't remember when we weren't," Tafolla says. "I am proud to say it is a part of our mission, and always has been. We are delighted to be among those who were first in this important step forward."

According to HRC, the HEI has taken on added significance in the last few years, given the attacks on LGBTQ healthcare from the Trump-Pence administration.

"These top-scoring facilities are not only establishing policies that save LGBTQ lives, but they have become advocates in the public square," HRC president Chad Griffin said.

Houston's Lou Weaver, a transgender man, has served on HRC's board of directors for the last four years.

"The HRC's Healthcare Equality Index is a valuable tool to help healthcare facilities improve," says Weaver, who also serves as transgender-programs coordinator for Equality Texas. "But more importantly, it is invaluable for LGBTQ patients who want to find the places that provide the best care. The HEI offers an excellent measure of where we should spend our healthcare dollars."

With so many medical institutions in Houston, is Weaver surprised that there are so few excelling in LGBTQ care?

"I can nearly walk from my backyard into the Texas Medical Center," Weaver says. "Yet, when I needed to get my top surgery, I had to go to San Antonio. That's another reason we must support the HEI leaders—to encourage others to rise up to the same level."

*Kim Hogstrom is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*



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# Camping Out

This Side of the Rainbow offers safety and support to LGBTQ youth.

By Sarah Gish

**D**re Guthrie, a 19-year-old college student, says being transgender can be “exhausting.”

“Changing your identity is hard, and trying to figure out who you are is hard,” Guthrie says.

Assigned female at birth, Guthrie says he always felt different. After learning about trans people online, he explored gender fluidity, including periods of identifying as lesbian and intersex.

Guthrie, who is from Cypress, decided to begin transitioning in eighth grade. It was a slow process that started with changing his hairstyle and requesting to be called by his chosen name. He started ninth grade wearing a boys’ uniform and was the only trans person in his class.

Behind Guthrie’s transition was a lot of pain. While his family was relatively supportive, life was far more difficult away from home. There was no Gay Student Alliance at his school, despite his repeated attempts over four years to start one.

Just going to the bathroom was a chore: Guthrie had to sneak into the boys’ bathroom during class time, hoping there wouldn’t be anyone in there (if there was, he would leave). A straight-A student, Guthrie’s honor-roll notices were ripped off his locker on a regular basis. He was demeaned behind his back by the school’s jocks and was invited to only one party in his four years of high school.

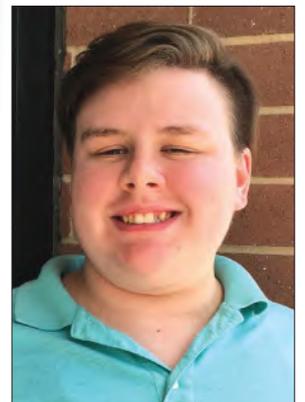
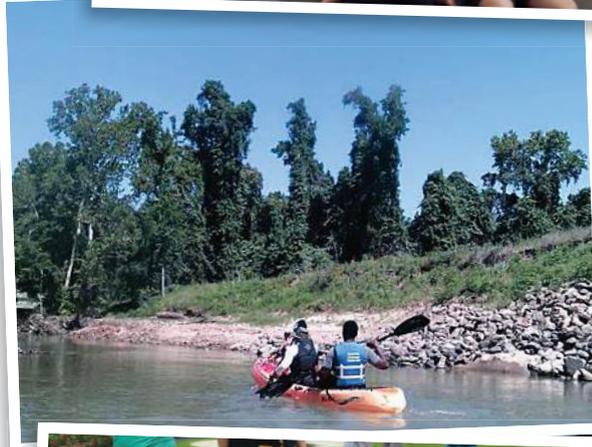
Tired of feeling isolated and alone, Guthrie began self-harming by severely burning his arms, partly because of self-loathing and partly because of anxiety and clinical depression. It was at Houston’s summer camp for LGBTQ teens, called This Side of the Rainbow, that Guthrie finally found comfort and acceptance, both as a camper and a counselor.

“I think people sometimes see these

campers as a place where you talk about being gay all day,” Guthrie says. “The camp has a gay nucleus, but I liked it because it was more about doing activities where you learn self-acceptance and about being in community with like-minded people who you don’t have

to explain yourself to. It’s about how you feel on the inside. Rainbow camp helped me find peace within myself.”

This Side of the Rainbow was created in 2016 by mental-health professionals Michael DeVoll, Michael Lesher, and Jeanie Low. →



**Transforming Lives**

Dre Guthrie (far right), a 19-year-old transgender man, says he felt isolated as a teen—and even began harming himself by severely burning his arms—before he found comfort and acceptance at This Side of the Rainbow.

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## CAMPING OUT

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They work with LGBTQ teens, and saw a need for therapeutic resources for these children and their families. The goal was to help vulnerable youth feel better about themselves in a society that so often shuns them.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, four in ten LGBTQ teens say the community in which they live is not accepting of them, and LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to be physically abused by their peers. They feel more accepted online than in person, and their identity choice affects all areas of their lives, including schoolwork and friendships.

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 40 percent of respondents had attempted suicide in their lifetime—nearly nine times the attempted suicide rate in the U.S. population at large. Of those trans respondents who attempted suicide, 34 percent said they did so before age 14; 39 percent between the age of 14 and 17; and 20 percent between the age of 18 and 24.

The camp founders saw a need to combat all of this, and especially to create a physical community for the kids while also helping their parents understand them. “I never imagined when I was a teen that I would have any sense of community with folks who were like me,” De Voll says, adding that creating a safe space and a supportive community was paramount.

The camp consists of a variety of fun and creative therapeutic activities such as visual-art projects (ceramics, photography, book making, and drawing), meditation, drum circles, psychodrama, outdoor activities, yoga, walking a labyrinth, and much more. Some highlights of this year’s camp, set for July 16–21, include a kayaking trip on Buffalo Bayou and a panel discussion with college-age LGBTQ individuals. The name of the camp comes from the idea that while it’s nice to think about how lovely things might be “somewhere over the rainbow,” the founders are committed to helping make things better for LGBTQ youth on this side of the rainbow.

This Side of the Rainbow camp is for students in grades nine through twelve. The camp served eight LGBTQ youth in each of its first two years, but hopes to have 15–20 this year. The final day of the camp is designed for both the youth and their families.

The cost of the camp is \$595, but scholarships are available, and no one will be turned away.

To donate to the camp’s scholarship fund, visit [TinyURL.com/RainbowCamp2018](http://TinyURL.com/RainbowCamp2018). To register for the camp, visit [ThisSideOfTheRainbow.org](http://ThisSideOfTheRainbow.org).

*Sarah Gish is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART magazine and the creator of DayCampsHouston.com.*



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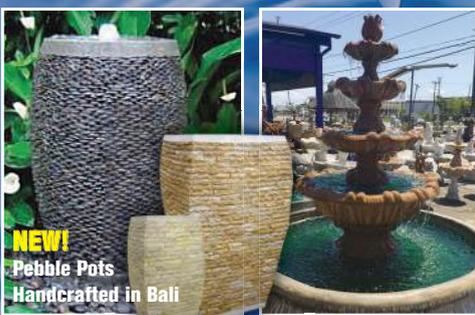
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# Keeping It Reel

QFest brings diverse array of LGBTQ films to Houston.

By Laura Gillespie



## Featured Attractions

Films at QFest this year will include *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, top, about a young lesbian forced into a conversion camp after being caught kissing another girl; *Them*, about a teen struggling with gender identity; and *The Heiresses*, about two wealthy Paraguayan women who suddenly face new challenges in their senior years when one is thrown in debtor's prison.

Beginning July 26, the 22nd annual QFest will bring slices of LGBTQ life from Paraguay, Chicago, and Montana to the Bayou City.

*The Heiresses*, *Them*, and *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* will be among 20 features, short films, documentaries, and music videos shown during the festival, Houston's cinematic celebration of all things queer from around the world.

"[Qfest has] always been a staple in the summer—finding not only queer narratives, but queer filmmakers with queer interests, and [exploring] what queer cinema can be," says Michael Robinson, QFest's short-films curator.

QFest films are chosen from a pool of director-submitted works. There is no submission fee, which results in a large number of applicants—roughly 1,500 this year.

*Them* is an intimate look at the life of a

teen struggling with gender-identity issues, while *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, based on a best-selling young-adult novel, tells the story of a young lesbian who is forced into a conversion camp after being caught kissing another girl. *The Heiresses* is about two wealthy Paraguayan women who suddenly face new challenges in their senior years when one is thrown in debtor's prison.

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## KEEPING IT REEL

continued from page 69

good amount of representation of [the entire LGBTQ community, so it will] play well in Houston,” Robinson says. “It’s not just [films about] gay men; it’s a wide variety.”

Part of the goal of QFest is to challenge the community, Robinson says. One of this year’s strangest films is a documentary about a necrophile.

“The filmmaker is a queer woman who’s talking about her interest in different types of love—especially taboo types,” he says. “[She relates] so much to being ostracized growing up, [and she thought] ‘What are the other audiences that are not given much of a platform?’”

QFest was started by four straight women and a lesbian in 1996, in conjunction with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH); DiverseWorks; Rice Media Center; and Landmark Theaters. QFest co-founder Marian Luntz, curator of film and video at MFAH, still works with the festival.

“We all [felt] that Houston, as a major city, deserved to have a festival focused on GLBT cinema and themes,” Luntz says. “It was an initiative of women working together. It was not a surprise that women get things done.”

Luntz has worked in the Houston film scene since the mid-1980s. DiverseWorks created a season of gay and lesbian films, which led to conversations about a festival.

“This is how [the founders] felt they could give back to the gay community,” says Kristian Salinas, QFest’s artistic director.

QFest became a nonprofit, and its small budget comes from “the generosity of supporters,” Robinson says. The volunteer organizers run the festival out of their homes.

For the first time, this year’s QFest will feature a juried competition, including a grand prize “Freedom of Vision Award” and honors for Best Director, Best Actress, Best Actor, and Best Documentary.

Luntz says juried awards offer prestige to directors, which helps them make more films. The Houston Film Critics Society will also bestow its own award for Best Feature at QFest, and there will be an Audience Prize.

The jurors represent a mix of ages and sexualities, and come from a variety of film and art backgrounds. Salinas, a member of the MFAH film committee who has served on juries in the past, says the QFest judges will have “very tough choices ahead of them.”

As of this writing, the full QFest schedule had not been finalized, but the festival will kick off on July 26 with *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* at 7:30 p.m. *The Heiresses* is scheduled for July 27 at 7 p.m., and *Them* will screen on July 28 at 5:30 p.m.

For updated info, visit [Q-fest.com](http://Q-fest.com).

Laura Gillespie is a frequent contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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# The 'Phantom' Strikes Again

Bisexual actress Katrina Kemp previews 'Love Never Dies' at the Hobby Center.

By Jenny Block

Photo by Joan Marcus



## Getting Her Big Break

Katrina Kemp, center, had never sung for an audition, let alone for a paid performance, when she landed the role of Fleck in *Love Never Dies*. "I went from being the squirrel who sat in the basement until 4 a.m. to the puppet wrapped in bubble for a four-million-dollar show," she says.

**L**ove Never Dies is a dream come true for hardcore fans of *Phantom of the Opera*. Some say it's a dream for anyone who loves the magic of the theater—and the circus.

The *Phantom* sequel, which comes to the Hobby Center this month, is set in 1907, ten years after the phantom disappeared from the Paris Opera House. He lives in New York now, where Coney Island's amusement-park rides and freak shows fill his days and nights. Here, his music can soar—and his love for Christine Daaé has not died.

Daaé has become one of the most celebrated sopranos in the world. She travels from Paris to New York to perform, and the phantom sees this as his final chance to win back her love. So he lures her and her family to the bright and gleaming Coney Island to make his move.

The music is by Andrew Lloyd Webber, of course, and the show is based partly on Frederick Forsyth's book, *The Phantom of Manhattan*. Gardar Thor Cortes plays the phantom, Meghan Picerno portrays Christine Daaé, and Katrina Kemp, an intriguing young bisexual

actress, takes on the equally intriguing role of Fleck, one of the phantom's henchmen.

Kemp, 28, is also a little person and a self-proclaimed San Fernando Valley girl who is making her professional singing debut in *Love Never Dies*. She says she's always loved to perform because it feels incredibly natural. Her parents met via a theater group in California, and she has "always wanted to join in and entertain since birth."

At 19, Kemp landed a gig playing Chucky at Universal Studios in Hollywood. Her mom wouldn't let her work Universal's "Halloween Horror Nights" with her friends in high school, but after she graduated she stepped into that major horror role right out of the gate.

"It was a real challenge, creatively and stunt-wise," she says. "I was so afraid of anything horror my whole life. Working that job blasted all my fears."

Kemp says when she realized she could make a grown man cry, she knew she could do anything. "My best friend kept telling me, 'You can work there. I know you can.' He tricked me

into seeing my first horror movie, *The Hills Have Eyes*. I peed my pants and vomited."

From there, Kemp spent time touring with Miley Cyrus, and appeared on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, *Faking It*, and *Man Seeking Woman*. "Friends and family who have seen [*Love Never Dies*] would now say [this is my big] break," Kemp says. And it's a surprising one, given that she had never previously sung for an audition, let alone for a paid performance.

She recorded her *Love Never Dies* audition at the home studio of a friend's boyfriend. Then she "dressed as a Parisian clown whore and danced around the living room and lip-synced to my own song with all of these mini-candelabras and pianos my roommates had around." That was on April 11.

She didn't hear anything until June, when the show's producer's flew her to New York for a meeting. Naturally, she was working on other things by that time, and also considering being featured on *Little Women: LA*. Then everything changed. "I was doing transcriptions for reality TV and everyone was laid off. That same day, I got offered →

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## THE 'PHANTOM' STRIKES AGAIN

continued from previous page

*Love Never Dies*. I went from being the squirrel who sat in the basement until 4 a.m. to the puppet wrapped in bubble for a four-million-dollar show.”

Working in live theater has been great for Kemp, who says she prefers it to television. “Everyone is just themselves. TV is not as personal—it’s in and out so fast. [In theater], you have to find new things every day to make it magical. This job has made me work the hardest I ever have in my whole life. The production team was pumping me up like I was Kobe Bryant.”

Asked about the audience experience at *Love Never Dies*, Kemp says, “This show is for the mega, mega *Phantom* fans. It’s like a love letter from Andrew Lloyd Webber. You are going on a ride. You are not in control. We are in control. People have not had this experience with a little person in a show. I don’t think there’s been another character like this in the world.”

During the tour, Kemp says audience members have waited outside the stage door after the show just for the chance to meet her. “The fans are so overwhelmingly supportive and gentle and self-deprecating in their love for [the show]. For me, it’s like a reminder to keep doing it even on a hard day when it’s your eighth show of the week. Slap on some *Icy Hot* and let’s do this.” Kemp says she wants to give people the best possible experience, since it might be their first encounter with a little person.

As for her personal life, Kemp considers herself a late bloomer. She came out as bisexual when she was in her early 20s. “That basically explains to people that I can’t explain what it is about a person that makes me want to be with them. I always have a stronger emotional connection to women.” She says she hasn’t really come out publicly, per se. “It’s never been a thing. If anyone asked, I would tell the truth.”

Kemp is relishing every minute of her time in *Love Never Dies*. She is also anxiously awaiting the release of *The Filth*, a new series she stars in about “two delusional, queer creatives in L.A. who navigate their complicated love lives while attempting to maintain the only stable relationship they have: their friendship.”

As for the future, well, Kemp says that’s an easy one. “My dream is to star in *Kill Bill Vol. 3*.”

**What:** *Love Never Dies*

**When:** July 17–22

**Where:** The Hobby Center, 800 Bagby St.

**Tickets:** TheHobbyCenter.org

Jenny Block is a regular contributor to *OUTSMART* magazine.

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# Behind the ‘Cellar’ Door

Out actor Doug Atkins stars in the one-man comedy about Barbra Streisand and a gay employee.

By Don Maines



© **‘Happy Days Are Here Again’**

Houston’s Doug Atkins describes his affection for *Buyer and Cellar* as love at first sight. “The second I read it, I said to myself, ‘I am going to do this. It’s fate. I am going to do this piece.’”

In the one-man comedy *Buyer & Cellar*, Doug Atkins plays multiple roles—including Barbra Streisand, who marvels at the sheer number of people who are gay.

“God, there are so many of you,” she tells her employee, Alex More, in the July 14–August 12 production at Main Street Theater in Rice Village. “I know it’s supposed to be 10 percent of the population, but not in my life. Feels more like 70. Why do you think that is?”

“We have good taste,” Alex replies.

Throughout the 2013 off-Broadway hit by Jonathan Tollins, Atkins plays both sides of every conversation, whether Alex is speaking with Streisand, her brusque assistant Sharon, or Streisand’s husband, James Brolin. (“Everything about him just feels thick,” Alex tells the audience.)

Atkins also plays Alex’s boyfriend, Barry Rosenstock, whose parents, like Streisand, grew up in Brooklyn.

As Alex, Atkins narrates the fictional tale of how a struggling L.A. actor, recently fired from his job playing a costumed character at Disneyland, is hired to work in the storage basement of Streisand’s home in Malibu. His menial tasks include things such as steaming, feather-dusting, and applying a vinegar solution to clean the dress Streisand wore on Broadway when she sang “People” in *Funny Girl*.

“When I started this job, I was not that big of a Barbra queen,” Alex says. But even he is seduced by the chance to breathe the rarified air of the superstar’s home. Inside the gates of the estate, he says, “The leaves on the trees shimmered in the breeze like sequins on Liza Minnelli.”

Then, one day, “the Lady Herself” comes downstairs where Alex is working.

“She talked to me!” Alex says. “I wanted some connection. Isn’t that what all of us want?”

According to press material for the show, “It feels like real bonding in the basement, →

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BEHIND THE 'CELLAR' DOOR

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but will their connection ever make it upstairs in the real world? *Buyer & Cellar* is an outrageous comedy about the price of fame, the love-hate relationship between gay men and divas, and the oddest of odd jobs."

This will be the second time Atkins has played Alex, having starred in a production of *Buyer & Cellar* two years ago at Stage West Theatre in Fort Worth. *Ugly Betty's* Michael Urie originated the role off-Broadway.

"I am a blessed little guy," Atkins says.

The 28-year-old grew up in Allentown, Pennsylvania, getting his start in theater as a third-grade violinist for a musical. The next year, he dumped the violin in favor of acting onstage as Mr. Bundles in *Annie*.

In fifth grade, Atkins played the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*. More roles followed, including Rolf in *The Sound of Music*, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and his favorite, Eugene Morris Jerome, the narrator in Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

"I told my father, 'I know I will do [acting] forever,'" says Atkins, who came out to his parents at 16.

"It was in a fit of anger the night before my junior prom," he says, recalling how he objected to a proviso from his father. "I said, 'It's because I'm gay, isn't it?' He said, 'It's not because you're gay. It's because you're an asshole!' I was mouthing off. I was being a teenager."

The outburst paid off for Atkins. "It allowed me to live as the musical-theater nerd that I was. I could hit on guys. I could talk to gentlemen in a dating sense. It opened me up to being able to pursue my style of acting."

Atkins says he moved to Houston four years ago because of its theatrical opportunities.

At JR's he met his boyfriend, Charles, who moved here six years ago from Connecticut to work in the oil and gas sector. They have been a couple for two-and-a-half years, sharing their happiness with two miniature dachshunds.

The actor describes his affection for *Buyer & Cellar* as love at first sight. "The second I read it, I said to myself, 'I am going to do this. It's fate. I am going to do this piece.'"

Atkins is directed by out director Brandon Weinbrenner, who is the Alley Theatre's artistic associate.

**What:** *Buyer & Cellar*, performed by Doug Atkins

**When:** July 14–August 12 (with previews July 12 and 13)

**Where:** Main Street Theater-Rice Village

**Tickets:** MainStreetTheater.com

*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*

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**“There is a sense of freedom one gets from making things without the input of a client. I think people connect with that sense of freedom.”**

*—Hugo Perez*

# Fifty Shades of Gay

Urban Eats showcases work of Pride Portraits artist Hugo Perez.

By **Ryan M. Leach**

*Photo courtesy of the artist*

**G**ay Houston artist Hugo Perez will showcase 50 pieces at Urban Eats from July 2 through September 30. The exhibition will include a public reception on August 18.

This will not be the first time the community has had an opportunity to enjoy Perez's work. More than 3,000 people from all over the world have been photographed in front of the backdrop painted by Perez for Pride Portraits. Heights residents are also familiar with Perez's Pride Wall mural on the side of Jenni's Noodle House on East 20th Street.

Perez says the Urban Eats exhibition will offer something different and a bit more personal.

"I've been asked before to exhibit at restaurants, but I never felt it was the right space for my work," Perez says. "This time, it felt different. Not only is the establishment owned by partners Levi Rollins and Eric Munoz, members of the LGBTQ community, but they are committed to promoting local art. That resonates with me because I feel like Houston is full of undiscovered talent."

Rollins agrees. He invited Perez to exhibit at the restaurant in part based on the artist's ongoing commitment to the LGBTQ community. "Hugo's art is figurative, informative, and contemporary; he is inspirational," Rollins says. "Hugo's commitment to our community [goes beyond] his true gift of creativity; from his involvement in #BeVisible to Positive Exchange and Pride Portraits. I am excited to share his amazing work with our friends, family, and customers."



Perez was born in San Francisco, but moved to Houston as a child after his parents divorced. The Bay Area still provides him with a great deal of inspiration that can be seen in the work he produces today.

"As a kid, I still remember being in awe of all the brightly colored murals throughout the city," Perez says.

Perez earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the Art Institute of Houston, with a specialization in graphic design. After graduating he worked for an ad agency, but he even-

tually realized that he missed painting.

"I fell in love with the process of making work for myself," Perez says. "There is a sense of freedom one gets from making things without the input of a client. I think people connect with that sense of freedom."

The artist's work is inspired by day-to-day life. Perez says his influences include Francis Bacon, Marc Chagall, and David Hockney.

"My work is heavily textured and very expressive. To achieve this, I use a combination of acrylic paint and pastel sticks," he says. "This allows me to build layer upon layer much faster than oils. I prefer this medium because it lets me concentrate on the composition without the worry of slow drying times."

The Urban Eats installation ranges from small drawings on paper to large works on stretched canvas. "The installation will include some of my earlier pieces, but will also include new art that I am really excited to exhibit. The paintings have a surreal quality that pushes the boundaries of what is considered figurative art. The installation is like a retrospective of sorts—a timeline showing experimentation and growth."

**What:** Hugo Perez exhibit at Urban Eats

**Where:** Urban Eats, 3414 Washington Ave.

**When:** July 2 through September 30, with a public reception on August 18.

**More info:** HelloHugo.net, FeastUrbanEats.com

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



# Going Above and 'Beyond'

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Andy Bell talks  
Erasure's new album  
before Houston visit.

**By Gregg Shapiro**  
Photo by Doron Gild

Andy Bell (*left*)  
and Vince Clarke

**I**t's been 30 years since the release of Erasure's third album, *The Innocents*, when the duo of gay vocalist Andy Bell and synthesizer mastermind Vince Clarke (formerly of Depeche Mode and Yazoo) crossed over into mainstream success with songs such as "A Little Respect" and "Chains of Love." Of course, the gays (and the cool kids) had been dancing to songs like "Oh, L'Amour," "Who Needs Love Like That," "Victim of Love," and "Sometimes" for a couple of years by then. Since the release of *The Innocents*, Erasure has put out more than a dozen studio albums, and Bell has released a handful of solo efforts. An interesting musical experiment if ever there was one, Erasure's *World Beyond* (Mute) is a "classical reworking" of the 10 tracks from its 2017 *World Be Gone* disc. Given the subject matter of the album, the current chaotic political mood, the chamber-music setting backed by the Echo Collective is quite fitting. Songs such as "Be Careful What You Wish For!" "Oh What a World," "World Be Gone," "Take Me Out of Myself," and "Lousy Sum of Nothing," in particular, actually benefit from these new renditions. It's not all doom and gloom, as you can hear on "Love You to the Sky" and "Just a Little." Nevertheless, "Still It's Not Over," Erasure's queerest and most overtly political statement, is sure to have the greatest impact on LGBTQ listeners. I spoke with Andy Bell about the album before Erasure embarked on its U.S. tour, which will bring the duo to the Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land on August 4.

**Gregg Shapiro: When the 10 songs that appear on both *World Be Gone* and *World Beyond* were originally written, did they begin in electronic or acoustic arrangements?**

Andy Bell: They were written electronically. Vince had sent me the musical parts and chord arrangements. It was done over a period of six months. I was sitting on the songs for probably three months. I was hemming and hawing—I couldn't come up with any ideas. Once Vince and I got together, we had three writing sessions: one in London, one in Miami, and one in New York. Each time we met up, all of a sudden my confidence came. I was singing into the mic. It was almost like I needed Vince there as my muse for the songs. [laughs] He's kind of a confidence booster. When I first heard the music, I thought, "Oh wow, the music is so good, it doesn't really need any vocals." [laughs] It sounded like a film soundtrack. It took me a while for the songs to settle in. I think I get a bit

nervous when I first hear the music. I kind of don't know what to do. You have to leave it for a while. You can listen to it, but the trick is not to listen to it too much. Otherwise, you can kind of OD on the music.

**You don't want to overthink it.**  
Yes!

**With the exception of switching the placement of the songs "Love You to the Sky" and "Oh What a World," both albums are essentially mirror images in terms of the track listings. Why were those songs switched in the order?**

The running order worked itself out on the electronic version. It was almost like a DJ list. It's not like you're telling a narrative all the way through. Each one finds its own place. When I redid the vocals for the orchestral version, I felt like "Oh What a World" was so strong. I think it had been a bit overlooked on the first version. Rather than overlooking it again, we should put it first so people notice it.

**Can you please say something about what was involved in the decision process to re-record the songs on *World Be Gone* with the Echo Collective and transform them into what they are on *World Beyond*?**

I think it was an idea that was sparked by Daniel [Miller, of Mute Records] and Vince having dinner together. I think it was because I had been working on this "Torsten" project, which was two theatrical albums—*Torsten the Bareback Saint* and *Torsten the Beautiful Libertine*, and there's a third part to come. It was a thing of letting me explore my vocals more. When you're singing with electronic instruments, they tend to soak up a lot of the nuances in your vocals. I feel like I have to add backing vocals, just to emphasize the choruses and things like that on the electronic versions. On the orchestral versions, I think it's much more about the character of the voice. It was a bit of an experiment to maybe bring the "Torsten" project closer to Erasure. →



Erasure frontman Andy Bell, shown above and at left with Vince Clarke, says the death of his longtime partner, and the struggle of the AIDS crisis, influenced songs on the band's new album, *World Beyond*.

**Still He Rises**

*continued from previous page*

You sing about “sweet summer loving” in the song of the same name, and “summer romance” in the song “Love You to the Sky.” Would it be fair to say that summer is your favorite season?

Well, it would be fair to say that my new husband, Stephen Moss, is from Florida. I associate him with the sunshine. He’s got such a beaming smile. He lights up the room when he comes in. It’s about that, and it’s a bit of a salvation song. Stephen was instrumental in helping me through [the loss of my longtime partner] Paul [Hickey]. It’s still kind of tough. It feels like you’ve lost your home, in some ways. Even though Stephen and I are building a new life together, when you’ve been with someone so long, it leaves such a gaping



Vince Clarke

ANDY STURMEY

hole. You’re not trying to fill it with the other person—you have to find a new way.

To my ears, “Still It’s Not Over” is one of the most overtly queer and political songs Erasure has ever recorded, and the arrangement really brings out the emotional power of the song.

It’s about my love affair with San Francisco and New York City. Being out from the very beginning of my career, going to San Francisco was very hard. We were embraced by the city, by the LGBT community.

At the same time, you felt the ghosts of all the people who had gone before us, especially in the U.S., who had fought to get HIV medicines and

such. It’s about those polar opposites. I remember coming across an ACT UP demonstration in New York City. It was very exciting, but at the same time quite scary [laughs] because of all the things tied in with it. Especially being HIV-positive myself, you kind of felt a bit like a wild animal. It’s difficult to explain it. I think the song was a nod to that, and a thank-you to all of the people who have helped us. I know it’s tough—the times we’ve been bashed to the ground, physically and emotionally, and had to get up again, pick up our stuff, and start from scratch.

**And still we rise.**

Yes! It’s never over. You think there’s going to be a day when you can take a sigh of relief, but it’s never going to be over, ever.

**What:** Erasure: World Be Gone

**When:** August 4

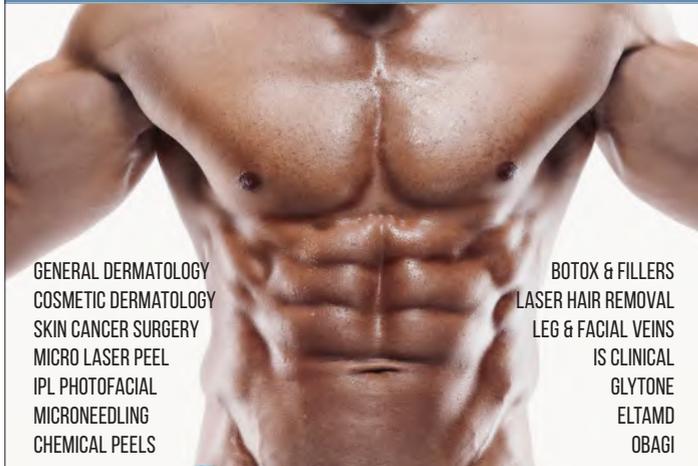
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**Tickets:** [Tinyurl.com/erasuretour](http://Tinyurl.com/erasuretour)

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

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Rick Dickson

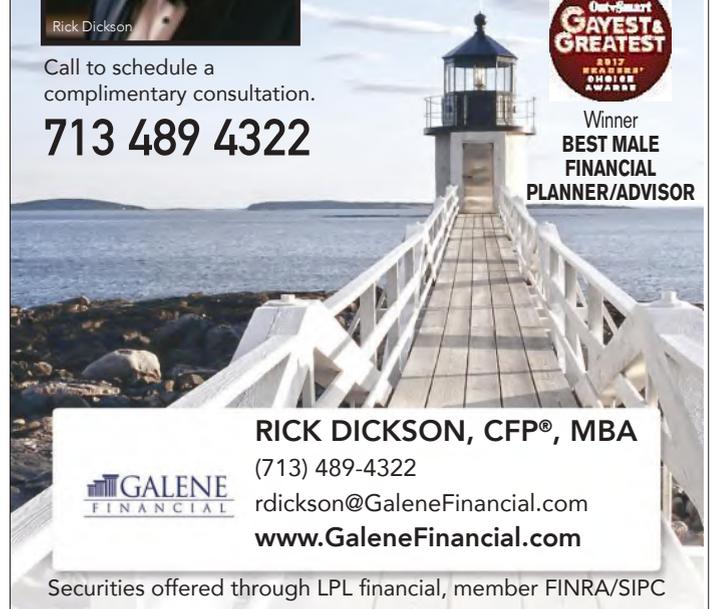
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# Putting the *SPICE* in *ADVICE*

Bianca Del Rio on her new book.

By Gregg Shapiro  
Photo by Magnus Hastings

**W**hen I first heard that Bianca Del Rio had written a book, in true Bianca Del Rio fashion I thought, “Wrote a book? I didn’t even know she could read a book!” Cue the laughs.

As one of the greatest success stories of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, Del Rio consistently sells out concert venues for her live shows. She has also graced the silver screen in *Hurricane Bianca* (and its new sequel, *Hurricane Bianca: From Russia with Hate*, available online at [hurricanebianca.com](http://hurricanebianca.com)), and she now has a new book of advice, *Blame It on Bianca Del Rio* (Dey Street, 2018). I spoke with Bianca about the book, “insightful prying,” and *Drag Race*.

**Gregg Shapiro: As someone who just published an advice book, what’s the best advice you ever received?**

Bianca Del Rio: It was really good advice, but I didn’t take it: “Don’t do drag. It’s a trap.” I found out later that they were right. *[laughs]*

**What’s the worst advice you ever received?**

“Do drag!” *[laughs]* No, advice is an odd thing because you always think you know better yourself. In fairness, I think the best advice I truly did get was, “Always laugh. Laugh at yourself. Don’t take yourself too seriously, and keep moving.” I think for me, in particular, when I was much younger I would get hung up on things for a long period of time. Now it’s like, “F--k it! You’ll live. Get over it! Have a drink. Life’s too short!” In the end, it’s that it’s not that serious. Or it shouldn’t be that serious.

**What percentage of advice-column questions do you think are legit, versus the ones just made up by writers?**

I grew up without having social media. I’m old enough to remember that world. It’s quite fascinating to me how people [will] put so much of their business out in the real world—whether it’s Facebook or Instagram. I’m obviously doing this book as a joke to give the worst advice possible, because if you’re seeking advice from a 42-year-old drag queen, something’s wrong with you. But I’m fascinated by the stuff people share. I don’t know if they’re doing it [to get] attention, or if it’s actually real. It’s fascinating to see how people’s minds work. People have no shame at all—none, I must say.

**Can you please say something about how your humor transitions from the stage, where most people know you, to the page?**

I think writing is a lot harder, as I realized when I was doing the book. There’s also an audio version. When I started to read it aloud for the recording *[laughs]* I started to get nervous about a couple of things. I thought, “This comes across differently than my stage show.” I think you can get away with murder on stage, in the moment, [through your] delivery. When you have something in print and someone is reading it for the first time, it may come across a little differently. There are some things I fixed in the end, where I thought maybe it wouldn’t translate unless you got the audiobook. My first reaction was, “Whoa, this seems too far or a bit much.” Usually, for me, it’s no holds barred. →





**“I’m obviously doing this book as a joke to give the worst advice possible, because if you’re seeking advice from a 42-year-old drag queen, something’s wrong with you.”**

—Bianca Del Rio

*continued from previous page*

Everything is funny [on stage], but in print, it's a little serious. But then with other things I was like, "Go with it! You asked a ridiculous question, you deserve a ridiculous answer!" [*laughs*]

**You mention "insightful prying" in the author's note. In what ways can that be a useful tool?**

I think sometimes the answer is usually there, and people know in their hearts what the truth is. Of course, what I'm doing here is comedy. In fairness, there is a lot of truth in comedy. Usually the funniest stuff is what you can really relate to. A lot of people are attention whores and they put things out there that they know are wrong. Or they have an idea of what the truth is, but they fail to recognize it. I thought that if I could give it to them in some "inspirational" way, [*laughs*] it might actually help them—if it's a real question. You never really know. When I posted stuff saying that I was doing a book of this nature and "send me your questions," we had several duplicates. Usually drag-related. Everything from "What is RuPaul like?" to "What color is your eye makeup?" That kind of shit. Some of them, I was like, "This is insane! The answer is right there in your question!" But I had to point it out for them because they're probably not smart enough to figure it out themselves.

**One of the more colorful and amusing parts of the book is the wonderful photos. How did you come up with some of the concepts?**

Basically, the publisher said they would also like to include photos. But we live in a social-media world and I post a lot of photos. Back in my day, [after you shot] a photo you had to have it printed and you had to wait a week! This was a different process—I had to create new content for the book. I had to make myself appear a lot more established than I am. And also push the joke home, make it fun. Over four days, we did a photo shoot here in Los Angeles with a friend of mine who is a New York photographer. We hit the road thinking, "What are the most ridiculous things we could do?" That is where we came up with the captions and dialogue. I truly didn't want to do a vanity project and

write a book about myself. I thought this would be a good way to slide in my sense of humor by making jokes about myself as well.

**Do you think you might have another book in you? Perhaps a novel?**

I am not opposed to it. Friends of mine who

returning] was like going back to high school. All the feels and smells were the same. When you film on the soundstage, there's one side where the contestants are during filming. The other side is where the staff and Ru and guest judges stay. It was interesting to be on the other side of the wall. I didn't realize how fabulous

it was until Audra McDonald was in the dressing room next door. That made up for it. My little gay heart got excited and I realized that this is some legitimate shit!

**What's the single best piece of advice you would offer to this season's queens?**

Oh! In seriousness, the best advice would be to be as honest and as real as you are, even though we're wearing wigs. Just be yourself. I think the audience, especially with a reality show, gravitates to people who are real. Knowing the pattern of *Drag Race* in particular, now that they're in their tenth season, some of the most notable characters were people who were true to themselves. It's very easy to get lost in the madness. It's easy to get lost with cameras around you. To think, "I need to be this. I need to be that." Shockingly, the audience can usually see through it.

**In addition to your first book hitting bookstore shelves, your new movie *Hurricane Bianca: From Russia with Hate* is opening in theaters. What can you tell the readers about it?**

It's our second feature, which I'm excited about. The first film actually dealt with gay rights and a schoolteacher who was fired for being gay—which is completely legal in America in 29 states, which is insane! He loses his job and then gets it back. In this second film, my nemesis is the brilliant Rachel Dratch. We pick up where we left off—I ruined her life, and now she's determined to ruin mine. And I end up in Russia! So, it's topical and fun. We have some great cameos and supporting players—the fabulous Janeane Garofalo, Cheyenne Jackson, and Wanda Sykes. We were lucky to gather a bevy of talented people. I'm really looking forward to it!

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



JOVANNI JIMENEZ/FEDRAZA

have read the book have looked at me and said, "What is wrong with you? You are absolutely insane!" Which I think is great. I guess that works for books. No one has ever said, "Stephen King's a normal person." My publisher, HarperCollins, has been extremely supportive. [We've even talked about] future projects, and I'm like, "Sure, sure, sure! But let me get through this week first." [*laughs*] When I have a minute to collect my thoughts, I would totally do it. Why not?

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the experience of your recent return as a guest on *RuPaul's Drag Race*?**

I would say it was a 10 for me. I originally competed on the show almost five years ago, [so

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# Love in Transition

George and Barbara Dugan tied the knot, repeatedly, after helping each other come out.

## Dancing with Pride

George and Barbara Dugan, who were not out when they met, have become activists since their wedding last year. "We show people that being transgender doesn't have to be an obstacle in marriage," Barbara says.

George and Barbara Dugan first connected online in February 2014, but Barbara stood George up three times before they finally met in person 10 months later. “I always felt bad about it,” Barbara says. “He was a really nice guy, but my friends warned me that recently divorced guys were bad news.”

About a month before George sent Barbara a message on OkCupid, he came out as gay to his wife of 30 years, and they divorced. After the split, George, 60, began exploring dating websites. Within the first year of his divorce, he started identifying as pansexual, meaning that he is attracted to people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

Barbara, 49, was dealing with depression during her 10-month friendship with George. She was a closeted trans woman who didn't think she could ever come out. When she decided to take George up on one of his invitations, they met for the first time in front of the Academy Sports & Outdoors store in Spring Branch.

Prior to their meeting, George had no idea that Barbara was not out. As George waited in the store's parking lot, Barbara approached wearing masculine clothing and a baseball cap. She had just gotten off work and decided to stay in her uniform.

The two ate dinner at Pappadeaux Seafood, where George, who says he's typically extremely confident, was so nervous that he forgot his credit card at the restaurant. After dinner, they shared their first kiss and set a date for the following weekend.

On their second date, Barbara dressed in feminine clothing in public for the first time. George says he was blown away when he picked her up at Vanity's Boutique in the Heights after she had a professional makeover. They had dinner at Theo's in Montrose, watched a drag show at JR's Bar & Grill, and rode around the Galleria area looking at Christmas lights until almost 3 a.m.

“Every time we hit a stoplight, we were kissing and holding hands,” George recalls. “We've been inseparable since then.”

In January 2015, Barbara, who had just a handful of online friends who knew that she was trans, came out to her parents and told them about George. They accepted Barbara's news and welcomed her boyfriend with open arms.

“My relationship with George inspired me to come out,” Barbara says. “I was pretty

good at hiding, but I got tired of living a double life and hiding who I was from my family and people at work.”

After she came out to her parents, Barbara, a maintenance technician of 10 years at National Oilwell Varco, came out at work, prompting the multinational oil-and-gas supply firm to adopt trans-inclusive policies.

George, a technical sales manager at CETCO Drilling Products Group, was rejected by some of his close family members after he came out as pansexual. However, to his surprise, his father was not one of them. When he told his father that Barbara was not cisgender, his father's response was, “If you're happy, that's all that matters.”

“I told my dad that I had never been happier in my life,” George says. “He told me that I was lucky to have found Barbara. I couldn't believe that this was the same Archie Bunker-type man who raised me.”

George and Barbara say their favorite activity is taking road trips together. In their first year of dating, they put 5,600 miles on George's car. On their first vacation together, the couple drove from Houston to San Francisco with stops in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada.

### On their second date, Barbara dressed in feminine clothing in public for the first time. George says he was blown away.

In 2015, George and Barbara went to San Antonio and double-dated with George's close friend Brandi and her girlfriend, Amy. Brandi had taken George to a support group after his ex-wife publicly outed him and bashed him online. While on a carriage ride along the River Walk, Amy proposed to Brandi. When their proposal concluded, George got down on one knee and gave Barbara a promise ring.

“The promise ring was our official engagement,” George says. “Immediately following it, we went to Zales and started picking out wedding rings.”

Plans for their October 2017 wedding were pushed up because Barbara had some issues with her documentation. She moved to the U.S. from Monterrey, Mexico, with her family when she was 16. Her parents and younger brothers and sisters became U.S. citizens, but she fell through the cracks of immigration law and could not become a citizen.

“I was losing sleep,” George says. “There

was a possibility that Barbara could be detained. She would have lost her properties, a job that she loves, and I would have lost her. I couldn't bear the thought of that.”

A judge told the couple that Barbara could live in the U.S. legally if they got married sooner than they originally planned. On March 11, 2017, George and Barbara eloped to a Harris County Justice of the Peace courthouse, where they were married.

They had their full wedding ceremony and reception for friends and family on April 30 at the Pavillion on Gessner, where their clothing and decorations matched the colors on the trans flag. The minister who married George and Barbara wore a rainbow stole to represent both of their sexualities and gender identities. Their first dance was to Cyndi Lauper's “True Colors.”

For their honeymoon, the couple purchased an RV and went to Wyoming's Pride celebration in June 2017, and then watched the total eclipse of the sun as it passed over Wyoming.

This year Barbara got her name and gender marker changed, so the justice of the peace had to marry the couple for the third time.

George, who was born and raised in New Iberia, Louisiana, currently resides in Denton, Texas. During the week, he travels out of state for work, and on weekends he comes to Houston where Barbara lives and works. George admits that a long-distance marriage is tough, but they plan on buying a house together as soon as possible.

The two have become activists in Houston's LGBTQ community as members of Organización Latina de Trans en Texas (OLT'T). Since joining, George and Barbara have traveled to Austin to testify against anti-trans and anti-LGBTQ bills. At Houston Pride 2017, the couple carried OLT'T's banner during the parade.

Barbara now has a work permit and has undergone some gender-confirmation surgeries. Barbara says that aside from marrying George, transitioning was the best decision she ever made.

“We show people that being transgender doesn't have to be an obstacle in marriage,” Barbara says. “We're living proof that couples like us can do it. We're both out and proud of each other.”

*Lourdes Zavaleta is a regular contributor to OUTFSMART magazine.*

# Vive L'Amour

Houstonians  
Jeremy LeBlanc  
and Max Jones  
had a vintage  
New Orleans  
celebration.

By Ryan M. Leach

Photos by  
iNVision  
Photography



## Jazzy Affair

Jeremy LeBlanc (l) and Max Jones marched through the French Quarter with a brass band and their wedding party, then tied the knot at the historic Columns Hotel in the Garden District.

It was quite the scene on Bourbon Street when Jeremy LeBlanc and Max Jones marched through the French Quarter with a brass band and their entire wedding party, waving white handkerchiefs with the couple's names embroidered on them.

A few guests even bobbed their umbrellas up and down to the Cajun music. The whole French Quarter seemed to take notice, with many shooting videos and photos. Some bystanders even joined the parade for a few blocks, until it ended in the Pat O'Brien's courtyard where the band entertained the crowd for a good 30 minutes. There was much to celebrate in New Orleans that day.

"The entire weekend was a dream, and turned out to be better than I could ever have imagined," Jones says. "We spent the whole weekend with everyone together, starting with a brunch and second-line parade on Saturday, and then



the wedding on Sunday. It was a really wonderful time, with all of our worlds colliding. It was humbling and very special."

The historic Columns Hotel in the Garden District was the venue for the ceremony and reception, with plenty of Old New Orleans charm seeping into every minute of the festivities. The wedding party was dressed to the nines as they enjoyed a proper cocktail hour before the ceremony.

After the couple was hitched, everyone meandered onto the hotel's famous front porch to sip champagne, enjoy the perfect weather, and watch the grooms have their photos taken as the streetcars whizzed by. The light from the setting sun filtered through the live oaks and Mardi Gras beads that have found permanent homes hanging from the overhead streetcar wires. It couldn't have been more "New Orleans" if it tried.

Friends of LeBlanc and Jones are well aware of the couple's affinity for all things Louisiana. Gumbo is a staple in their Houston Heights home, as is a constant debate among their large group of Louisiana ex-pat friends about how to make the perfect roux. Each Monday night, the group gets together to eat, gossip, and celebrate—and if LeBlanc and Jones are playing host, you can bet the dinner will have some Cajun flare.

The 35-year-old LeBlanc is from New Iberia, Louisiana, population 30,000, which is situated on the Gulf coast midway between Houston and New Orleans. After being raised in the rich Cajun culture common to small Louisiana towns, he left to attend the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He found himself in Houston after graduating, and he now serves as regional underwriting manager at AIG.

Jones, 30, was raised in Houston. He recently graduated from the University of Houston and serves as the online content coordinator for David Weekley Homes. Jones is a certified yoga instructor as well as a professionally trained dancer who has traveled the world performing, choreographing, and training others.

It may seem unusual that LeBlanc, who assesses risk for a living, and Jones, a dancer, would pair up. But it is their devotion to each other and their shared goals for a family that

keep the relationship strong.

"We like to constantly remind each other of how much [our relationship] means," Jones says. "We will spontaneously get each other cards, leave random notes, bring home flow-ers, or even set up a date night to try out a new restaurant."

"We do romantic things for each other all of the time," LeBlanc adds. "For me, it's the little things that are most romantic."

The two met in person for the first time after chatting online for a few weeks. Their first date was at a local wine bar, where they sat for two-and-a-half hours getting to know each other. Most of that time was spent laughing at the list of questions Jones had written down in case they found themselves with nothing to talk about.

"Max seemed genuine and caring," LeBlanc says. "He was engaging, had a nice laugh—and a cute butt, too. He made it easy to want to get to know him more."

"I never felt like I was trying to get to know someone new because I felt so comfortable and content around him," Jones says.

Their second date soon followed, and the couple started seeing each other almost every day. Before they knew it, they had decided to move in together in 2014. In 2015, their Heights home fell victim to the Memorial Day floods. It was a challenging event, but they cleaned up and made it through together. They

have since sold that home and are currently building a new house in the Heights where they soon hope to start a family.

It is through the challenging times that couples often realize their true strength. When LeBlanc found out his father had cancer, he leaned on Jones for support and came to a revelation. "My dad found out he had cancer while Max was working in New York," LeBlanc says. "It was painful being apart from each other, but I felt comfort in knowing how much he cared for me. I think that was a defining moment."

"Jeremy has inspired me and pushed me to reach goals that I never thought I could," Jones says. "He wants what's best for me, always, and is a constant reminder of what a dedicated partner is. We hope to have a family some day, and he is the perfect role model for a child. So I wouldn't say there was one moment in time when I realized I wanted to marry him—I just always knew!"

Through thick and thin (both in life and in their quest to make the perfect roux), the couple has looked to each other for support. On their honeymoon in Costa Rica shortly after their April wedding, they relaxed and reflected on the beautiful celebration with their supportive friends and family.

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

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## ▼ Sarah Huckabee and Kathy Griffin



Last night I was told by the owner of Red Hen in Lexington, VA to leave because I work for @POTUS and I politely left. Her actions say far more about her than about me. I always do my best to treat people, including those I disagree with, respectfully and will continue to do so

7:53 AM - 23 Jun 2018



Kathy Griffin @kathygriffin

Poor Sarah F kabee has to deal with jokes about her lying and smokey eye and not being able to eat at a local restaurant while children are held in internment camps without their parents and transgender troops have to live in fear.

## ▼ Brian Sims (first openly gay elected representative in Pennsylvania history)

*Re: welcoming vice president Mike Pence to Philadelphia.*



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## ◀ 'Pose'

(TV Guide, 6.25.18, Damian Holbrook)

**Cheers to Pose for being a ball. FX's groundbreaking soap about the vibrant denizens of '80s Manhattan is a subversive fashionista dream draped around so-relevant social commentary about the LGBTQ community's refusal to walk away from any challenge to their basic human rights.**

Ⓢ Strike a 'Pose'

Indya Moore (l-r), Ryan Jamaal Swain, and Mj Rodriguez star in the FX series Pose.

## Quil Lemons ▶

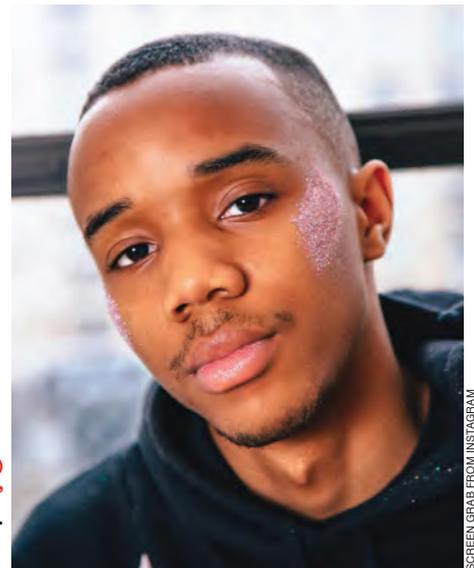
(The Huffington Post, 6.2.18, Taryn Finley)

*The 20-year-old photographer made waves in 2017 when he released "Glitter Boy," a photo series challenging the norms of masculinity that society places on black men.*

It's really interesting being at that intersection of queerness and blackness, because for a while I felt like those things couldn't exist. Especially publicly. And then if it did exist, it was like I don't even know that many black queer people from like early on. Only person I can think of: Frank Ocean. That was literally it. I think that's why I made a series in homage to him because that's the one person that I had to, like, feel like some type of solace with, and I'm just happy that now we have the Internet and so many people [are] putting out their narratives.

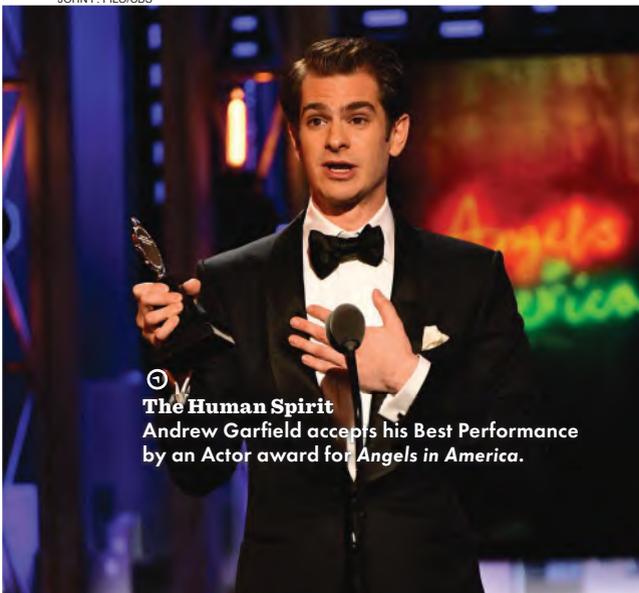
Ⓢ 'Glitter Boy'

An homage to Frank Ocean.



SCREEN GRAB FROM INSTAGRAM

JOHN P. FILO/CBS



Ⓢ **The Human Spirit**  
Andrew Garfield accepts his Best Performance by an Actor award for *Angels in America*.

## ◀ Andrew Garfield

(72nd Annual Tony Awards, 6.10.18)

At a moment in time where maybe the most important thing we remember right now is the sanctity of the human spirit, it is the profound privilege of my life to play Prior Walter in *Angels in America*, because he represents the purest spirit of humanity and especially that of the LGBTQ community. It is a spirit that says no to oppression, it is a spirit that says no to bigotry, no to shame, no to exclusion. It is a spirit that says we are all made perfectly and we all belong.

So, I dedicate this award to the countless LGBTQ people who have fought and died to protect that spirit, to protect that message, for the right to live and love as we are created to . . .

We are all sacred and we all belong, so let's just bake a cake for everyone who wants a cake to be baked. Thank you so much.



# 'Change' of Heart

An interview with The B-52s' Cindy Wilson.



## 📍 Cindy Goes Solo

The B-52s' Cindy Wilson (center) is surrounded by her *Change* bandmates (l-r): Suny Lyons, Lemuel Hayes, Marie Davon, and Ryan Monahan. Wilson, however, is now on tour with The B-52s, who perform in Houston on July 15 at the Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land. *INSET: Wilson's *Change* album cover.*

KEITH TRIGACI

With the release of her debut solo disc, *Change* (Kill Rock Stars), Cindy Wilson is now the third member of the legendary B-52s to record a solo album. Be forewarned: you shouldn't expect to hear the Cindy Wilson you remember from B-52s songs such as "Give Me Back My Man," "Girl from Ipanema Goes to Greenland," "Legal Tender," or "Love Shack," on *Change*. Closer in mood to the subtle soul drama of "Ain't It a Shame" (from 1986's underrated B-52s platter *Bouncing Off the Satellites*), the songs on *Change* introduce us to a more soft-spoken Wilson who sings these 10 songs (two of which are covers) in a breathy belt. The disc opens with "People Are Asking," a potential activist anthem if there ever was one. Wilson, who has an appreciation

for a good beat, invites us to "dance this mess around" again on "No One Can Tell You," "Stand Back Time," "Mystic," "Memory," and the title track. Wilson takes an unexpected experimental rock turn on "Brother," her interpretation of a song by the Athens, Georgia, band Oh-OK. Just back from her first solo concert tour, Wilson took a few minutes to answer some questions in a phone interview.

**Gregg Shapiro: Your full-length solo debut album, *Change*, was released in late 2017. Why was this the right time for you to put out a solo record?**



Cindy Wilson: I had the time to do it. The B-52s were laying off for a while. It was a stressful time, and I started to get together with a friend of mine to do some music. We went into Suny Lyon's studio to kick it around and experiment and see what kind of direction we wanted to go in. It took about three and a half years, off and on, recording and everything. Then we put the songs together with a band and went down to Austin, Texas. We met Portia [Sabin] from [the record label] Kill Rock Stars, and she helped us get on the right path. It's been amazing, really.

***Change* is an accurate name for the**

*continued on page 101*

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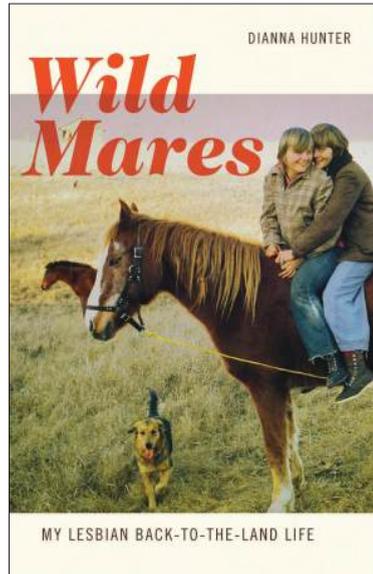
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# ‘Wild Mares’

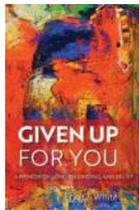
A lesbian’s back-to-the-land life.



📖 **Wild Mares: My Lesbian Back-to-the-Land Life**

- by Dianna Hunter
- 2018
- University of Minnesota Press (upress.umn.edu)
- 241 pages
- \$18.95

**Given Up for You: A Memoir of Love, Belonging, and Belief**  
Erin O. White



Erin White was glad she missed the last train back home as she anticipated what could happen next. She’d never slept with a woman or even considered it, but on the night she met Chris at a dinner party, it was

all she could think of. What would she tell her therapist? For some time, White had been exploring that which her soul seemed to crave, and at her therapist’s urging, she read the four gospels and was “stunned” by the words. She cautiously attended Catholic services and began learning more about God and religion; eventually, she broke up with Chris, who’d been raised in the Church and avoided it as an adult. White wanted “to love a woman yet avail myself of the opportunities of straight culture; to break the rules of the Church but still feel myself beloved by it.” Two kids and a strong marriage later, she sees things in a different light—as her three-pronged memoir of love, faith, and motherhood reveals. The subject of gay Christians is presented in a way that’s calm and thoughtful. Although it’s too long, *Given Up for You* may belong on your bookshelf. • University of Wisconsin Press (uwpress.wisc.edu).

—Terri Schlichenmeyer

**Y**ou were going to change the world. It’s true that you were one small voice, just one person with a vision, but you were sure it could be done. You were going to change the world, one corner at a time—starting with the one you called home. And in the new book *Wild Mares: My Lesbian Back-to-the-Land Life* by Dianna Hunter, that’s sometimes all it takes.

Growing up in rural South Dakota, Hunter learned what “queer” was long before she understood her own sexuality. She was “seventeen, cosseted, closeted, and clueless” back then, but once she enrolled in college and started living in Minneapolis in an atmosphere of early-1970s feminism and LGBT activism, she “surprised” herself by coming out.

By then, classmates had introduced her to new friends who then introduced her to a lesbian community that raised her consciousness. Hunter learned how to be an activist and help create safe places for lesbians to socialize. And when her friends began to think about establishing a collective farm in Minnesota, she

was highly intrigued.

“We were headed toward our dream and our vexation,” she says. “Women’s Land, Open to All Women.”

And it felt like the right “path to freedom.” At the first farm Hunter lived on, women and children shared the work and the bounty. “Voluntary poverty and group living” taught them that they could get by without much money, and they didn’t need men to care for livestock or outbuildings. Hunter soaked up every bit of information she could, and when it was time to move on, she and her next housemate rode their own horses more than 200 miles to another farm.

Through the years, there were other farms and other horses. Friends and lovers came and went as societal attitudes also changed. Though she was now retired, Hunter was eventually able to buy and manage a dairy farm near Lake Superior.

“To many onlookers,” she

says, “our lesbian-feminist back-to-the-land dream must have seemed strange and unrealistic, but we were far from the only ones who dreamed it.”

“Utopia” is a word that author Dianna Hunter uses when recalling her first 15 years after coming out as a lesbian. No word could be more apt, because despite a few episodes of lack and hardship, *Wild Mares* makes that life sound positively serene.

And yet, there’s angst here, starting with the constant stream of people who move in and out of Hunter’s narrative, taking their drama with them and re-inserting it. After a while, it starts to seem like just more of the same, and character fatigue may begin to set in. (It doesn’t help that there are several farms involved, adding to the consternation.)

Even so, Hunter’s introspection, her eagerness to do anything to find her “utopia,” and her love of the land all combine to make this book palatable. In the end, *Wild Mares* is a worthwhile look at non-traditional 20th-century farming, and at Midwestern lesbian history. Yes, the book is a little relentless in its overly-peopled narrative, but it’s also something different, for a change.

*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.*

undermine the civil rights of LGBT people in the name of religion.”

Ria Tabacco Mar, an ACLU attorney on the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, said the *Arlene's Flowers* case is “virtually identical” to *Masterpiece*, with one exception. There has been no claim that Washington state officials exhibited any hostility toward the business owner’s expressed religious beliefs against LGBTQ people. That was one feature of the *Masterpiece* case that prompted the U.S. Supreme Court to vacate a Colorado state decision against a baker who refused service to a same-sex couple. The U.S. Supreme Court did not address the larger legal issue of whether a First Amendment claim could outweigh an anti-discrimination law.

Mar predicted the Washington Supreme Court will simply reaffirm its earlier decision.

In its February 2017 decision in *Washington v. Arlene's Flowers*, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that anti-discrimination laws serve a “broader societal purpose: eradicating barriers to the equal treatment of all citizens in the commercial marketplace.”

“Were we to carve out a patchwork of exceptions for ostensibly justified discrimination, that purpose would be fatally undermined,” said the state supreme court. The decision was unanimous.

Shannon Minter of the National Center for Lesbian Rights said the June 25 announcement in *Arlene's Flowers* means “very little.”

“All that today’s remand means is that the Washington Supreme Court will review the decision in *Arlene's Flowers* to be sure it was not similarly tainted. Since there is no evidence that it was, the Washington Supreme Court will almost certainly reaffirm the decision in favor of the same-sex couple who brought the case.”

“The important point for LGBT people is that the law continues to protect them” in Washington State, said Minter, “and even businesses owned by people who would like to deny them certain services based on the owner’s religious beliefs must comply with anti-discrimination laws.”

In the *Arlene's Flowers* case, two gay men decided to get married in Washington State in 2013 and approached their regular florist to provide decorations. But Arlene’s Flowers balked at their request, saying it was due to the owner’s religious views. Washington State law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations, and the state courts ruled that the business owner in this case was, despite their religious claims, violating that law.

Many predict the case will be back before the Supreme Court as soon as the state supreme court reconsiders its ruling.

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# Merry Misfits

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Del Shores brings 'Six Characters in Search of a Play' to RMCC.

*By Don Maines*



**Y**ou know you're gay when you see yourself in a character written by Del Shores.

You know you're *really* gay when you are a character written by Del Shores, as in the case of a Houston woman who inspired one of the title roles in *Six Characters in Search of a Play*, a 90-minute one-man show that Shores will perform July 14–15 at Houston's Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church (RMCC).

"Of course, I changed her name," says Shores, who is the author of wildly popular fare such as *Sordid Lives*, *Southern Baptist Sissies*, and other works that draw on his upbringing in Winters, Texas.

"I'm not really a writer; I'm a thief!" he says, humbly maintaining that he simply records what he sees and hears—including his 2015 appearance in Houston when a monkey bit him at a meet-and-greet party at Guava Lamp. On the other hand, he says, he embraces the advice attributed to writer Mark Twain: "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story."

RMCC board member Van English was at the scene of the monkey bite, but he doesn't want to hear any spoilers as to how Shores tells (and perhaps embellishes) what happened. "I want it to be a surprise," English says. "I want to be as shocked and thrilled and inspired as I always am by Del Shores."

In addition to the RMCC member with the monkey, whose character's name in *Six Characters* is "Marsha," Shores reveals that his script features five parts based on people, "who have inspired me, but I have not quite found a place for them yet in my plays or my TV shows or my films." Shores plays each of them, without costumes and with minimal props. For example, when he holds two fingers to his mouth and inhales, the audience knows the character is smoking.

Chain-smoking "Sarah" is based on the late Sarah Hunley, an actress who appeared in the movies *Marie* (starring Sissy Spacek), *Ghosts of Mississippi*, and *Waitress*, but was best known for her portrayal of Juanita Bartlett in the movie *Sordid Lives*. Due to health problems, Hunley was unable to reprise her role in last year's movie *A Very Sordid Wedding*, in which Oscar-winner (and all-around shit-stirrer) Whoopi Goldberg made a cameo appearance as a minister who champions marriage equality. When Qfest hosted a screening of *A Very Sordid Wedding* at the River Oaks

Theatre, says English, "A very large contingent from our congregation attended."

RMCC senior pastor Troy Treash says there is a natural connection between Shores and the LGBTQ community. "Del is fully immersed in the lives of queer people and their struggle with commitment to faith," he says. "Humor is healing, and Del brings a deft hand mirroring our truth right back at us and making us laugh at ourselves."

English agrees. "We all have things about us that are lovable or unlovable, ugly or beautiful."

*Six Characters in Search of a Play* (whose title is a play on Luigi Pirandello's classic absurdist comedy, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*) also includes "Yvonne", an anti-vegetarian waitress whom Shores met in Dallas, where he performs regularly. "I usually find interesting characters when I stop for food, or gas, or something," Shores says. "My friend asked the waitress if there was any meat in the green beans, and the waitress replied, 'Well, yes, honey, they *are* green beans.'"

The other three characters in the show are "Lorraine," a once-brilliant drama teacher "who has lost her damn mind" and now is obsessed with porn; "Aunt Bobby Sue," a racist Republican "with a heart of gold"; and Jimmy Del, a "very conflicted, latent homosexual" who loves Magic Mike.

Of the sextet, the character that Shores

loves the most (no spoiler here) is "the one who really just does not give a damn. He (or she) has no f--ks left to give."

English allows that Shores is donating 50 percent of the show's proceeds to RMCC, to help pay for repairs that were needed following last year's Hurricane Harvey. If the first two shows are sold out, there is a possibility of adding a third benefit performance.

Treash says he welcomes any and every appearance by Shores. "When we put on a live production of *Southern Baptist Sissies* in our activities building, even the shocking and tough stuff brought healing," he says. "It was a full house each night as our sanctuary choir director, Steven Shannon, played the lead role in drag and would drop in and out of song perfectly. Queer people have a complicated relationship with God. It is a miracle each time an LGBTQ person finds spiritual transformation that overcomes early faith teachings. Del knows this."

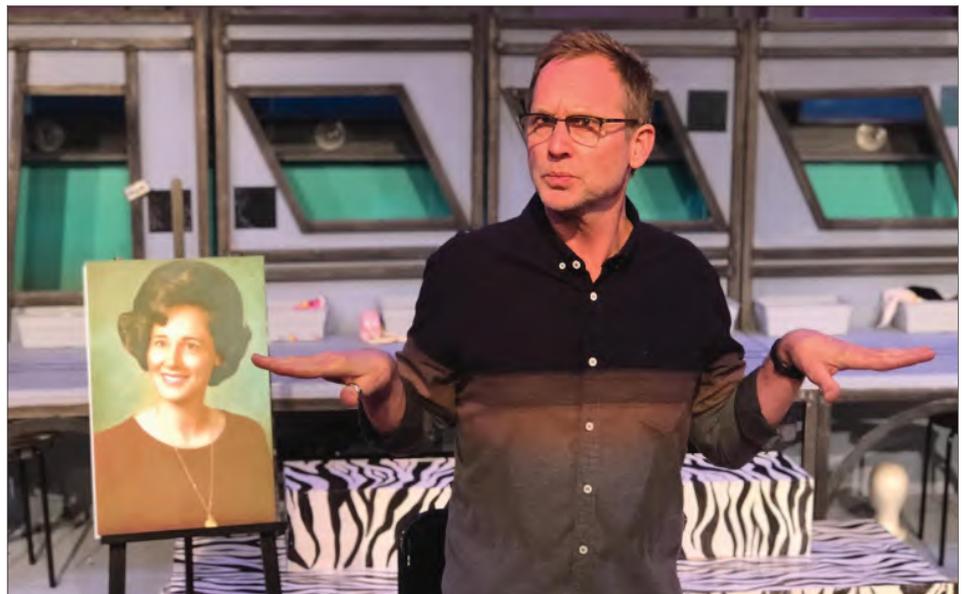
**What:** *Six Characters in Search of a Play*, by Del Shores

**When:** 8 p.m. on July 14, 2 p.m. on July 15

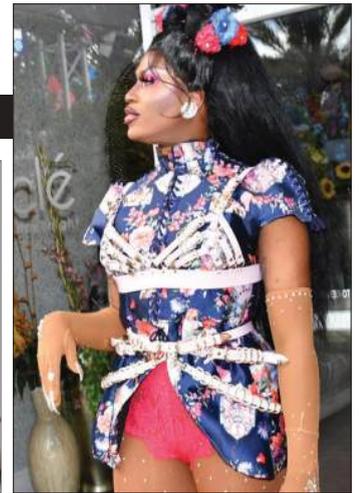
**Where:** Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2025 W. 11th St.

**Tickets:** DelShores.com

*Don Maines is a regular contributor to OUTSMART magazine.*



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**album, because it doesn't sound like the Cindy Wilson people are familiar with from your years in The B-52s. Was that a deliberate decision?**

Of course. I've been doing The B-52s thing for 40 years. It was really fun to be experimental. I had a different set of musicians. It was a real learning experience for me. The music scene is a whole new thing now, both with the business end and creatively. I had a blast experimenting with that.

**There are a couple of cover tunes on *Change*, including "Brother," which was originally performed by the Oh-OK band. Was this meant to be a nod to your roots in the Georgia music scene?**

We started in the late '70s and they came just a tad later. What happened was we had done Oh-OK songs in Athens with Ryan [Monahan] and Lemuel [Hayes], and some other musicians. We had done a tribute to Vanessa [Briscoe] from [the band] Pylon and different musicians who were in Athens at the time. It was so much fun. The Oh-OK song "Brother" turned out so well that we decided to record it. Everybody loves that song!

**With the exception of the cover songs, you co-wrote the remaining tracks with Suny and Ryan. In what ways would you say that your writing experience differed from when you co-wrote songs for The B-52s?**

Luckily, I thrive in a situation where people are being super-creative. You let down your guard. That's when a lot of good ideas can come through. You bounce off each other and you create things together. You tap into this stream of consciousness. It's really magical. It was different from The B-52s, but it was definitely being able to feel the vibe. Like I said, for the Cindy Wilson thing, I let down my defenses and explored. This was great. I did a lot of listening to Suny and Ryan, and I got to throw in some things of my own. It was really fun.

**You mentioned how this has been a stressful time, and I was thinking about how "People Are Asking," the first song on the album, sounds like one of your most political songs, which feels new for you. Am I on the right track?**

Yes! It's one of the elements, definitely. I hate to tell people what a song is about, because it does feel better for it to be a personal thing. But it definitely had those [political] elements in it.

**Kate Pierson's solo debut was released in 2015, and Fred Schneider put out one in 1984 and another in 1996. Did they**

**have any words of advice for you on the subject of going solo?**

Yes [laughs], yes! They did it their way. Everybody does it a different way. When we signed with Kill Rock Stars Records, they had a lot of ideas, too. It was definitely a joint thing.

**You recently completed some tour dates. What was that experience like for you?**

I love taking recorded music and making it come alive—actually having to perform it! When you tour, your show gets better and better and stronger and stronger. You get even more intuitive with the musicians in the band. There are so many great elements that come through the personalities of the people in the band, which adds so much. I had the best time. We're building an audience. It's been really purposeful to take it slow and build and experience a new beginning.

**On June 10, The B-52s headlined Pride-Fest Milwaukee. As The B-52s' sole straight-ally member, can you please say a few words about what the LGBTQ community and LGBTQ fans mean to you personally?**

[Laughs] I've got so many friends and family members and loved ones that are in the gay community in all different forms. I take my hat off and say thank you!

**You will be on tour with The B-52s throughout the summer and early autumn. [EDITOR'S NOTE: The B-52s perform on July 15 at Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land.] What do you like most about performing with your longtime bandmates?**

To me, it's amazing that we've been around 41 years. I've known them and I've seen them go through different phases of their lives—losing Rick [Wilson, Cindy's brother] and the different changes that go on in the band, the musicians who step in and out. It's a marriage, and it seems like The B-52s are an entity all its own. I'm just one aspect of it. It's amazing to look across the stage and see Fred in 2018. And Kate! How much life has shaped her. You see their souls. We're singing "Rock Lobster," and it's an amazing thing to look out in the audience and see people having such a good time. It's really special to be able to bring that to an audience after all these years. From my point of view, it's an amazing story, really.

**One of the tour dates brings The B-52s to Atlanta in July. What does it mean to you to play to your hometown audience?**

It's very special. Everybody says it's the hardest when you come and play to your hometown. There are so many fans there and everything. It's going to be fun. It's going to be a hoot!

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

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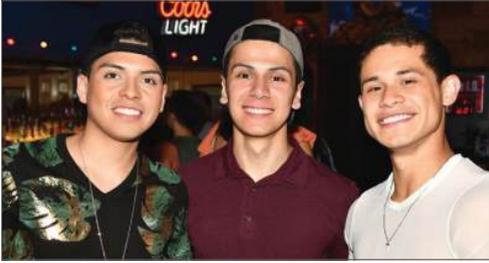
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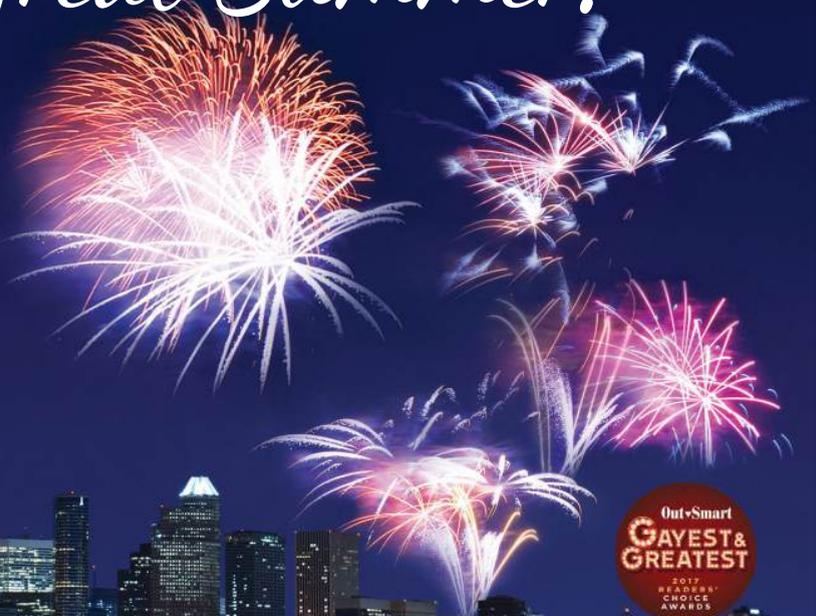


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## SIGNOUT

continued from page 112

your main menu as the month begins. This is an excellent month to renew those bonds and set new goals for the upcoming years. This is true for both business and personal relationships. You are also wanting to be more open about your feelings, especially with your partner. This can be a great month for therapy or a weekend getaway. Finances take your attention by midmonth. You will be reviewing your salary and what you can do to make that better. This is also a great time to look ahead and do some financial planning for retirement. You are moving forward in a safe and conservative way.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20–February 18). This continues to be an active, feisty, short-tempered time for you. Mars, planet of action, reaction, adventure, and protection, will be visiting your sign through the end of November. Mars needs physical action and expression. If you hold it in, it only gets more explosive. This would be a great month to reconnect to your workout and health routines. You will take

everything that happens much more personally. Try to find a positive use for all of this energy. You may find it hard to get to sleep with your brain being so overly active. Relationships are the focus of your plans during July—it's a wonderful month to renew those bonds with that special someone.

**PISCES** (February 19–March 20). You are laying low as the month begins. You are doing well in avoiding stress and the demands of others, and the creative mood you're in is helping to express and free your inner child. As we get closer to mid-month, your routines return and you are back in the daily groove. You will want to improve and update your electronic devices this month, but make sure you get that done before the 20th. This continues to be a good time for travel, publishing, taking or teaching classes, and generating better connections with your colleagues. This is also a super month to focus on improving your health through better diet and exercise!

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**BAR & CLUB GUIDE**

**HOUSTON**

Sundays start at 3pm with dart and pool tournaments. 617 Fairview • 713.528.8102.

**ALIBI**

Located right next to Hamburger Mary's, this dance club is party central for Houston's circuit crowd and even features late night dancing till 4am on Friday and Saturdays weekly! Be sure to check out the official Dirty Disco Saturdays with JD Arnold from the Billboard hit remix duo Dirty Disco. 2409 Grant • 713.522.2867

**BARCODE**

Houston's newest bar with happy hours from 11am to 8pm daily, this new neighborhood watering hole is a great place to see Drag Shows and Strippers Tuesdays - Saturdays and Karaoke Sundays & Mondays. 817 Fairview St. • 713.526.2625 barcodehouston.net

**BLUR**

Multi-level dance club featuring an upstairs lounge and balconies. Ladies enjoy Wet and Wild Wed., 18-year-olds welcome Thurs., Latin night on Sun. Happy hour 8-10pm; free cover before 11pm. 710 Pacific St. • blurbar.com.

**CLUB 2020**

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

**CLUB CRYSTAL**

Find many of Inergy's former staff and décor at this two-room Latin/hip-hop club. Sunday evening drag shows rule the roost. 6680 Southwest Frwy, next to Colorado 713.278.2582 • crystaltheclub.com.

**CROCKER BAR**

This comfortably remodeled Montrose nightspot also offers karaoke on Tuesdays and Thursdays and extended happy-hour prices throughout the week. 2312 Crocker • 713.529.3355.

**GEORGE**

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar. Sports Saturdays and

**GUAVA LAMP**

This trendy and friendly video and cruise bar gets busy during happy hour and stays busy 'til closing. Karaoke on Wed. and Sun. 570 Waugh Dr. • 713.524.3359 guavalamphouston.com.

**HAMBURGER MARY'S**

You'll also find many a RuPau's Drag Race girl on stage along with stand up comedy and a charity game night. Voted as Houston's Best Drag Bar and Best Hamburger by our readers, this is a must stop for family dining by day and late night cocktails. 2409 Grant St • Hamburgermarys.com

**EAGLE**

Part of the Eagle worldwide family, it's the definitive home to the man's man - leather, bear, jock or muscle, you'll find them here! DJs every night, multiple patios and a leather/accessories shop inside the bar. Noon-2am every day, 611 Hyde Park, 713.523.BIRD

**JR'S BAR & GRILL**

This Montrose standard offers drag and strip shows throughout the week, karaoke Thurs. and Sun., plus pool tables and male dancers. 808 Pacific St. • 713.521.2519 jrshouston.com.

**MICHAEL'S OUTPOST**

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

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## BEHIND the BAR



**ROBERT CHANDLER**  
Rumors Galveston  
3102 Seawall Blvd.  
Galveston, Texas  
rumorsbeachbar.com

**What is your favorite shot to make?**  
Colombian Car Bomb: I came up with it working in Atlanta when Patron XO first came out. Patron XO topped with Bailey's and dropped in a half pint of Guinness.

**What is the best and worst holiday to work? Why?**  
PRIDE is the best because everyone shows their true colors and the community is so unified. I don't have a "worst" because people tend to gather at Rumors when they can't be with their family...so there's a good, close vibe!

**Biggest tip from one customer?**  
On my second night here I got \$100 for making champagne with a splash of Campari served in a Stella chalice.

**If you weren't a bartender... what career would you choose?**  
Although I've managed bars in Atlanta and Chicago for many years, I currently work in nursing services at UTMB.

highlights like open mic night, steak night, and drink specials.  
4216 Washington • pearlhouston.com.

### RICH'S HOUSTON

Houston's most iconic and largest LGBTQ dance club, with multiple levels featuring a video/show bar and a private VIP lounge. No cover before 10:30 p.m. 2401 San Jacinto • 281.846.6685  
richsnightclub.com.

### THE RIPCORD

This multi-roomed leather bar boasts a busy patio, especially on the weekends. The Forge shop located inside the club. Saturday nights with DJ Tad Dvorak  
715 Fairview Ave • 713.521.2792.

### RUDYARD'S

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

### SOUTH BEACH

Closed for remodeling.

### TONY'S CORNER POCKET

This comfortable club has one of the friendliest bar staffs in town. Amateur dance contest each Thurs., Fri., & Sat. at 11pm. Opens daily at noon.  
817 W. Dallas • 713.571.7870  
tonyscornerpocketbar.com.

### VIVIANA'S

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4624 Dacoma • 713.681.4104.

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121 North Main • 979.823.6174 • halobcs.com.

### GALVESTON

#### 23RD ST. STATION

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#### ROBERT'S LAFITTE

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#### RUMORS BEACH BAR

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# Your Resolve Will Be Tested

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This month is jam-packed with action, drama, humor, and pathos. Besides the eclipses on the 12th and the 27th, Mercury goes retrograde on the 20th before it goes direct on August 24. If you're going to start new projects, you need to start them before the 20th. • The eclipses on the 12th and the 27th are some of the strongest eclipses I've seen in a while! The solar eclipse on the 12th directly impacts the U.S. chart in the sign of Cancer, so that will certainly test the resolve of our citizens. The lunar eclipse on the 27th is more edgy, and demands that people take action. The eclipse on the 12th will have the greatest impact on cardinal signs (Aries, Cancer, Libra, and Capricorn), while the eclipse on the 27th impacts the fixed signs (Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius). • Positive days for this month are the 5th, 9th, 10th, 14th, and 22nd. Difficult days for this month are the 12th, 24th, 25th, 26th, and 27th.

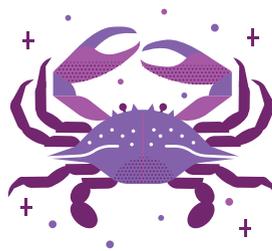
**ARIES** (March 21–April 19). Home and family capture your mood as the month begins. Long-term security and revamping your career have been strong themes for you over the last couple of years. You are starting to get a handle on decisions, and are making some headway and feeling more secure. Boundaries will help you keep your balance. Friends and community organizations take your attention by midmonth. This is an excellent month to reconnect with old friends, your existing client base, or become more active in making your community a safer place to live. Your children are more influential in your life this month!

**TAURUS** (April 20–May 20). As the month begins, you are getting your life more organized to make better use of your time on a daily and weekly basis. You are paying much more attention to your boundaries, and to the way respectful people respond to you. Your career area is highly active, especially by midmonth. You may feel pulled in several directions. Watch your commitments. Family is especially important to you this month, so you'll want to have friends and family gathering at your home. You are letting go of restrictive beliefs, people, and ideals so you can better enjoy your day-to-day life!

**GEMINI** (May 21–June 21). With your ruling planet, Mercury, going retrograde on the 20th, it's especially important to get as many activities and projects as possible started in the first half of

the month. Finances and resources are the main topic as the month begins. You may be putting yourself on a budget, or making only conservative investments, or buying only the things that you need. The latter half of the month is excellent for connecting with old friends, your existing client base, taking care of all those projects you have been putting off, or spending more time with your children.

**CANCER** (June 22–July 22). Happy Birthday to all of the Moon Kids this month. This is your personal yearly cycle where you will review what you did last year and consider what new adventures you will take your life on during the next year. Your mood remains serious as you take a hard look at your future, your career, and how much longer you are going to be doing this. You are very focused on money during the latter half of the month, so that can be a good time for refinancing loans or getting your credit cards paid off. Your partnerships need some updating to make sure you and your partners are working on the same goals.



**LEO** (July 23–August 22). This is a mixed month for you. Part of you is in a period of rest and retreat, while another part of you is very busy interacting with close friends and partners. It can be an especially easy month to overcommit yourself to activities, even if they are a lot of fun. Relationships are demanding a lot of your attention, and that is likely to continue through the last half of the year. If you are having relationship problems, they will come to the surface so you can address them. This is also a good month to find time to renew those bonds! Your work is not bringing you as much satisfaction as it has in the past. It is time improve or change those conditions.

**VIRGO** (August 23–September 22). With your ruler, Mercury, going retrograde on the 20th, it's best to get your new projects started before that time. You are continuing to be busy and to push yourself forward. This month, business and community organizations are very beneficial for you, both personally and professionally. You will want to get back on your health routines this month as

well. In the latter part of the month, you are needing some time for rest and retreat. Don't overextend yourself if you don't really want to commit to a project or a friend. Resentment will develop, and nobody likes that. Focus on what makes you happy, not them!

**LIBRA** (September 23–October 23). Career is still the focus as the month begins. You have been on this track for the last two months. You are much more deliberate about your choices, and have little time for those who don't respect your time. If you have children, they are going to be a big part of your life this month so you can be more childlike and have more fun! If you don't have kids, then you can be the child! The latter half of the month is a super time to connect with old friends and associates. You may even want to travel or have an adventure. Keep a handle on your spending. It will be easy to justify what you want.

**SCORPIO** (October 24–November 21). You are trying to keep your schedule sensible as the month begins. There are a lot of demands on your time, so the commitments may seem never-ending. You are wanting to get a lot done. There are lots of opportunities out there for you, and you don't want to turn any of them down. Career activity takes over by midmonth. This is an excellent time to showcase your talents or past accomplishments. Travel can be a great release for you, especially this month. Even a short jaunt will help give you some perspective. Keep your family close this month.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22–December 21). Money and future finances still dominate your thoughts as the month begins. You are very conservative in your spending, and also who you invest your time with. Your creativity and learning energies get stronger as we get to midmonth. This is a good time to market yourself or the projects that you have been working on. Your communication skills are working particularly well. You may see former relationship partners or old friends showing up toward the end of the month. And it would do wonders for you if you could get out of town for a weekend! Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees!

**CAPRICORN** (December 22–January 19). Relationships and emotional intimacy are still on

*continued on page 105*

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On May 24, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted a happy hour at Ginger & Fork. Pictured are **Gary Wood, Tammi Wallace**, Council Member **Karla Cisneros, Deborah Lawson**, and **Jeffrey Myles**.



On May 24, the Alley Theatre hosted ActOut featuring Picasso at the Lapin Agile. Pictured are (standing) **Brandon Weinbrenner, Janet Deshotel, Tina Berry, Larry Deshotel, Travis Deshotel, Michael Leibbert**, and (seated) **Joseph Roberts** and **Lauren Pelletier**.



On June 5, Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg was keynote speaker at the Gulf Coast Allies Diversity Summit at the Crown Plaza River Oaks. Pictured are **Glynda McGinness, Khaliah Guillory, Gary Wood, Kim Ogg, Ray Purser**, and **Margaret Mayer**.



On June 8, Mayor Sylvester Turner's LGBTQ Advisory Board hosted Safe Night Out at Emancipation Park. Pictured are **Eric Edward Schell, Harrison Guy** and **Mike Webb**.



From June 8-10, Galveston Pride hosted its 2018 celebration. Pictured are **Christopher Bown, Jerry Simoneaux, Constantine Volo**, and **Michael Harrison**.



On June 11, Houston Stonewall Young Democrats hosted its June meeting. Pictured are **Rebecca Treviño, James Lee, Fran Watson, Mark Solano, Shelby Hansen, TJ Hoffman**, and **Kandice Webber**.



On June 13, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted Brewing Up Business at EastWest Bank. Pictured are **Alex Chang, Roy Alvarez, Jr., Deborah Lawson, Jenny C. Lin, Irene Pi, Gary Wood, Noel Huang, Richard Spicer**, and **Corey Allen**.



On June 14, LifeSmiles and Dr. Randy Mitchmore hosted a ribbon-cutting for Med Spa. Pictured are **Gala Hemphill, Sandra Smith, Dr. Randy Mitchmore**, and **John Copous**.



On June 14, Lambda Legal hosted Equality Night Out at the Magnolia Hotel. Pictured are **Corey Devine, Anne Krook, Cisselon Nichols Hurd, Jaime Glikberg, Rhonda Sigman**, and **Alan York**.



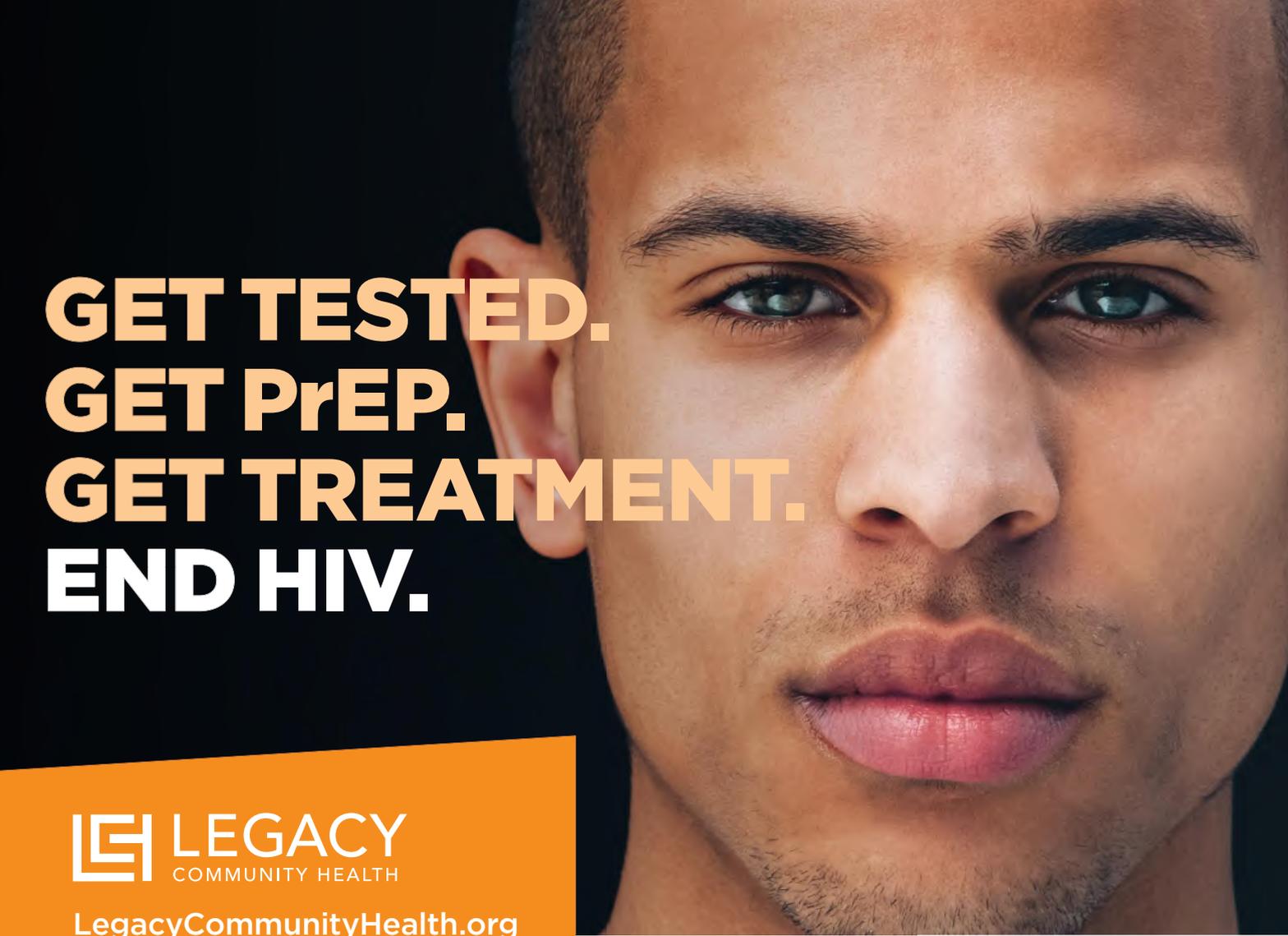
On June 14, Pride Houston hosted a reception for former and current grand marshals at Hamburger Mary's. Pictured are former and current grand marshals.



On June 15, Pride Houston and the Executive and Professional Association of Houston hosted a showcase at the Jumper Maybach Fine Art Gallery. Pictured are **Alice Curtis, Jumper Maybach**, and **Venita Howard**.



On June 17, Hamburger Mary's hosted a Father's Day celebration featuring Sister Helen Holy. Pictured are **Kelly Hejtmančík, Marie Hejtmančík De Valenzuela, Sister Helen Holy**, and **Nathanael Hejtmančík De Valenzuela**.



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GET PrEP.  
GET TREATMENT.  
END HIV.**



[LegacyCommunityHealth.org](http://LegacyCommunityHealth.org)

### **GET TESTED**

Know your status! Testing is the only way to know if you have HIV. No matter what your test results are, you can take steps to help protect your health. FREE, FAST and CONFIDENTIAL HIV testing is available at Legacy.

**Visit:**  
[legacycommunityhealth.org/gettested](http://legacycommunityhealth.org/gettested)  
to learn how easy it is to get tested!

### **GET PrEP**

Get PrEP for the prevention of HIV. PrEP is an FDA-approved medication that, when taken once daily, offers people who do not have HIV another powerful way to protect themselves. PrEP significantly reduces the risk of contracting HIV.

**Schedule an appointment with a Legacy health care provider to decide if PrEP is right for you.**

### **GET TREATMENT**

Starting and staying on treatment can help a person with HIV live a longer and healthier life. Treatment also lowers the amount of virus in an individual's system which helps prevent the spread of HIV to others.

**Legacy has been providing expert care to people living with HIV for almost 40 years and we're ready to care for you too!**

**To learn more about Legacy's comprehensive services, visit [LegacyCommunityHealth.org](http://LegacyCommunityHealth.org) or call (832) 548-5221 to schedule an appointment today.**

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