

# Out & Smart

FEB. '19

HOUSTON'S LGBTQ MAGAZINE

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## MODERN FAMILY

LGBTQ COUPLES  
AND KIDS

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## PRICE IS RIGHT

MAMMA MIA!  
ACTOR  
MARK PRICE

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# FASHION FORWARD

TRANS MODEL  
AND ADVOCATE

JESSICA ZYRIE

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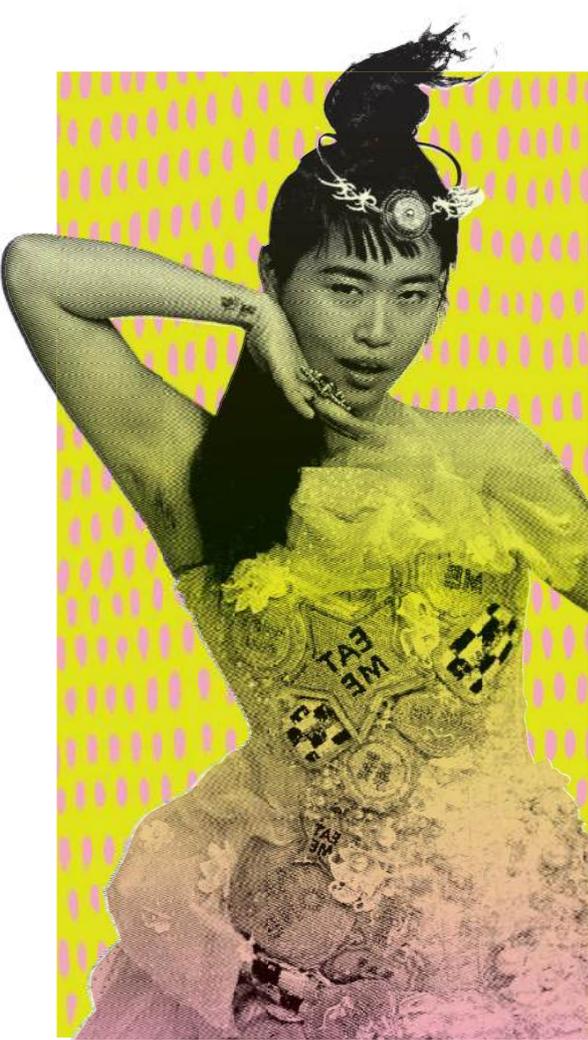
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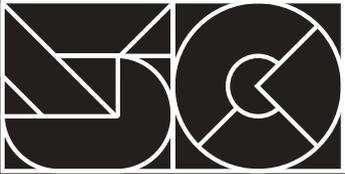
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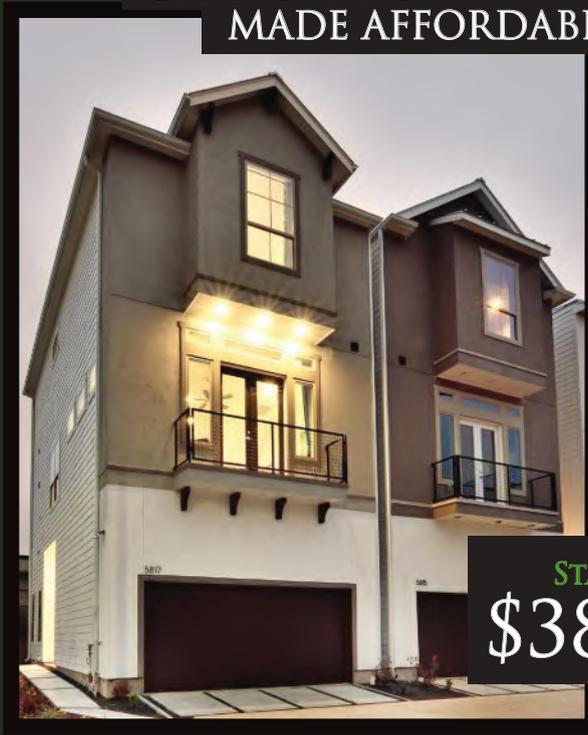
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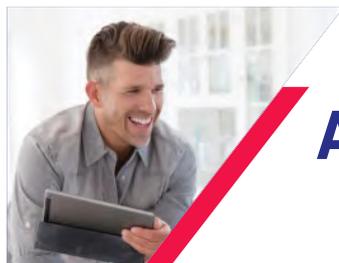
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Welcome to the February 2019 edition of OUTSMART. It's Black History Month and we'd be remiss if we didn't say something about the terrible attack on *Empire* actor and activist Jussie Smollett. It's a sad reminder that no matter how great our strides have been in equality and LGBTQ rights, hate is still an insidious element that runs through our society. The assault on Smollett resonates greatly in the Black LGBTQ community and OUTSMART wants to extend our empathy, support, and compassion to our brothers and sisters.

Cover girl Jessica Zyrie, herself an activist in her own right, is no stranger to hate. In a stirring profile, OUTSMART writer Ryan Leach profiles the model's life and work, whether that takes her to the catwalks of New York's Fashion Week or the halls of the Montrose Center. Her story still shows us that even a simple

Facebook post can make one a target of attack.

This issue also celebrates and examines the lives of LGBTQ families and the various methods being used to bring children into the happy homes of gay and lesbian couples throughout Houston. Kim Hogstrom's story is as informative and enlightening as it is heartwarming, especially in its featuring couples like Crystal Carvajal, Liliana Galvan, and their baby, Mila Sofia.

AIDS Foundation Houston will be hosting their 30<sup>th</sup> AIDS Walk March 3 and writer Marene Gustin takes us from the start to the finish line with her story on page 46. We're also featuring King of Bling, Chad Gore, who gives drag queens their dazzle by creating unique, one-of-a-kind pieces of jewelry for our local drag performers. We're also taking a closer look at the wealth of LGBTQ material that the University of Houston has received with its vital acquisition of the Botts/Carper collec-

tion. It truly is a treasure trove of gay history to the rapidly expanding LGBT History Research Collection. Also look for Monica Roberts' piece on Black trans people making Black history. It's a vital article whose time has been a long time coming.

Lastly, I'd like to mention our subtle but stellar redesign. Art Director Alex Rosa has freshened up OUTSMART's pages with a crisp, clean, contemporary look we think you're going to love. And you'll especially appreciate our expanded Calendar featuring all the LGBTQ events you're going to want to take part in.

We hope you enjoy every page of this issue.

Sincerely,

Greg Jeu  
PUBLISHER



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# Doubling Down on LGBTQ Discrimination

House Republicans resurrect anti-LGBTQ bills with HB 1035.

By RYAN M. LEACH

**T**exas representative Bill Zedler of Arlington has filed HB 1035, a bill that Equality Texas says includes the “bathroom bill” and doubles down on LGBTQ discrimination. This filing is a departure from the more moderate tone coming out of Austin this legislative session, one focused on “bread and butter” issues like public education and property taxes.

Zedler’s bill would legally protect discrimination in healthcare, social services, the workplace, access to housing, in business, and in government by creating special rights for those who hold two specific religious beliefs: opposition to marriage equality and rejection of transgender people. The bill contains some of the same divisive bathroom regulations that overshadowed much of the 2017 session.

“Rep. Zedler missed the message voters sent last fall, when they sent home the author of 2017’s notorious bathroom bill,” said Samantha Smoot, interim executive director of Equality Texas. “Voters have had it with the hatefulness. They want lawmakers to focus on the economy and public education, not take aim at LGBTQ Texans’ rights.”

It appeared at the beginning of the current session that the too-close-for-comfort November 2018 election had put a scare in leaders like lieutenant governor Dan Patrick, who came within



AP PHOTO/HARRY CABLUCK

## Here We Go Again

Rep. Bill Zedler, R-Arlington (l) talks with Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands, during the 2007 session of the Texas House of Representatives in Austin.

single digits of losing his seat. Texas Republicans have been accustomed to heartier leads for over two decades. As the electoral pendulum appeared to be swinging back, the “Big Three” (governor Greg Abbott, speaker Dennis Bonnen, and Patrick) tried to take on a more moderate tone for 2019. This bill could indicate that all of that was just talk, and that LGBTQ Texans are still on the legislative menu.

The House will not be allowed to vote on potential legislation until sixty days into the session, due to constitutional constraints. Speaker Bonnen assigned new committee chairs in recent days, so it is still too early to tell whether or not HB 1035 will make its way to the governor or languish in committee and eventually die on the vine. However, groups like

Equality Texas are not taking any chances.

Former speaker Joe Straus, who stepped down after the 2017 legislative session, was largely given credit for blocking the inflammatory bathroom legislation that dominated that session. Although a very public rift between Straus and Patrick dominated the 2017 headlines, the anti-LGBTQ legislation ultimately failed except for one bill that now allows adoption agencies to legally discriminate against potential parents based on religious beliefs and/or LGBTQ status.

A recent American Values Atlas survey showed that the majority of Texans oppose discrimination like HB 1035. The Texas business community also demonstrated strong opposition to similar legislation in 2017 dur-

ing both the regular and special sessions.

The 2018 election did have some positive news for LGBTQ Texans. The LGBTQ legislative caucus in the House has grown to five members, and the historic representation of queer women will likely play a role in developing pro-LGBTQ legislation for consideration, even if the odds of it passing may be low. LGBTQ Texans are making slow but steady progress in the state.

Zedler may also want to think twice about pushing bills like HB 1035. The 2020 election is lining up to be bigger than 2018, with President Trump likely to be at the top of the ticket. He may want to keep in mind that the last state representative who wrote a bill like HB 1035 was sent home and replaced by a Democrat.

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## Movers and Shakers

Transform Houston joined LGBTQ activists from across the nation in Detroit on Jan. 25 for Creating Change 2019, where the group shared its plans to give Houston an NDO.

# Transform Houston

## Group prepares for a new Houston nondiscrimination ordinance.

By LOURDES ZAVALETA

**D**espite Houston's history of voting against legislation that protects LGBTQ folks, the advocacy group Transform Houston is working to give Space City a new nondiscrimination ordinance.

The repeal of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) in 2015, along with similar pro-equality losses in 1985 and 2001, has inspired members of Transform Houston to strategize for a future Houston nondiscrimination ordinance (NDO). The organization will host monthly community events through June to inform voters about the need for a law that would make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

"In the past, we didn't start talking about nondiscrimination laws until we were about to vote on them," Transform Houston organizer Brad Pritchett says. "We didn't get the chance to talk to folks who might be susceptible to misinformation about the LGBTQ

community, and how these laws are bigger than us. Transform Houston has launched its newest initiative because when the next fight for an NDO happens, voters will already be aware of who this legislation impacts."

On February 16, Transform Houston will host a town-hall meeting at the Houston Public Library's Freed-Montrose branch to explore the timeline for putting an NDO on the ballot.

Mayor Sylvester Turner has no plans for a public vote on an NDO in 2019, according to his communication director Alan Bernstein. However, a citizen-led petition initiative with at least 20,000 qualified voter signatures could still place an NDO on the ballot.

Transform Houston will not push for an NDO in 2019, but will instead use the year to expand conversations about anti-discrimination laws. Pritchett believes that a general lack of knowledge about NDO legislation is the reason that Houston voters have rejected LGBTQ protections in the past.

HERO, which prohibited discrimination based on gender identity and expression (in addition to more than a dozen other characteristics), was approved by City Council in 2014. However, anti-LGBTQ groups used misleading anti-transgender attack ads to convince voters to repeal the ordinance in November 2015.

After HERO was repealed, Pritchett met several folks who were unaware that the ordinance would have protected them. A Houston man's undocumented wife from Guatemala was wrongfully fired after she told her employers that she was pregnant. When Pritchett asked the man if he believed his wife would have benefitted from HERO, the man responded "No, because she is not gay or trans." Pritchett informed the man that the ordinance would have protected his wife because of her sex, national origin, and pregnancy.

"HERO would have helped many non-LGBTQ folks, but its opponents seized on one aspect of it and publicized it that way," Pritchett says. "Transform Houston's current goal is to diffuse myths about NDOs and show folks that they protect everyone."

Mayor pro tem Ellen Cohen, a longtime ally who has worked to defeat several anti-LGBTQ referendums, believes that Transform Houston's plan to educate voters about NDOs will increase the chances of one finally passing in Houston.

"Houston voters should be informed that anti-LGBTQ activists used lies to derail pro-

tections for a marginalized community," Cohen says. "Everyone deserves to be protected, and I believe that Houston will one day have a nondiscrimination law."

Following Transform Houston's February 16 town-hall meeting, the group will perform community outreach through canvassing, fundraising, and affiliating itself with religious groups. A full list of Transform Houston events can be found at [facebook.com/transformhouston](https://facebook.com/transformhouston)

Transform Houston (formerly HOUequality) launched in 2014 after Pritchett and Houston activists Fran Watson, Brandon Mack, and Ashton Woods attended a National Gay and Lesbian Task Force summit. At the conference, the group learned about the Leadership LAB's non-discrimination canvass model that helped Miami pass an NDO, and made plans to replicate the canvass in Houston.

Members of Transform Houston, who advocated for HERO when that NDO was approved by Houston City Council, were unable to organize a non-discrimination canvass before the NDO was repealed in 2015. The organization ran a transgender prejudice-reduction canvass in 2017 to familiarize Houstonians with trans and gender-nonconforming folks.

With the launch of Transform Houston's newest outreach plan, the group's organizers are in search of folks from all backgrounds to create a community council that would lead conversations about the city's next NDO.

"A diverse steering committee would assist us to drive the work that we want to accomplish," Pritchett says. "We want to bring together all communities who would be impacted by an NDO so that they feel included in the ordinance from the get-go."



For more info about Transform Houston, visit [transformhouston.org](https://transformhouston.org).

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# PRIDE HOUSTON: The New Look of Diversity

Meet the Pride Houston grand marshal nominees.

By BRANDON WOLF  
Photo by DALTON DEHART

**P**ride Houston introduced the 2019 Pride marshal nominees, as well as this year's theme, at a packed event held Thursday, January 24, at Guava Lamp.

The theme, "Summer of '69" pays tribute to the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, the pivotal New York City incident that unleashed the modern gay-rights movement. The theme places Stonewall alongside two other unforgettable events during the summer of 1969: the moon landing and the Woodstock festival.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



## Pride Houston 2019 Grand Marshal Nominees

Erika Richie (from front left, counterclockwise), Constable Alan Rosen, Mike Webb, Jani Lopez, Iris Rodriguez, Shannon Baldwin, Eric E. Schell, Lo Roberts, Greg Griffin, Becca Keo-Meier, and Harrison Guy.

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## Marshal Nominations Include New Category

In the past, marshals have been classified as male, female, and ally. This year, a new “non-binary” category was introduced for those who identify as neither male nor female. Roberts said that the number of nominations submitted this year was a record.

Male-identifying marshal nominees are: Eric Edward Schell, known for his groundbreaking Pride Portraits project; Jason Black, an HIV/AIDS advocate and head of Legacy Health mSociety intervention program for gay African-American men; and Harrison Guy, chair of the Mayor’s LGBTQ Advisory Board.

Female-identifying marshal nominees are: Shannon Baldwin, newly elected judge for Harris County Criminal Court 4; Janie Lopez, a volunteer for the Victory Fund and the Texas



“Summer of ‘69” logo

Pride Impact Fund; and Iris Rodriguez, a Houston Fire Department captain and U.S. Army sergeant major.

Non-binary marshal nominees are: Becca Keo-Meier, a research assistant at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work; Julien Gomez, co-host of the podcast Veer-Queer; and Mike Webb, president of the Houston GLBT Political Caucus.

The ally marshal nominees are: Erika Richie, PFLAG mom and mother of trans son Landon and a non-binary child; Marian Luntz, a co-founder of QFest; and Alan Rosen, Harris County’s constable for Precinct 1.

Voting for the marshals began on January 27 on the Pride Houston website. Roberts says that community feedback about the current categories of marshals will be welcomed at a Town Hall to be held Saturday, February 23. The event will be held at the Montrose Center, Rooms 106/107, starting at 2:30 pm.

## A Whole New Pride Houston

Roberts took over the leadership of Pride

Houston in late 2017. Since that time, she has worked hard to affect change and make the organization more community-based and diverse. Roberts says that when she first started as president, there were four board positions filled. Now all 13 positions are filled. There were three chair positions in existence when she took up the reins, and now there are 16.

When the board, the chairs, and the nominees were presented to the crowd, it was obvious that Pride Houston has evolved to fully embrace diversity. Pride Houston now looks like Houston, the nation’s most diverse city.

New board member Bruce Reeves, who was the Pride co-chair in 1988, says “I decided it would be interesting to apply for the board. After the first interview, I was pleasantly surprised by the openness [of] the new board. Going forward, I realize how much Pride Houston has changed, grown, and become a tight and very cohesive unit. As co-chair of Special Events, our budget for any single event today is greater than the entire budget was in 1988. I am enjoying the challenge of this position, and look forward to [once again] seeing Pride from the inside.



To vote for Pride grand marshals, visit [pridehouston.org](http://pridehouston.org).

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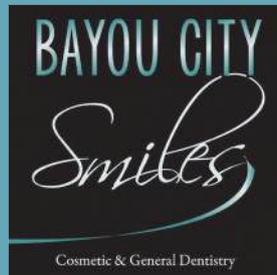


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# QUEER THINGS to DO



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MUSIC

February 19-March 3

## Mamma Mia!

*Mamma mia, does it show again?  
My my, just how much I've missed you.*

**Y**eah, we've missed this musical. But it's back at Theatre Under the Stars this month with a stellar cast and gorgeous costumes. The 1999 musical features a Catherine Johnson book and music by ABBA's Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus. Such toe-tapping numbers as "Super Trouper," "Take a Chance

on Me," "Dancing Queen" and, of course, the title song will have you dancing in the aisles (just remember it's impolite to sing along out loud in the theater). Leading off the cast as Donna is Sally Wilfert. She is joined by Felicia Finley as Tanya, Carla Woods as Rosie, Matthew Scott as Sam Carmichael, Mark Price as Harry Bright, Steven Bogard as Bill Austin, Berklea Going as Sophie, and Karl Josef Co as Sky. Rounding out the company are Zachary

Daniel Jones, Graham Keen, Jacob Major, Blair Medina, Gabi Stapula, Yasmyn Sumiyoshi, Emily Tanner, Christopher Tipps, Raven Justine Troup, and Phil Young. The production also features an ensemble of students from TUTS' Humphreys School of Musical Theatre. Out@TUTS performance will be Wednesday, February 20. See ya there.

[tuts.com](http://tuts.com) or [facebook.com/events/328632851056999/](https://facebook.com/events/328632851056999/)

ART

Now thru April 11

## Close to Home: Latinx Art and Identity

Prints and paintings celebrate the Latinx community and history in this exhibit at the O'Kane Gallery at the University of Houston-Downtown. The artists included in the exhibition are largely based in Texas and Los Angeles. Among the nationally known are Carlos Almaraz, Patssi Valdez, Cesar Martinez, and Kathy Vargas. Carlos Almaraz, who is best known for his brightly colored scenes of urban life and Chicano heritage, created artwork in support of Cesar Chavez's farm worker's movement. [uhd.edu](http://uhd.edu)



COMMUNITY

Sun. | February 24

## Decadent Desserts

Neon Boots Dancehall & Saloon will be hosting an event for AssistHers. It will be an afternoon of bountiful desserts, tasty barbecue, decadent desserts (of course), along with a photo booth, raffles, and generous amounts of boot-scootin' and complimentary parking. Nina Lombardo will host. Tickets are \$25 now, \$35 at the door, or a \$500 sponsorship package which includes VIP tickets for two and a reserved table for four at the main event. [bit.ly/assisthersddd](http://bit.ly/assisthersddd)

**THEATER**

**February 23 & 24**

# The Wizard of Oz

**W**e're off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz! If you're a fan of the famous film, you'll love seeing the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, Dorothy, and her little dog, too, on stage singing all your favorite songs. This Broadway touring production is faithful to the film and boasts a cast and crew from the Great White Way. Bring the kids, bring a friend, bring a date. Audiences of all ages will love this story of timeless family values. [spahouston.org](http://spahouston.org)



**MUSIC**

**February 9**  
**WOMEN ROCK**

Returning for the second year in a row, Mildred's Umbrella is teaming up with Rudyard's British Pub and *Houstonia* magazine for "Women Rock," a fundraiser benefiting the theater company's 2019-20 season. The benefit concert will feature local female-fronted bands and solo artists, a silent auction, and a VIP section with hors d'oeuvres from Rudyard's. [mildredsumbrella.com](http://mildredsumbrella.com)

**NIGHTLIFE**

**February 9**  
**OUTREACH UNITED RED HOT PARTY**

OutReach United's Red Hot Party and Burlesque Benefit featuring Dem Damn Dames will get you into a very romantic Valentine's mood. So join all the tawdry and titillating action at Neon Boots from 7 to 9 pm. Neither Christina Aguilera nor Cher will be in attendance, but don't count out a drag version or two showing up. [neonbootsclub.com](http://neonbootsclub.com)

**NIGHTLIFE**

**February 9**  
**HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN HER PARTY**

HER HRC Group presents A Valentine's Dance Party at Pearl Bar. One of Los Angeles' hottest spinners, DJ Goodboy Morgan, will be here to play the best hits for all you lovebirds with a special music performance by Houston's own Nina Lombardo. \$10 suggested donation at the door. [facebook.com/events/291081881750066/](https://facebook.com/events/291081881750066/)

**NIGHTLIFE**

**February 14**  
**VALENTINE'S DAY DRAG SHOW AT RIPCORD**

Several local drag queens will be performing at 10 pm. Barba Coa will host. She'll be joined by Ondi, Mocca Bone, and Beck (not *the* Beck). Following the show, Ripcord will have their resident DJ Melle Mel, a two-time OutSMART favorite female DJ winner, play a set. [facebook.com/events/2188795157842227/](https://facebook.com/events/2188795157842227/)

**ART**

**February 16**  
**RONNIE QUEENAN AT URBAN EATS**

Come and enjoy an afternoon of art, complimentary beer, wine, champagne, and hors d'oeuvres at the reception for artist Ronnie Queenan from 3 to 5. Owner and culinary director Levi Rollins says, "Ronnie's art delivers a broad spectrum of texture, style, and emotion." And while you're there picking up a piece of art, grab some grub to go from Urban's downstairs market. [feasturbaneats.com](http://feasturbaneats.com)

**TELEVISION**

**February 19 @ 9pm**

**AT HOME WITH AMY SEDARIS**  
Comedienne Amy Sedaris' show returns to truTV. So expect more bizarre recipes, horrifically helpful hints, and other homemaker tips Martha Stewart never even dreamed of. The second season's guest stars include Rose Byrne, Matthew Broderick, Justin Theroux, Susan Sarandon, Ellie Kemper, Fred Armisen, Ann Dowd, Martha Plimpton, Jessica Walter, and Janeane Garofalo. Check local listings. [trutv.com/shows/at-home-with-amy-sedaris/index.html](http://trutv.com/shows/at-home-with-amy-sedaris/index.html)



**FASHION**

**February 22**  
**HAUTE NIGHT OUT FASHION SHOW**

At press time, there were no deets for this big bash, but rest assured it will feature all the glamorous fashion ogling you're used to at this party after the Red Dress Gala, which, in the past, has benefitted such worthy causes as AIDS Foundation Houston and Hatch. Come out and strut your stuff with the rest of Houston's hippest fashionistas. [facebook.com/events/307798112893132/](https://facebook.com/events/307798112893132/)

**MUSIC**

**February 25**  
**KACEY MUSGRAVES OPENS RODEO HOUSTON 2019**

In the nearly six years since she released her debut album *Same Trailer, Different Park*, Grammy-winning artist Kacey Musgraves has released 15 singles and four studio albums, with three albums reaching the No. 1 spot on the Top Country Albums chart. She'll be sure to open this year's rodeo with a boot-scootin' bang. [facebook.com/events/1452944834836524/](https://facebook.com/events/1452944834836524/)



**TALK**

**March 2**  
**MICHELLE OBAMA VISITS HOUSTON**

If there's anyone who can turn a mega event like this at the cavernous Toyota Center into an "intimate conversation," it's Obama. Expect her trademark warmth, wisdom, and Oprahesque inspirational storytelling when she discusses her book, *Becoming*. [houstontoyotacenter.com/events/detail/michelleobama-becoming](http://houstontoyotacenter.com/events/detail/michelleobama-becoming) or [facebook.com/events/362993531175962/](https://facebook.com/events/362993531175962/)

**OUTDOORS**

**March 3**  
**AIDS WALK**

The 29th annual event last year had 9,000 attendees and raised \$300,000 for AIDS Foundation and 12 other local HIV/AIDS service organizations. The event has been dogged by rain for several years, but we're hoping the weather gods will be kinder this year. [aidshelp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=682](http://aidshelp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=682) or [facebook.com/events/353471181874447/](https://facebook.com/events/353471181874447/)

More QUEER THINGS TO DO →

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### QUEER THINGS TO DO

#### THEATER

February 13–March 9

### A Doll's House

The revolutionary Norwegian 1879 classic by Henrik Ibsen is once again at the forefront as it explores the woman's changing place in the world. Nora and Torvald have a seemingly traditional settled 19th-century marriage. Nora, however, has lived for many years with a secret which is about to be revealed.

Theatre Southwest ([tswhouston.org](http://tswhouston.org))

### SAVE the DATES

#### FEST

March 2

### Mardi Gras Parade-Watching Party

Party on the island for a good cause. Join Island ETC (East End Theatre Company) for a parade-viewing party and fundraiser. Tickets are \$100 but include a special viewing area along Mechanic Street, clean restrooms, beer and wine, a Cajun dinner, and maybe a surprise or two! This is a really fun event and a great way to support the theater while enjoying Mardi Gras. [islandetc.org](http://islandetc.org)



#### MUSIC

April 10

### Indigo Girls

The Grammy Award-winning Indigo Girls—Amy Ray and Emily Saliers—join the Houston Symphony, performing folk-rock hits from their career spanning the past four decades. The duet has rewarded fans with hits including “Galileo,” “Kid Fears,” “Closer to Fine,” and “Making Promises.” Experience the Houston Symphony and Indigo Girls sharing the stage together as the iconic duo’s “voices soar and swoop as one” (*Rolling Stone*). [houstonsymphony.org](http://houstonsymphony.org)



Submit your events at [calendar@outsmartmagazine.com](mailto:calendar@outsmartmagazine.com)

Somewhere over the rainbow  
is just around  
the bayou...

# THE WIZARD OF OZ

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By SUSAN BANKSTON  
Illustration by BLASE DISTEFANO



## Sizing Up Your Opponent

A litmus test to keep 'em honest.

**W**e are required to have a national election in two years and, tragically, someone has to win. Clearly, America needs to get better at picking the right candidates.

In an effort to get this done, the staff and patrons at The World's Most Dangerous Beauty Salon, Inc. are kickstarting this effort with . . .

### How to Tell If Your Political Opponent Is Exaggerating Their Political Accomplishments

- You're pretty sure that your opponent isn't old enough to have freed the slaves.
- Claims to be governor of "the greatest state in the union," but is actually the governor of Texas.
- Claims that the thick ozone in Houston is an important source of vitamins and minerals.
- Has more expertise in extramarital affairs than in foreign affairs.
- In addition to claiming he walked on the moon, also claims that Sister Alfonse over at Our Lady of Perpetual Virginity hit on him first.
- You're pretty sure that no one named Rhonda signed the Declaration of Independence.
- After an exposé by CNN, she's backtracking on her claim that she single-handedly slayed the Night King and his army of night walkers beyond the wall and reclaimed the Iron Throne for House Targaryan.
- Adds extra syllables to make accomplishments seem more impressive.
- Claims he never touched alcohol during his entire term as Australian prime minister—but if he did, Mexico paid for it.
- Despite all evidence to the contrary, claims

he does not use the Twitter handle @HugoBalls.

- This many eyes haven't simultaneously rolled since Madonna released "Like a Virgin." And the #1 Way to Tell If They Exaggerate Their Political Accomplishments:
  - Bragging concludes with, ". . . and on the seventh day, I rested."

### It's time to talk about Texas

Right this very minute, while you're foolishly sitting there without a damn death-grip on your wallet, the Texas Legislature is meeting in Austin and figuring out ways to hold you upside down to shake all your money out.

In Texas, we allow the Legislature to meet and pass laws every two years for 140 days, and nothing more. Upon reflection, we wish we had made that two days every 140 years.

We pay them \$600 a month, plus all the live armadillos they can steal (which is far too much money, not to mention the stock for fine purveyors of tchotchkes everywhere). Our lawmakers support themselves off of graft and kickbacks.

This year, the opening day of the 86th Legislative Session corresponded exactly with the day Donald Trump made his build-my-wall speech on television. Texas lieutenant governor Dan Patrick could not attend the Legislature's first day because, as he explains, he was in Washington DeeCee "helping" Trump write his television speech. Nobody on God's green earth thought Trump's speech was any damn good, proving once and for all that when Trump and Patrick work on anything together, one plus one can equal a big flaming tootin' zero.

Lt. Governor Patrick is a giant supporter of

the so-called bathroom bill. If Patrick had his way, transgender Texans would be required to use the bathroom corresponding to the gender they were assigned at birth. Patrick has thrown wall-eyed snot-nosed hissy fits over his bathroom bills for the past two legislative sessions, and he was soundly defeated both times.

Patrick now says he will not introduce the bathroom bill during this legislative session. Wanna know why? He spent one damn day with Donald Trump, and he's learned how to play the game. Now he's explaining why he's not introducing the bathroom bill by saying, with a straight face, "When you win the battle, you don't have to fight the battle again. I think it's been settled, and I think we've won."

No, Patrick, you lost. You did not win. I do not care how you spin it, you lost. Defeated. Humiliated. Trounced. Conquered.

Honey, Patrick doesn't know whether to wind his ass or scratch his watch.

The new reality is to lose, and then declare you won. That would mean Germany won WWII, the Astros repeated their World Series victory this year, nobody remembered the Alamo, and from now on you can call me Miss America.

One day Patrick spent only one day with Trump. I swear this stuff is contagious.

Have a wonderful Valentine's Day, and I hope someone dreamy kisses you flat on the mouth.

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

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Register at: **[AIDSWalkHouston.org](http://AIDSWalkHouston.org)**

**AIDS Walk Houston is the largest HIV/AIDS fundraiser in Houston, Benefiting local AIDS Service organizations:**

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Individuals Providing a Positive Presence – IPPP | Lazarus House | LIVE Consortium  
The T.R.U.T.H. Project | The University of Houston LGBTQ Resource Center



\*Parks and Recreation Department Regulations prohibits dogs, amphibians, reptiles and snakes that are considered dangerous.

By MONICA ROBERTS

**Blazing Trails**

Among the black leaders we honor this month are trans pioneers (l-r) Janet Mock, Althea Garrison, Marsha P. Johnson, Laverne Cox, Dominique Jackson, and Wilmer Broadnax.

# Black Trans People Are Making Black History

## It's time to give credit where credit is due.

**T**he calendar has once again turned to February, which means we once again have 28 days (29 in a leap year) for people to get a snapshot of black history.

Black history is the proud story of a people spanning thousands of years—a story that is much bigger than the shortest month of the year. As a child and godchild of historians, every month on the calendar is Black History Month for me, because black people aren't doing awesome things that deserve to be recorded for posterity just in the month of February.

One group of trailblazing black people we don't talk about enough is black trans people. It may be news to our cis counterparts, but black trans people are black people.

Black trans people have undeniably been making black history, and that history doesn't start and end with Marsha P. Johnson at the Stonewall Inn. The first trans person to go through the Johns Hopkins gender pro-

gram when it started in Baltimore was a black trans woman named Avon Wilson.

You could also consider Lucy Hicks Anderson one of the first people drawn into the battle for marriage equality. She was arrested and tried for perjury by a California district attorney.

Wilmer Broadnax was a Houston-born gospel quartet singer who was popular from the '40s to the '70s.

Some of our early trans leaders were guys—in the persons of Marcelle Cook Daniels, Alexander John Goodrum, and Kylar Broadus. Goodrum helped pass Tucson's nondis-

crimination ordinance, while Broadus later became the first trans person to testify to a U.S. Senate committee.

I had to remind the world the night that Danica Roem won her Virginia House of Delegates race that she wasn't the first trans person to be elected to a state legislature. Althea Garrison had already accomplished that in 1990.

That same November 2017 night when Roem was getting

elected, Minnesota voters elected Andrea Jenkins and Phillippe Cunningham to serve on the Minneapolis City Council.

Politics isn't the only area where black trans people are blazing trails. In December, Breanna Synclaire made her debut with the San Francisco Opera. Tona Brown has performed at Carnegie Hall.

Dezjorn Gauthier, Laith Ashley, Dominique Jackson, Angelica Ross, and Arisce Wanzer were just some of the black trans people who were part of the all-trans March Marco fashion show that occurred during New York Fashion Week last September.

Janet Mock, who already has a *New York Times* best-selling book to her credit, is now one of the writers and producers of the TV show *POSE*. Laverne Cox continues to blaze trails in Hollywood as she speaks truth to power.

Dr. Kortney Ryan Ziegler continues to blaze trails in the tech world as an entrepreneur. He was recently named to the 2018 *EBONY* magazine Power 100 List.

I need to talk about myself for a moment, because in my 20 years of activism I have also blazed some trails. I just received my fourth nomination for a GLAAD Media Award in the

**"WE WISH TO  
PLEAD OUR  
OWN CASE.  
FOR TOO LONG  
OTHERS HAVE  
SPOKEN ABOUT  
US, BUT OUR  
VIRTUES GO  
UNNOTICED."**

*John Russwurm and  
Samuel Cornish, 1822*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64



# What Is Your ‘Income Stability Ratio’?

Descending the retirement-income mountain.

**R**egardless of how long you’ve been saving and investing for the future, it is likely that you’ve focused primarily on your investments’ returns. Baby Boomers have traditionally been trained to think about “climbing up Mount Everest,” ascending higher by accumulating assets and increasing net worth.

But as we get older and start to approach retirement, far fewer people—consumers and financial advisors alike—are focused on “descending” the mountain and converting assets into an ongoing, sustainable income that will last for as long as it is needed.

## The Three-Legged Retirement Income Stool Has Become Unbalanced

In the past, many retirees could count on income from three primary sources—pensions, Social Security, and personal savings. These are oftentimes referred to as “the three-legged stool.”

With a defined-benefit pension plan, retired employees could rely on a set amount of income, typically for the remainder of their lifetimes. (And in some cases, some or all of that income would continue for a surviving spouse).

Social Security was another primary source of income for yesterday’s retirees. When this program was initially put into place in 1935, there were more than 40 workers paying into the system for every one retiree collecting benefits. This is not the case anymore.

For retirees in the past, any income that was generated from personal savings and investments was oftentimes just icing on the cake. And because life expectancy was shorter several decades ago, none of these income sources had to last very long.

But today it’s a different story.

First, due to the expense of paying out lifetime retirement benefits, many companies have done away with the traditional pension and replaced it with the 401(k). While there can be some nice aspects of investing in a 401(k) plan, going this route has shifted the responsibility for generating income in retirement away from the employer and entirely into the hands of the individual employee.

Second, while retirees today can still count on Social Security, this may not be the case for long. One of the primary reasons for this is because there are far fewer workers paying into the system today to support each recipient. In fact, the current ratio is less than three work-

ers paying taxes for every one Social Security income recipient.

And according to the Social Security Administration, this benefit is only intended to replace about 40 percent of an average wage earner’s pre-retirement income. (That percentage is even lower for those earning higher wages.)

Given all of that, personal savings and investments have had to play a much larger role in ensuring that you have income in retirement, and that the income will last for as long as you need it to. In order to do so, it is necessary to start positioning assets and thinking about how to generate cash flow.

## Are You Ready to Descend the Retirement-Income Mountain?

The truth is that when you’re retired, a successful and stress-free financial future has much more to do with how much income you are generating—as well as for how long. This requires a totally different mindset from what we’re used to.

There are a number of ways to generate income and essentially “replace” your employer’s paycheck when it comes time for you

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64



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## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

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

### Through February 10

**Galveston Restaurant Week 2019** benefiting Access Care of Coastal Texas. INFO: Galvestonrestaurantweek.com

### February 24

**Decadent Desserts & Dancing** presented by the Montrose Center, benefiting AssistHers. MontroseCenter.org/ddd

### February 20

**Out@TUTS Night** presents *Mamma Mia!* Get your seats for the first Wednesday night of every thrilling production in TUTS' 50th-anniversary season. After the curtain goes down, the party continues with free bites, drink specials, and live music. Mingle with the cast and crew members, sing a few show tunes, and celebrate an inclusive Houston. All are welcome! INFO: tuts.com/out

### February 24

Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) presents **OUT@SPA Night** with OutSmart. Join us at the inaugural OUT@SPA event for a performance of *The Wizard of Oz!* at 6:30 p.m., and party on after the show. INFO: SPAHouston.com

### March 3

**AIDSWALK Houston** Sam Houston Park in downtown Houston at noon. INFO: AIDSWALKHouston.org

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# THE DYNAMIC BEAUTY of

# Jessica Zyrie

By **RYAN M. LEACH** | Photos by **CHRISTELYN NASH**

---

**T**rans fashion model Jessica Zyrie and her boyfriend, Alexander Miller, posted a photo of themselves on Miller's Facebook page in early January. The photo showed the couple dressed in color-coordinated outfits of black and yellow.

Zyrie, who has walked the runways of New York Fashion Week, stole much of the focus. While Alexander is equally as attractive, Jessica has that breathtaking beauty that is rare among mortals. Although the photo was like millions of other photos of couples that are posted every day on the platform, shortly after it was posted it was removed by Facebook for violating "community standards."

"We were both completely clothed and it was fully appropriate, but somebody reported it. Why? I don't know. I've had people steal my photo, post it on their wall, attack me, and have all of their followers say horrible things about me as a person. And Facebook does nothing. Somehow, that's okay and not violating anything," said a frustrated Zyrie. →





The photo that she is referring to is of her as a child, side-by-side with a current photo of her at 26. When she posted it online, she intended it to be inspirational. “The post was intended to convey that I wish I could go back and tell this little kid that it’s okay to be yourself—that if you keep living your life, there will be people that love you and accept you, and you can follow your dreams. It was just talking about my story. I got a lot of support when I posted it on my page originally,” said Zyrie.

Followers of the site that stole her photo left comments like “This is Satan, what a shame!” or “This little boy was so cute and now this happened.” They also added throw-up emojis over Zyrie’s face.

She shrugged it off, accustomed to a world that often does not welcome trans people. “At first, I didn’t really think too much of it. I was just like, ‘Whatever—haters are gonna hate.’ But I continued having people come on my public page for modeling and leave comments saying that I was disgusting and gross, and putting more throw-up stuff on there,” said Zyrie.

“A few went onto my boyfriend’s page and said, ‘You’re really dating this?’ My boyfriend is also trans, so he started receiving attacks too. We both reported it, and Facebook’s response was that the behavior still fit within the community guidelines and it was okay for them to do that,” she continued.

“People don’t realize that social media can be such a beautiful thing. I have met so many friends and have been able to network and promote my modeling on social media. I even met my boyfriend on social media. But the other side of that is this wall, and it makes it easier for people to dehumanize a person that they may never have met.”

### A Snapshot of Youth

It may be easy via social media to only see Zyrie as a model, or only as a transgender activist. What photos won’t show is Zyrie’s bachelor’s degree in psychology that she earned in 2016 from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, graduating with honors.

She is the first person in her family to graduate from college. It was at A&M that she began developing her interest in modeling while living day-to-day as her true self after

coming out in high school.

“When I came out, I was 17 years old. It was winter break and I was thinking about prom a lot. I loved to dance, and I didn’t want to feel uncomfortable at this dance that I knew I was going to remember for the rest of my life. I contemplated over break if I wanted to just show up at prom as myself for the first time ever. But then I was concerned that my school might think it was a joke and I wouldn’t be able to attend. I decided that winter break was a good time to buy clothes and get everything situated. I talked to my parents, talked to friends, and then went back the first day as myself.

[I figured that I wouldn’t] have to pretend to be anyone else at prom, and could be comfortable as myself. And maybe I could get a date!”

Zyrie ended up going to the dance with friends and enjoying the prom as she had hoped. Even in 2019, Zyrie’s story of simply going to school and the prom sounds like an act of bravery that many in the LGBTQ community can identify with.

### Coming into Focus

Student groups like GSAs and SAGA clubs have helped improve the school environment for LGBTQ people, but progress is still a daily struggle—especially for trans students who feel they must capitulate to the status quo and fake their way through the milestones of growing up. On a daily basis, they fight for the basic right to use the correct restroom, to be identified by the correct name or pronouns, and to participate in sports.

Most recently, a transgender teen named Mack Breggs was forced by Texas UIL rules to participate in state wrestling tournaments against female competitors. He trounced his competition, winning all-state titles twice. Mack had his top surgery in August and finally joined the men’s wrestling team at Life University in September.

A school’s location in Texas can also dictate how friendly the school district may be to transgender students. Nearby Pearland ISD’s superintendent has been particularly hostile towards transgender students. When Kimberly Shappley fought to allow her daughter, Kai, to use the girl’s restroom, she and Kai were met time and again with resistance. On several occasions, the elementary-age little girl wet her pants while adults fretted about whether or not Kai could use the girl’s restroom. Shappley ended up moving her family to Austin, where the school district is inclusive and Kai can attend school without having to worry. →

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**“I was blinded by society’s feelings about who I may be, and I didn’t want to cause an uproar. Now I’m more able to stand up and fight for myself.”**

—Jessica Zyrie



**Z**yrrie can relate to that experience, to a degree. “When I went back to school, the principal called me into his office. I was concerned because I had never been called into the office before. I had never been in trouble. He just asked me a little bit about how I was feeling, and I explained to him what was going on. At the time I felt very supported. In retrospect, however, I remember the bathroom thing was a huge deal. I had to use the nurse’s bathroom.”

The “nurse’s bathroom” has been the usual compromise offered to transgender or gender nonconforming students for many years in Texas schools—a well-intentioned but misguided approach that in and of itself can be discriminatory, ostracizing, and inconvenient.

“At the time, it kind of hurt. I wish I would have been able to use whichever restroom was accessible to me. But honestly, my main concern was not being able to be myself at school. I also just thought, ‘Look at the big picture. You won’t be in trouble for being yourself.’ That was key. I just forced all of those feelings to the back, because I’ve spent all of my life pushing everything to the back. I think about how sad that was, because now I wouldn’t stand for that. But at the time, I was still so blinded by society’s feelings about who I may be, and I didn’t want to cause any more of an uproar than my transition had already caused. Now I’m more able to stand up and fight for myself.”

### Fashion Forward

These days, Jessica works at the Montrose Center when she’s not in front of a camera. As an HEI counselor who assists clients with early-intervention HIV services, she helps link clients to resources they may require, whether it’s housing, employment, healthcare, or other general needs.

Zyrie has always been very involved with helping the community since she arrived in Houston in 2016. She started with PrEP advocacy and education at the Montrose Center a year ago, and is the first trans woman to have that position at the Center. In fact, she was the Center’s January 2019 employee of the month.

Zyrie will return to New York for Fashion Week this spring for her second time. She walked in Fashion Week for the first time last year, fulfilling a career goal and a lifelong dream. Zyrie had hoped to one day become a Victoria’s Secret “angel,” but those plans may be on hold after one of the company executives made discriminatory comments about hiring trans models for the show.

As for her relationship with Miller, things are moving along nicely, even though he lives in Kentucky. Zyrie hopes that he will make the move to Houston as their relationship evolves. That photo of the couple that had been reported and removed for violating community standards was finally reviewed by Facebook, and they determined that the couple was, in fact, not violating their community standards, and their photo was allowed back up on the platform. However, Zyrie still receives harassing and abusive comments from other users related to the other photo that was stolen.

But she will still keep on strutting, even if it’s not on a fashion-show runway. Nothing is going to get in the way of her dreams. ▼

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

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# Modern Family

## LGBTQ Couples & Kids

By KIM HOGSTROM

A thrilling new trend is emerging in American parenting: LGBTQ couples starting families. As one might suspect, they often live in thriving urban areas, but they're also growing in numbers in bucolic suburbs and quiet rural regions. The one element these couples seem to have in common is joy.

What is causing this trend? As more members of the LGBTQ community tie the knot, an unexpected instinct steps into the picture—the desire to build a family. While that's not always the case, why would we expect otherwise? The hetero side of humankind has felt the need to reproduce since the dawn of time. What better way to celebrate a loving LGBTQ relationship than to share that love with a child?

But how? There are several options for either assisted reproduction or adoption, and many local professionals are stepping up to help local LGBTQ couples make parenting a reality.

### Exploring the Procreative Options

As a 20-something lesbian living in Houston, Liliana Galvan never dreamed she would marry the love of her life, Crystal Carvajal—or that the couple would give birth to a beautiful daughter. Galvan, 32, could not be happier. “Life today is pretty darned awesome,” she

says, smiling.

When it comes to LGBTQ reproduction, there are more options than most people realize. And in Houston, we have professionals who stand ready to help with every one of them.

Galvan and her wife decided it was time to consider building a family at the seven-year mark in their relationship. “We decided to investigate the process after we lost some close friends, back to back,” recalled Carvajal. “When something like that happens, it makes you think about the ‘what if’ scenarios. We decided that if anything happened to either one of us, we wanted to leave each other something more.

“After our first consultation with Dr. Hoff at Houston Fertility Institute (HFI), we understood the options, but we also knew there were no guarantees. Lily and I agreed that if parenthood was meant to be for us, it would be. Then we searched HFI’s recommended sperm bank for donors and purchased four vials of sperm.

“Lily surprised me on Valentine’s Day by telling me she was pregnant. It was the best Valentine’s Day ever!” Carvajal concluded.

“I carried our daughter,” Galvan added. “Crystal has a job that would have made a pregnancy difficult, so we knew it would be me. Working with Dr. Hoff, we searched sperm-bank files separately and then brought our favorites back to [share with each other]. There was one who stood out. →

Crystal Carvajal, Liliana Galvan,  
and their baby, Mila Sofia Carvajal

We listened to an interview with him, and we both got very emotional. That's when we knew we'd found our donor," Galvan explained.

"Lily and Crystal used our medically assisted insemination process," stated OB/GYN Heather Hoff, a specialist in the field of reproductive endodontology and infertility (REI) at Houston Fertility Institute. "We used a catheter to place the sperm in the center of her uterus. Success is not a sure thing, but we soon had a pregnancy. It was joyous moment for all of us."

Lesbian couples have many donor options. Some turn to a friend for sperm; others ask a male relative of one of the women for help.

An interesting option is the use of *in vitro* fertilization. A sperm donor is identified and one woman contributes the egg, which is fertilized externally, then implanted in the second woman who carries the pregnancy to term. If the donor is a blood relative of one of the two, this process allows the biologically unrelated woman to carry, thus producing a baby that is as connected to both women as possible.

There are many good sperm banks offering both frozen and fresh sperm. (Freezing is a safe option and has no effect on the child, says Dr. Hoff.) In the case of Houston Fertility Institute, the agency also works with a highly qualified sperm-bank service, thus providing lesbian couples a one-stop resource to meet all their needs.

The field of reproductive endodontology and infertility is a highly specialized one. For Dr. Hoff, the choice to pursue this particular field almost felt like a calling.

Dr. Hoff originally planned to be a veterinarian, but when she delivered her first child, it was a moving, life-changing experience that served as an epiphany. Even today, the thought of helping couples start families often brings tears to her eyes.

Dr. Hoff also believes that being a lesbian gives her a deeper understanding of the concerns and uncertainties that LGBTQ couples have. Dr. Hoff herself is considering the journey to parenting, making her profession all the more thrilling and personal.

### Men and Reproductive Road Bumps

Gay male couples face more challenges bearing a biological baby than their lesbian sisters, and many assume parenting is simply not in their stars. Much to these couples' surprise, very few of

## "LILY SURPRISED ME ON VALENTINE'S DAY BY TELLING ME SHE WAS PREGNANT. IT WAS THE BEST VALENTINE'S DAY EVER!"

—Crystal Carvajal



Liliana Galvan

the infant because it is not biologically related to her.

Here again, there are options. Some gay couples decide to combine an egg from one man's sister (or other female relative) with the sperm of the second, unrelated partner, and implant the ovum in a woman who will serve as the gestational carrier. This produces a baby genetically related to both men. Many male couples who choose this path consider such a birth to be a blessing, if not a miracle.

Who are these surrogates? Aspire Fertility works with a highly regarded agency to offer a selection of women candidates, all of whom have been thoroughly reviewed, medically tested, and investigated on relevant matters.

"Some people question the motives of surrogates, or as we call them, gestational carriers," stated reproductive endocrinologist and OB/GYN Barbara Stegmann, a physician at Aspire Fertility. She is a doctor who derives great joy from her "dream position" at the clinic.

"The truth is, our gestational carriers are the nicest people you will ever meet. These women know they are giving the greatest gift there is to give a loving LGBTQ couple. They are delighted to help," Dr. Stegmann explained.

Gestational carriers are selected by the future parents, and are required to have their own biological children first. When their birth children ask about the pregnancy, the carrier will generally say something like, "We are babysitting for some very happy parents." (How sweet is that?)

"They are truly kind people, with their hearts and interests in the right place," Dr. Stegmann added.

Aspire Fertility believes that families, like babies, come in all shapes and sizes, and actively seeks LGBTQ couples interested in starting families. Dr. Stegmann understands the questions that surround parenthood, and works to make the process as stress-free as possible. Aspire offers seven reproductive endocrinologists at six locations throughout the city, with a success rate that far exceeds the national average.

"When I meet an LGBTQ couple for the initial consultation, I spend a lot of time helping them sort through their uncertainties," →

the challenges are insurmountable. For any sort of a genetic link to an offspring, it is necessary to utilize a surrogate.

Surrogacy comes in two forms. In a traditional surrogacy, the woman who carries the baby is also the genetic mother and supplies the egg. After the surrogate agrees, the gay couple decides which partner will supply the sperm to fertilize her ovum. In some cases, the couple will direct medical professionals to use sperm from both men and leave the genetics of the child up to fate.

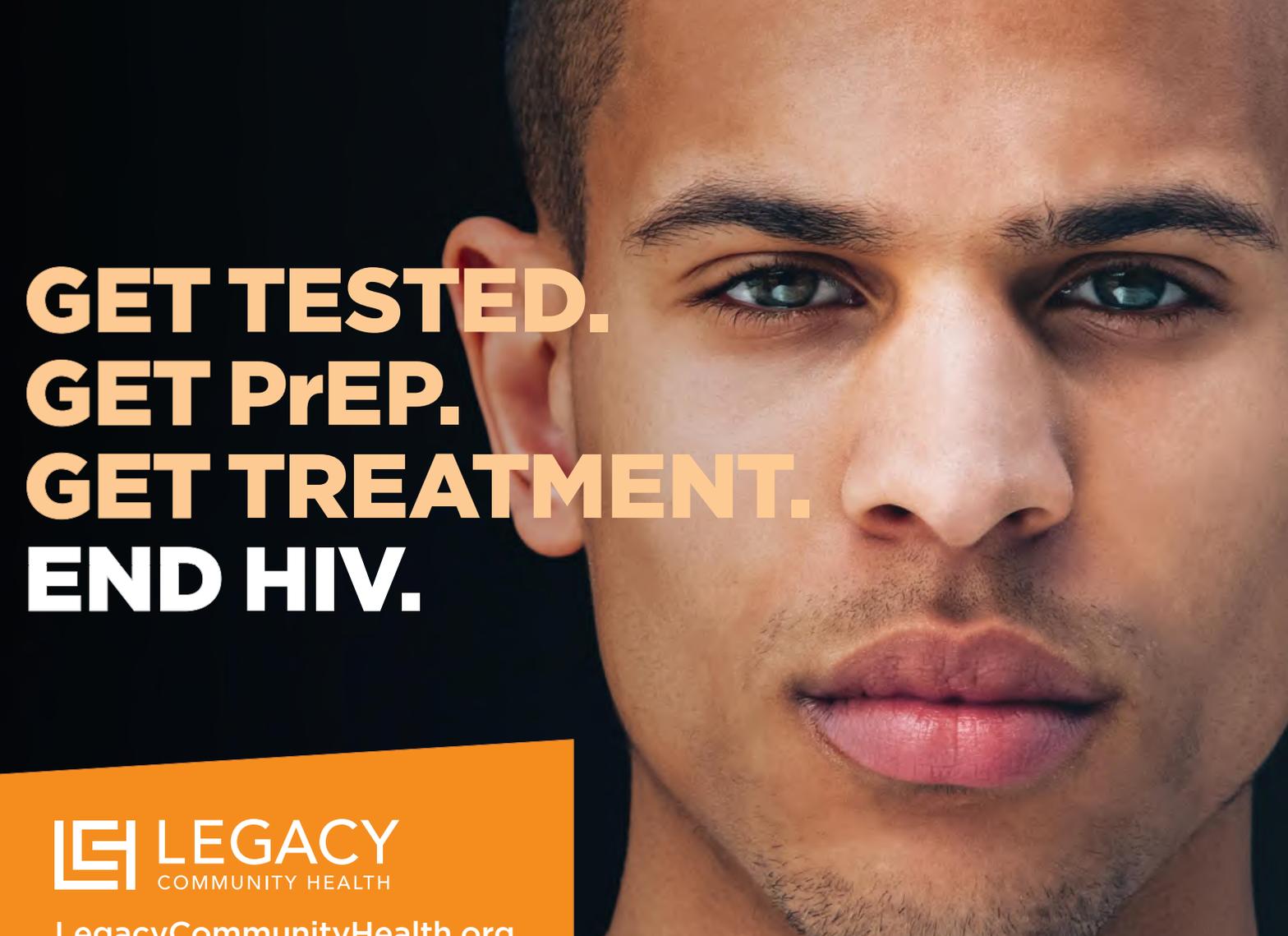
The second type of surrogacy is called gestational. In this case, the gay couple will use an egg from a donor and choose a second woman—a gestational surrogate—to carry the child.

A gestational surrogate offers advantages. She enters the pregnancy with all of the cards

on the table: she knows and has approved of the couple who will parent the child and, significantly, she will be less tempted to keep



Dr. Heather Hoff  
Houston Fertility Institute



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Dr. Stegmann explained. “Education is a big part of it. I ease their misgivings and share solutions. It is also important to let them know that they are not alone; we will be there for each step of their amazing journey. After all, that is the greatest reward for me, to start a new life and see the beginning of a loving family. That makes it all worthwhile,” Dr. Stegmann concluded, her eyes sparkling.

#### Transcending the Challenges of Transgender Parenting

There is another trend emerging in the LGBTQ community in Houston: more and more children are identifying as transgender at a younger age. This fact gives rise to some questions about the reproductive futures of transgender individuals. Can medical science provide answers?

“We see many trans patients in all stages of their transitions,” stated Dr. Hoff. “They are all excited about transitioning, but they also know they may want to have a family at some time. They want ‘insurance’ for down the line. Depending on where they are in their transition, we will take sperm or harvest eggs and freeze them for the future. It’s up to the patient what to do then, but that way they have possibilities,” the doctor explained.

“As for children, we see transgender teens and pre-teen kids too. They have no thoughts of a future family at this stage in their lives, but it is their parents who bring them into the clinic. The parents are thinking of potential grandchildren at some point. We work with the teen who is normally very comfortable with our suggestions to ensure options exist for the future.

“It is another amazing service we offer, and highly valued by the growing trans community,” Dr. Hoff concluded.

#### Financing the Future

Notably, both Aspire and HFI offer help identifying financing options for LGBTQ couples. A few insurance companies currently recognize the reproductive needs of the community, but the process is not cheap. A single vial of sperm runs about \$750, and a small selection of unfertilized eggs is around \$10,000. (These numbers do not take into account the tests and treatments needed to bring a child to term.)

The average compensation for a gestational surrogate in Texas runs about \$50,000 plus expenses, depending on the individual arrangements. In states like California, where surrogates are in high demand, surrogates may be paid much more.

There is no other way to slice it: having and/or raising a child is expensive. Building a family remains beyond the financial reach of

many loving LGBTQ couples. If partners enter the journey to parenthood thinking only about the expense of diapers and baby food, they need to think again.

No matter who you are, LGBTQ or otherwise, a prerequisite to reproduction in America may soon involve winning the lottery.

#### The Foster/Adoption Option

For some LGBTQ couples, the urgency presented by America’s overburdened foster-care and adoption system determines their choice for creating a family. Here again, there are some fine local agencies ready to help.

More than 400,000 American children are removed from homes as the result of abuse, neglect, or abandonment each year. Since 1966,



Blake Ellis (l), Shaun McDade Nelson, and Calder Anthony Nelson-Ellis

Trinity Youth Services has answered this societal challenge by providing foster-care services and finding permanent adoptive homes. In these loving environments, kids often start to heal from the trauma in their lives.

Unlike other agencies, the California-based Trinity organization seeks foster and adoptive couples regardless of age, religion, ethnicity, race, or, notably, sexual orientation. All are welcome.

Trinity is fully prepared to help certify couples by assisting with background checks, the FBI fingerprinting process, home visits, and the safety inspections required for foster

certification and licensing. Its knowledgeable staff helps by explaining the ins and outs of the foster-care system.



Dr. Barbara Stegmann  
Aspire Fertility

However, the agency’s services are by no means limited to foster care. Trinity strives to provide quality guardianship with one goal in mind—the permanency of adoption. If a couple expresses a desire to adopt, Trinity first requires the couple to foster the child for six months. If the request remains after that trial period, the agency will move heaven and earth to help with the adoption.

“Many of our most dedicated and loving foster families are LGBTQ couples,” states Brea Blaylock, director of marketing for Trinity Youth Services Houston. “And some of our happiest adoptions have been with LGBTQ families. We require their help. A child enters the foster system every two seconds in America. The need for families far outstrips the number of foster homes. We are fortunate and grateful for the love these couples are willing to share.”

Renee Barnes and Yuovene Spann are a lesbian couple who have been together 14 years and fostered five children. While the women are both African-American, their fosters represent nearly every ethnicity, and all were ultimately returned to their biological families by the courts. It is safe to say that each child was a bit happier and healthier thanks to Barnes and Spann.

“It is a very rewarding experience for us,” Barnes said, smiling. “We get to help the children heal, learn, and grow with us. Right now, we are shopping for a larger home. When we find it, we’ll start fostering more children—and hopefully, working with Trinity, we’ll eventually adopt one.

“We help the kids, but the kids help us, too. They bring us joy, and they keep us going. We are looking forward to plenty more peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in our future,” Barnes concluded, laughing.

There are other ways to arrive at an adoption. Sometimes it takes lots of help from agencies, and sometimes it takes a heaping dollop of luck. Such was the case for Houstonians Blake Ellis and Shaun McDade Nelson.

These two happily married men spent the first years of their relationship solidifying their professional lives. When they reached the four-year mark in their marriage, they started to think about building a family—a dream that began to take up more and more space in their hearts. →

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In 2015, the couple took their first steps toward adoption by filing requests for an infant with three adoption agencies. Then they waited.

“We thought about various forms of reproduction, but we decided that the best route for us to take was to give a child a happy, loving home who might not otherwise have the chance,” Ellis stated. “We put no stipulation on the child’s sex, ethnicity, or background—we would have loved whoever he or she was. We were just looking forward to sharing our love,” Ellis explained.

It took three long years for the call to come. Finally, a woman who was expecting a girl chose Ellis and Nelson to parent her soon-to-be newborn. The men were overcome with anticipation and excitement. They immediately started to “nest.”

“A day before the mother gave birth, she decided to parent the baby herself. We were devastated. There are no words for our sadness. But that’s not where it ends. A short time after that, we got a call from some friends in Mississippi who had a friend seeking good parents for a child she would soon deliver. She

**“WE PUT NO STIPULATION ON THE CHILD’S SEX, ETHNICITY, OR BACKGROUND—WE WOULD HAVE LOVED WHOEVER HE OR SHE WAS. WE WERE JUST LOOKING FORWARD TO SHARING OUR LOVE.”**

—Blake Ellis

was interested in meeting us. It was a shock and gift all wrapped in one, and we quickly got in the car and headed east,” Ellis recalled.

“We arrived at the hospital shortly after she gave birth to a baby boy,” Nelson added, smiling. “We didn’t participate in the delivery, but we met the birth mother and her family, and we all decided that it would be an open adoption from the beginning. The child’s biological relatives are welcome in his life. We think it will be best for his sake.”

Ellis and Nelson named their new son Calder Anthony Nelson-Ellis. Calder turned 16 months a short time ago, and the adoptive parents could not be happier.

“One of the things that we did not anticipate was the overwhelming and unrelenting joy and support we have received from all our friends, and particularly the LGBTQ community. It’s been wonderful. It’s sort of like we all had a baby,” Ellis stated, laughing.

“For me, I did not realize what a place Calder would take in my heart,” Nelson concluded. “I think about him constantly. Even now, as I wait for him to return from daycare, I can’t wait to see him. It has amazed and humbled me. It is a love that only seems to grow.” ▼

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

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COMMUNITY

# Thirty Years of Walking

AIDS Walk 2019, still a necessary step.

By MARENE GUSTIN

Photo by MORRIS MALAKOFF



“I can’t believe we have been in this fight for 30 years,” says Nike Blue, chief program officer of AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc. As the state’s oldest HIV prevention, education, and services agency, the nonprofit sponsors the annual local AIDS Walk, which turns 30 this year. And that milestone is cause for both celebration and concern.

“It’s a really fun event, rain or shine,” says Yesenia “Kimmy” Palacios, the project director of Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social, Inc. (FLAS), which enhances behavioral health and wellness services for the Latino community. “I’m in charge of getting all our staff and volunteers to register for the walk, distributing materials and shirts, organizing the team, and seeing that everyone has a good time.” FLAS’s team is usually 100 to 150 strong, and that includes Palacios and her children. “I bring them every year,” she says. “They love the bouncy-house.”

“It’s a great way to get information to families,” says Blue. “We have vendors with literature, and we have fun stuff for the children. And the food trucks were very popular last year.”

The 29th annual Walk last year had 9,000 attendees and raised \$300,000 for AIDS Foundation and 12 other local HIV/AIDS ser-

vice organizations, one of which was FLAS.

“We were hoping to raise more,” says Blue. “But like so many nonprofits, we were impacted by Harvey. So many people had given what they could to the hurricane-relief efforts that they couldn’t give to the Walk. But we were still very grateful for the fact that it didn’t rain. Hopefully the weather gods will smile on us again this year.” Houston’s AIDS Walk was snake-bit (or maybe weather-bit) with a five-year run of rain, to the extent that one year they gave red umbrellas to the walkers.

The Walk is a great way to raise funds and awareness for HIV/AIDS, but as Blue admits, it is sad that it is still needed today.

And while the overall HIV/AIDS picture may be brighter, the statistics for Latinos grow dimmer by the year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that while overall new HIV diagnoses among men who have sex with men (MSM) stabilized between 2010 and 2014,

diagnoses among Latino MSM increased 13 percent during that period. In fact, 9,290 Latino men received an HIV diagnosis in 2015. Latinos represent 17 percent of the population but account for 24 percent of all persons newly diagnosed.

“And it’s on the rise locally, too,” says Palacios. “The last couple of years, every year it has increased. And it is mostly men having casual sex with men. We see clients newly diagnosed who report sexual encounters with 30 to 40 partners in recent months, and they don’t even know their names. That’s why our Spanish-language marketing campaign is so important. A lot of them don’t know that PrEP can help high-risk candidates from being infected, and they don’t know about the new treatments and testing. Most of them don’t have insurance either, and don’t know about Federally Qualified Health Centers like Legacy Community Health, where they can get testing and treatments at rates they can afford. We can



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Left to right: Vince Lee, curator of the LGBT collection; Christian Kelleher, head of UH M.D. Anderson Library Special Collections, and Alys Garcia Carrera, one of the two students processing the collection into the library.

## LGBTQ Archive Makes Its Largest Acquisition to Date

Botts/Carper collection is  
city's oldest gay archive.

By **BRANDON WOLF**  
Photo by **DALTON DEHART**

**T**he rapidly expanding LGBT History Research Collection within the University of Houston Libraries' Special Collections division has made its largest acquisition yet, with the recent addition of the Charles W. Botts/James Carper Memorial Research Library of GLBT Studies.

The collection was donated to the University of Houston (UH) by longtime Houston LGBTQ activist and historian Judy Reeves, who is the curator of the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History, Inc. (GCAM).

Dating from the early 1970s and built by gay book-collector and NASA employee Charles Botts, the collection of books and publications expanded over the years to include archival collections and ephemera. As the oldest private collection in Houston, it firmly establishes the UH archive as the city's primary source of Houston LGBTQ history research material.

### The Boxes Arrive

The Botts/Carper acquisition arrived at UH in nearly 1,000 boxes. Approximately 70% of the collection is books, with the remainder being periodicals and activists' papers. Considerable effort was required to move the boxes to a special staging area that had to be set up by Special Collections staffers.

Processing the collection will unfold in several phases. The initial phase inventories and separates the collection, with books being sorted to identify duplicates and off-subject titles. It also identifies rare books, first editions, and author-signed books.

Each one of the nearly 15,000 books, covering a wide variety of LGBTQ subjects, will receive a nameplate identifying it as part of the Botts/Carper collection. Easily available books will be placed in the library's general circulating stacks. Rarer books will remain in the Special Collections stacks. The collection contains many signed first-edition books and complete sub-collections of the works of vari-

ous LGBTQ authors.

Among the periodicals being sorted into chronological order are Texas publications such as *This Week in Texas (TWT)*, *The Voice*, and *Eclipse*. Additionally, regional and national publications such as *The Ladder* are in the collection.

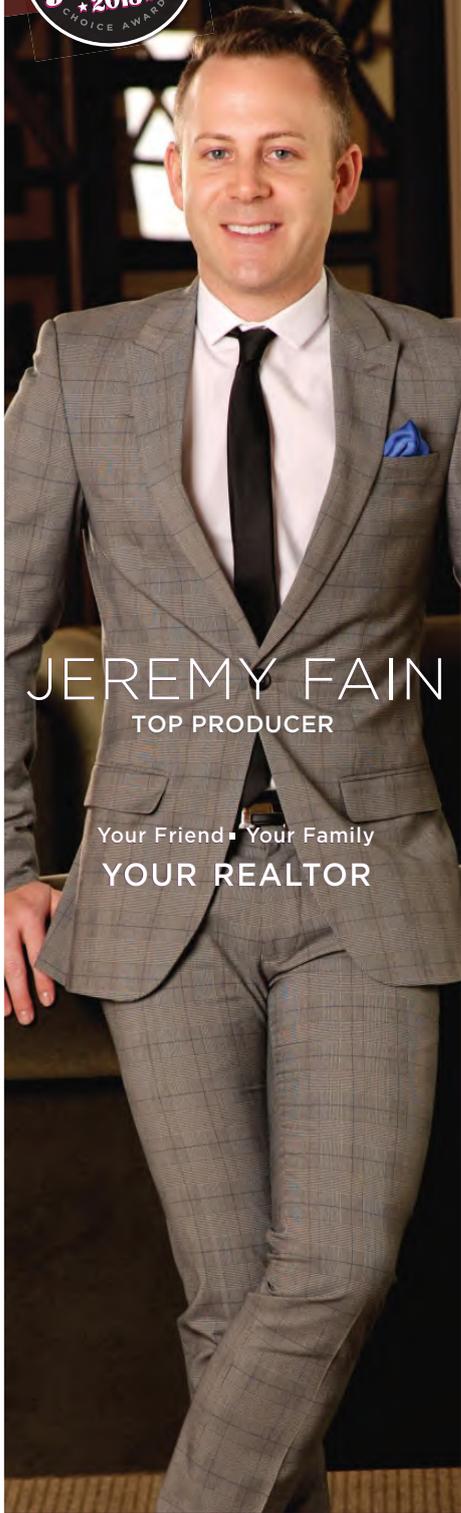
Two student workers have been focusing on the new Botts/Carper acquisition for months. Books that have been processed now take up nearly all of a sixty-foot-long by nine-foot-high multi-shelf stack.

### The Dreams of Charles Botts and Jimmy Carper

Botts was an avid and astute reader who began to collect contemporary gay books and publications in the early 1970s, and then filled out his collection with older and rarer books. He eventually became known in Houston as the only person with a visible gay library collection, so local activists started to give him boxes of their papers. →



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In the early 1980s, two LGBTQ archive efforts—one from Ft. Worth and one from Houston—were merged into the Botts collection. When it became too big to house in his home, Botts was offered space at the Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church.

Botts died in 1994. His brother, Richard Botts, remembers Charles saying that he often felt isolated and confused growing up, and that he would have had much more self-assurance if an LGBTQ library had existed. Charles was driven to provide such a resource for future generations as they searched for understanding in their own lives.

In 2012, Botts' collection was purchased by local activist Jimmy Carper. "Jimmy loved books, and loved that collection," says Reeves. A non-profit corporation was formed, and the collection was moved to a then-undisclosed location and remained there while the process of unpacking and cataloging took place.

Reeves says that Carper had hoped to open the collection in a brick-and-mortar location, but died in 2014 before he could fulfill that dream. The collection was willed to Reeves by Carper. Through a contractual agreement with GCAM, it was then moved to the larger space that GCAM now occupies, although the collection remained a separate entity from GCAM.



Reeves had become more familiar with UH last year when GCAM started a digitization project to get its collection of *The Voice* issues online. UH professor Whitney Cox, who had done research at GCAM, facilitated the collaboration between the two parties. GCAM loaned its *Voice* copies to UH for scanning with optical character recognition so that articles can be searchable through web search engines.

In 2018, Reeves found herself facing a major surgery and wanted peace-of-mind about



a permanent home for the collection. She was impressed with the facilities and equipment at UH, the full-time staff, the accessibility of their holdings, as well as the low-key, team-oriented library staff. She signed a deed of gift that transferred ownership of the Botts/Carper collection to the University of Houston.

22-year-old international student Alys Garcia Carrera is one of the student processors recruited through the UH LGBT Resource Center. She describes her experience processing the acquisition as a young member of the LGBTQ community: "It's really wonderful. I'm from Mexico, and I feel like we don't talk about history there. This has been a great opportunity to get to see all of the history and work with people that are guarding it with such respect. It really gives me a sense of hope."

She admits she often wants to stop and read some of the books she is processing, but must keep moving on. Among the very rare and unique titles that really caught her attention was a 1932 book about bisexuality.

The dreams of Botts and Carper have come to fruition with the UH acquisition of the collection. The books and other materials will be easily accessible by students, faculty, researchers, and the general public. Fifty years after Charles Botts began collecting, a whole new generation will be enjoying the wealth of material that he so carefully maintained.

### Other Recent Acquisitions by UH

In a short period of time, the LGBT history

collection at UH has grown remarkably as the local community becomes more aware of the UH library resources. Local activists such as Marion Coleman have donated their papers. Organizations such as AIDS Foundation Houston have also presented boxes of materials to the archive.

Former Houston mayor Annise Parker and her wife, Kathy Hubbard, donated 22 boxes of records from the Houston GLBT Political Caucus and other community organizations. *TV Montrose*, the weekly Houston-area LGBTQ roundup of news from the late 1990s, has donated their original video masters from the year-and-a-half run of that show.

Weeks before his death last November, the late Houston activist Ray Hill asked the UH library staff to collect and house his archives. Vince Lee, curator of the LGBT History Research Collection, and Christian Kelleher, head of Special Collections, spent two days categorizing Hill's holdings, and another three days boxing them. Seventy boxes of Hill's archives are now housed at UH.

The LGBT History Research Collection is now a continually expanding record of the Houston-area LGBTQ community spanning several decades. The reading room of the Special Collections group is open to students, faculty, researchers, and the general public for 40 hours per week. Staff members are available to assist in searching for specific items or subjects.

There is much there to discover. ▼

# King of Bling

Jeweler Chad Gore knows how to make drag queens shine.

By **DON MAINES**  
Photo by **MICHAEL ANDREW VOIGHT**



Drag Queen Violet S'Arbleu wearing her pieces.

**T**he New Year is likely to bring even more new friends for once-shy LGBTQ ally Chad Gore. “It’s like I was locked up in a closet,” says the popular jeweler to drag stars, who had “no point of reference” when he was introduced to Houston’s naughty nightlife by his brother Clay’s paramour, Dessie Love-Blake, the stage persona of Realtor Ron Kerr. “She said, ‘I’m going to get your name out there,’” recalls Chad. “I discovered there is a whole culture out here that I’d never heard about, and now they are my friends.”

Chad’s wife, Jennifer, knows not to worry. She’s been tagged as the lovable “Mama Jen” in the LGBTQ community.

“Being straight and stepping into the middle of the drag community, it’s been great to be so willingly accepted,” Chad says. “I’ve never seen straight people be this accepting, and I think if they knew how many gay people there are, they would be really surprised.”

Chad grew up with his older brother, Clay, two sisters, and a stepbrother. “I was very shy. I maybe had five friends in high school. I got my first job at 15 in the appliance department at a Montgomery Ward store that was on my walk

home from school. One day, I stopped and put in an application, and they were hiring.”

After graduating from South Houston High School in 1992, Chad worked at an export crating company in Houston that also employed Clay and their parents and grandfather. “I tried to follow in my family’s footsteps, but it really wasn’t for me.” Instead, he spent 12 years in industrial hydro-blasting at chemical plants in southeast Texas, as well as opportunities at big turnaround jobs from Alaska to Puerto Rico. However, when an accident at Chad’s last worksite shot acid into his mouth, he had had enough.

“Clay actually found a little bitty thin book called *Who Moved My Teeth*,” says Chad, explaining that the novelty of it gave the brothers Gore the idea of buying books in bulk, then reselling them online. “We bought a big group of books that filled three trucks and a U-Haul, and I listed them. I sold my first book on August 8, 2009, and I sold my first piece of jewelry on August 8, 2014.”

Along the way, Clay came out as a gay man, ending his marriage to a woman, and Chad and his wife moved in with Clay at his four-bedroom home in Pasadena. Chad says his brother is “not a feminine type at all, but we all sort of knew” that Clay was gay. After Clay

started dating Ron Kerr, who performs in gay clubs as Dessie Love-Blake, Kerr also moved in with the Gores.

Before you can say “Shantay, you stay,” Chad found his calling in drag pageants, beginning by building sets and props for Love-Blake’s competitions.

“I had never seen or heard of drag pageants,” says Chad. “I might have seen a piece of *Miss America* that my parents were watching. I had seen *Toddlers and Tiaras*, but it was after [the pageant] was over and they were fighting.”

Chad constructed spinning doors he could fold and make suitable for travel. “Everything has to fit through a standard-size door because you never know what you’re going to get” upon arriving at a venue, he explains. “You have to be prepared for anything.” He sewed, he patched things that got torn, and he even created a carousel inside Love-Blake’s costume so that it spiraled as she walked across the stage.

“I have always loved working with my hands and creating things,” says Chad, who hit a new stride with his jewelry business.

“I had never soldered, but I knew the basics of welding from a small-engine repair class at a college,” he says.

Ordering materials online, Chad found them to be overpriced and of low quality, so he set up ways to craft and control every step of the jewelry-making process, from design to electroplating. His fame spread each time an entertainer wore his jewelry or posted photos of them on social media.

“Several of my customers own a lot more of my jewelry than Dessie,” he says. “They have stuck with me from the start and probably buy a new piece every month. Kofi probably owns more than any two people.”

“Chad has always strived for a high-quality product at a fair price,” says Clay. “Queens often rave over the quality of the brilliant stones, smooth soldering, and plating options (gold, silver, nickel, and black). His prices are usually lower than most other jewelers, and he stands by his product by replacing or fixing any piece that he makes.”

Chad can be seen displaying his wares at drag pageants, but the self-described loner prefers to vanish behind the door of his home workshop to create custom items. “If I’m working, no one is allowed in. I am very, very secretive about what someone orders. I won’t show a picture before it’s finished. I will let them post it when they are ready.”

For more, visit [Facebook.com/chadgore.wickeddragjewels](https://www.facebook.com/chadgore.wickeddragjewels).

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



## Arts & Crafts

In designer Chad Gore’s hands, craft becomes high art.

# A conversation with Todd O'Neal

By **JENNY BLOCK**  
Photo by **DALTON DEHART**

**F**or many LGBT Houstonians, and especially those who are transgender, Dr. Julia Kovacs is a shining light in the medical world, which can all too often be an inhospitable place for transgender patients. Dr. Kovacs' practice recently announced the addition of Todd O'Neal to her team, and he will be focusing specifically on the transgender community's healthcare needs.

O'Neal was born and raised in Beaumont, but has been living in Houston for the past seven years, now in the East End. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University, a nursing degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

O'Neal has worked as a registered nurse at Texas Children's Hospital in the cardiovascular ICU, and later at Children's Memorial Hermann as a float nurse, primarily in the pediatric ICU. He has also served as a clinical instructor for nursing students through UTMB. For the past three and a half years, he has been working at Legacy Community Health in adult medicine, providing primary care with a clinical focus on the LGBTQ community.

OUTSMART recently asked O'Neal about his medical background and why he's looking forward to working with the transgender community as part of Dr. Kovacs' clinical team.

## **Jenny Block: How did you become interested in working with the LGBT community in general, and the trans community in particular?**

Todd O'Neal: As an out gay man, I have firsthand experience with some of the bias we face in securing competent care, and I wanted to actively work to change that bias in Houston. With a little push (and plenty of support) from a longtime friend who identifies as a trans man, I sought out learning opportunities in my previous practice from colleagues and patients about gender-affirming healthcare practices. Since then, I have worked to combine my training with ever-expanding research and guidelines. LGBTQ+ issues are generally not covered in medical training, or if they're included, topics are limited to brief lectures or electives. Children and young adults [usually receive] sexual education that is distinctly cis-hetero, focusing on preventing pregnancy [and barely mentioning] other sexual-health concerns and gender issues.

## **What do you find most rewarding about your work?**

When I see the positive changes in a person who is comfortable, confident, and proud of living their truth. I feel privileged to provide education and healthcare services to a community with known disparities in access to care. Recent social and political issues have lit the proverbial fire underneath me to continue providing care, and helping to educate other healthcare providers.



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## **What made you decide to join Dr. Kovacs' practice?**

I originally met Dr. Kovacs at a World Professional Association for Transgender Health conference early in my career, and we reconnected when I became involved in planning the continuing education for the Gender Infinity Conference, for which she is often a presenter. I have a profound respect for the care she provides—a respect that seems to be shared in the transgender community by word of mouth. [We recently] met for coffee, which resulted in a discussion about the growing need for competent, gender-affirming care in Houston and how we might address that need by working together.

## Love Your Heels Again



From a community standpoint, I believe our collaboration will increase availability for gender-diverse individuals to receive the care they need and deserve. From a personal standpoint, I believe a practice with two dedicated providers increases [the quality of decision-making and treatment]. I am excited to combine our experience and passion to create a well-rounded healthcare service for the LGBTQ+ community.

### What services will you be offering there?

I plan to continue providing adult primary-care services including wellness visits, vaccines, sick visits, and chronic-disease management, but I will also focus on LGBTQ+ health. I am passionate about sexual and gender health, including STI screenings, HIV prevention and treatment, and gender-affirming hormone therapy.

### What are your favorite things to do in Houston?

I enjoy trying all of the new and diverse restaurants around Houston. I also try to attend concerts and musical theater—*Wicked* is my favorite, but I recently saw *Phantom of the Opera*, which was fantastic. I will be seeing Fleetwood Mac in February, as I am a big fan of Stevie Nicks.

### What might people be surprised to find out about you?

I enjoy cooking—but not baking, because I like to cook to taste. When I get a chance to read for pleasure, I prefer epic fantasy novels.

### If you had the chance to speak to those filled with hate for the trans community, what would you like to say to them?

People often misunderstand ignorance. It is generally [the result of] a lack of knowledge. We are all ignorant, but the way we accept and acknowledge that ignorance is far more important than its existence. I try to challenge others to identify their areas of ignorance, biases, and privilege, and use that information to actively seek knowledge and relationships that will promote understanding and growth.

Through educating yourself and sharing experiences with gender-diverse individuals, you can gain an appreciation for the struggles of people who are much more like you than you previously imagined. In the words of the late transgender activist Marsha P. Johnson, “How many years does it take for people to see that we’re all brothers and sisters and human beings in the human race? I mean, how many years does it take for people to see that we’re all in this rat-race together?”

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

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# Transition of Power

Emmett Schelling promises more diversity as the new director of the Transgender Education Network of Texas.

By LOURDES ZAVALETA  
Photo by ERIC EDWARD SCHELL



**O**ppression in the transgender community disproportionately impacts trans people of color, according to Emmett Schelling.

Schelling, a Korean man who identifies as trans, is the newly appointed executive director of the Transgender Education Network of Texas (TENT), an organization dedicated to furthering gender-diverse equality. He vows to lead the organization with an intersectional focus.

“Trans people of color, specifically black trans women, face obstacles that their white counterparts do not,” Schelling says. “This is why TENT is programming through a racial-justice lens.”

Born in Seoul and raised with his adoptive family in Ohio, Schelling has made history as TENT’s first non-white executive director. The group, which was launched in 2002 to advocate for the inclusion of gender identity in an Austin non-discrimination ordinance, has historically been run by white trans women. Schelling says his first order of business was to bring more diversity to the organization’s board of directors.

Schelling’s team, which includes several trans folks of color, began their positions in January 2019. TENT’s new directors are chair Rocky Lane, vice chair Luka Rios, treasurer Ginger Chun, interim secretary Lauryn Farris, and directors Jamie Zapata, Nicholas Arvizu,

Erika Richie, Eric Edward Schell, and Katy Stewart.

“Our new board looks drastically different than it ever has before,” Schelling says. “Texas is very diverse, and having directors that reflect our community is extremely beneficial to guiding the mission of what we do.”

Lane, a black trans man who works in Austin, was asked by Schelling to become TENT’s chair after the two met at an ACLU training. Lane says he was immediately on board when he heard Schelling’s plan to expand representation for trans folks of color.

“Emmett’s idea of how TENT should work moving forward will help us protect and understand all trans voices,” Lane says. “Before, not everyone felt included. Diversity makes me, and many others, feel safe and accepted.”

Lane says that because Schelling is a trans

person of color, he is able to authentically use his platform to expose challenges that those like him face.

“Trans people of color are at a disadvantage,” Lane says. “On top of being trans, there are hardships that people of color also go through—homelessness, higher unemployment rates, medical issues, and more. Emmett recognizes this, and is bringing these issues to the forefront of our work.”

According to a 2015 survey conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality, 30 percent of trans people have been homeless at some point in their lives, compared to 17 percent of the general population. Meanwhile, 48 percent of trans folks reported being denied equal treatment, verbally harassed, and/or physically abused because of their gender identity.

For trans people of color, the stakes are even higher.

“If we didn’t acknowledge race and color in our work, TENT wouldn’t be doing its job completely,” Schelling says.

TENT will host a lobby day to discuss trans issues with elected representatives at the Texas Capitol on March 7.

Schelling, who currently resides in Houston, moved to Texas from the Midwest three years ago. After several years of working in corporate management and participating in LGBTQ activism in his spare time, his successful effort to help defeat a bathroom bill in 2017 inspired him to leave his job and become a full-time transgender advocate.

The proposed law to regulate bathroom use for trans Texans died in the summer of 2017, in part due to Schelling and other LGBTQ activists testifying at the Capitol about the dangers of banning folks from using public restrooms that match their gender identities. Following the victory, Schelling, who served as the 2016–2017 president of the San Antonio Gender Association, extended his work in advocacy when he was appointed as executive director of TENT.

**“TRANS PEOPLE OF COLOR, SPECIFICALLY BLACK TRANS WOMEN, FACE OBSTACLES THAT THEIR WHITE COUNTERPARTS DO NOT,” SCHELLING SAYS. “THIS IS WHY TENT IS PROGRAMMING THROUGH A RACIAL-JUSTICE LENS.”**

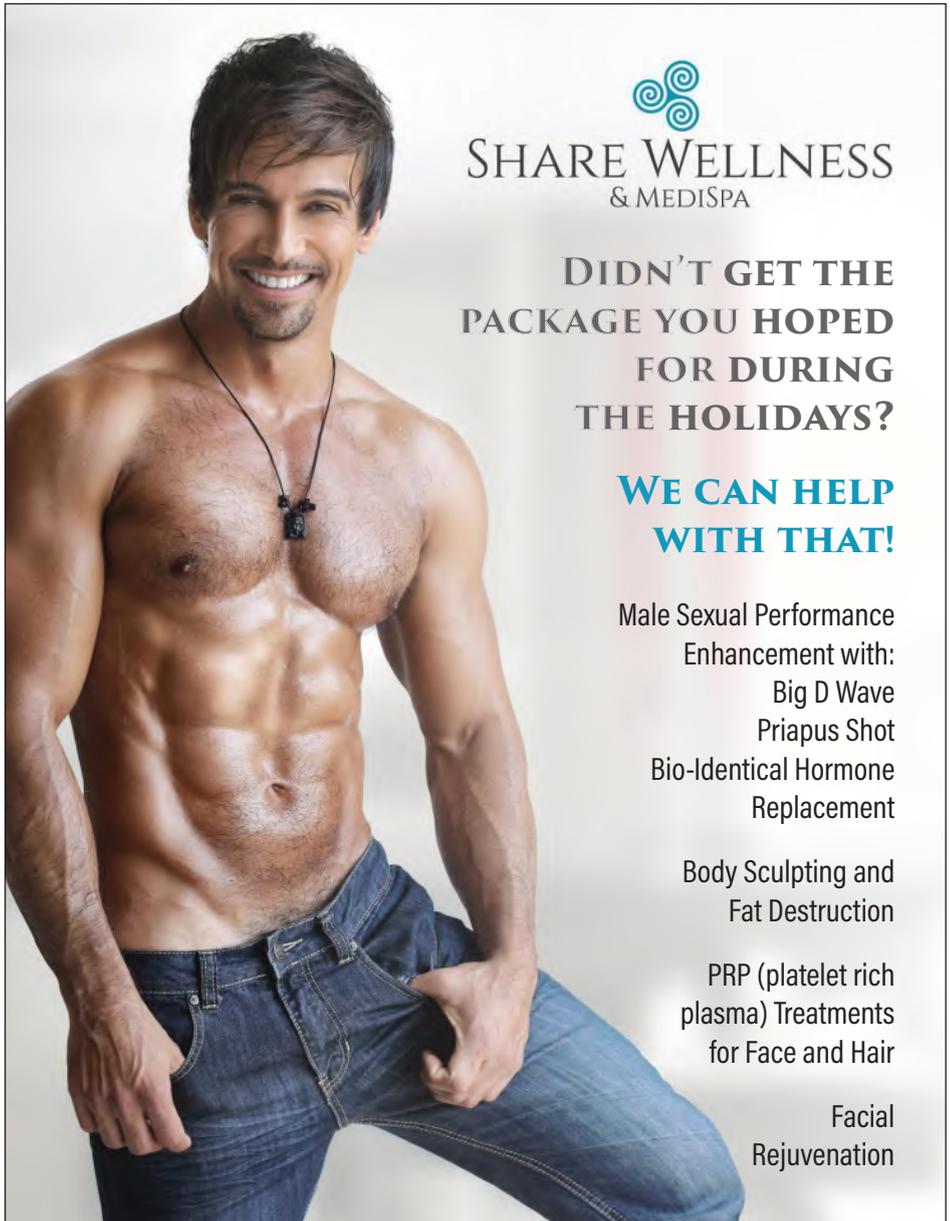
—Emmett Schelling

“It was apparent to me that there was still a push against trans folks,” Schelling recalls. “I realized that sitting by idly and watching this happen to myself and to my community wasn’t good for anyone.”

Because TENT is based in Austin and operates across the state, Schelling says much of his time is spent on the road, sharing his testimony in public and private forums to educate people about his experience as a trans man of color.

Schelling admits that he doesn’t have much time off, but when he does take a break from work, he volunteers with Transform Houston and spends time with his partner, Andrea Segovia, and his teenage child.

For more information about TENT, go to [transtexas.org](http://transtexas.org).



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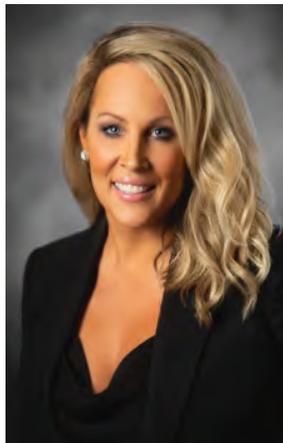
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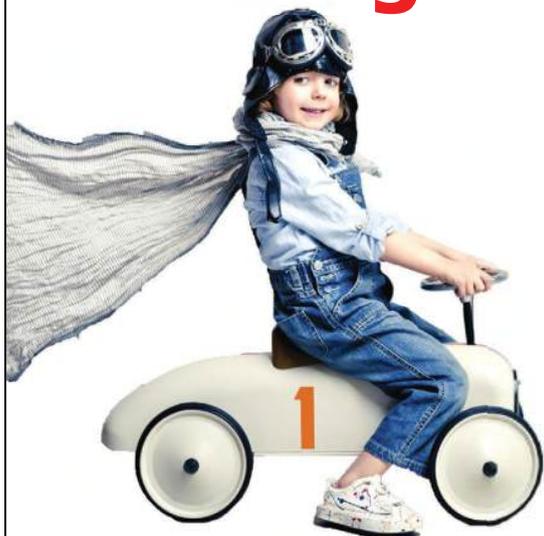
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# Gayming for Good

Texas' largest LGBTQ gaming group earns high scores for charitable efforts.

By MARENE GUSTIN



**Project Blue Shell**

Members of the Houston Gaymers, including Penny Pennington, second from right, regularly give away handheld gaming consoles to patients at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital. The Gaymers are shown below at Houston's LGBTQ Pride parade.

There was a time when the word “gamer” conjured images of a lonely nerd playing video games in his parents’ basement.

Not any more. Today’s gamers are more diverse and more social. There are meetups and groups and gamer clubs across the country, including LGBTQ-specific ones like the Houston Gaymers.

“We are the largest gaymer group in Texas,” says 33-year-old Ryan “Penny” Pennington. “We have an online user base of nearly 2,000 players, and about 500 local members who attend events.” Austin, San Antonio, and Dallas also have gaymer groups.

The word “gaymer” first popped up on usenet boards in the 1990s. In 2006 and 2009, the University of Illinois and the game design school Full Sail University teamed up to conduct a survey of LGBTQ gamers, which drew 17,000 respondents.

“Houston Gaymers was started in 2009 by Eric Hulseley and a group of friends,” Pennington says.

“That first meetup we had 30, 35 people show up,” Hulseley says. “It was very clear that there was a need for this.

“Of course we have games at our meetups,” Hulseley adds, “but it’s really about putting the focus on socializing. It’s about interacting with others. We have giveaways and themed drinks. We had zombie drinks based on Resident Evil for Halloween. It’s a great way to meet new people and make friends.”

Pennington found that out firsthand.

“I moved here from Los Angeles and didn’t know a soul,” he says. “But once I joined Gaymers, I met all kinds of people, and now about 90 percent of my friends are gaymers.” He has been on the board of the nonprofit for four years, and currently serves as its business and social-development director.

A music teacher, Pennington started gaming early.

“My mom says my grandmother bought me a Game Boy in the 1990s, and it went downhill from there,” he laughs. Pennington’s husband, Tagir Galiyev, is also a gamer. “Not as much as I am, but he kind of has to be to be married to me.”

The Houston Gaymers host about 75 events a year, including two monthly gatherings: the Handhelds Connect that meets the first Monday of every month for board games, card games, and handheld devices; and the Gaymer Meetup on the fourth Saturday of the month, which includes video games and a movie at Guava Lamp.

Besides the social aspect, Houston Gaymers has a philanthropic component. About five years ago, the group started helping raise funds for the AIDS Walk, HRC Houston, →

and Bunnies on the Bayou, in addition to food drives for the Houston Food Bank. Then three years ago, the members started their own charity. Project Blue Shell, named for a helpful item in a Mario Kart game, provides signature blue boxes packed with a Nintendo, two games (yes, one is Mario Kart), and information about Houston Gaymers. The Houston Gaymers distributed about 10 of the boxes each year to children's hospitals, homeless shelters, Hatch Youth, and Tony's Place.

"The Houston Gaymers have been long-time supporters of Texas Children's Hospital," says Jennifer Smart, manager of philanthropy at the hospital. "In addition to raising money through Children's Miracle Network Hospitals Extra Life program [and sponsoring] a 24-hour game marathon, they also donate handheld gaming devices for our patients to use during hospital stays. The games provide

**THE GAMES PROVIDE A HEALTHY DISTRACTION FOR PATIENTS, WHICH HELPS PROMOTE HEALING AND PROVIDES SOME OF THE COMFORTS OF HOME."**

—Jennifer Smart, Texas Children's Hospital

the virtual reality game SnowWorld required less pain medication than other patients who didn't play the game.

"Gaming and games for the gay community are getting better," Pennington says. He cites BioWare's Dragon War game, which features a gay main character, as an example. Yes, there's been some backlash in the straight gamer community, but not as much as in the early days when LGBTQ characters were removed

a healthy distraction for patients, which helps promote healing and provides some of the comforts of home."

Pennington says the group is even attempting to design a rolling cart with a TV and games for hospitals.

Studies have shown that games are therapeutic, relieve stress, and can provide pain relief. In 2011, the military conducted a study of soldiers suffering from burns at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

Those soldiers who played

from games or portrayed as stereotypes and minor characters. Other games simply didn't allow avatars to form relationships with same-gender avatars at all. That changed with The Sims in 2000, which allowed characters to form same-sex attachments and even marry. Within two years, it became the best-selling PC game, making video-game designers take note of the LGBTQ gaming market.

"Early on, it wasn't as welcoming as it is now," Pennington says. Not only are there gay characters in games and gamer groups, but there are also conventions for LGBTQ gamers like the 2013 GaymerX conference that drew thousands of players.

Hulsey, the founder of the group, says it's hard to believe that Houston Gaymers have been around for nearly 10 years.

"We are planning a really big anniversary party for June 1," Hulsey says. "It's going to be a really big deal."

For more info, visit [HoustonGaymers.com](http://HoustonGaymers.com), or [Facebook.com/groups/HoustonGaymers](https://www.facebook.com/groups/HoustonGaymers).

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

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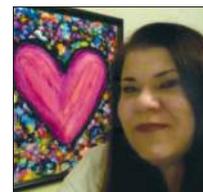
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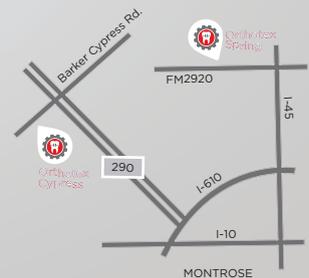
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Unapologetically Trans | CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

Outstanding Blog category. When I won the award last year, I became the first trans person of any ethnic background to do so.

In 2016, I became the first trans person to win the Robert Coles Call of Service Award, given by Harvard's Phillips Brooks House Association. Other winners of that award are Marian Wright Edelman, former vice president Al Gore, and Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza.

As Russwurm and Cornish stated well over 100 years ago, we black trans people will continue to plead our case for our humanity and human rights to be recognized. And through our trailblazing actions, we will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that we black trans people are an undeniable part of the black community.

Our destiny is inextricably tied to the progress of the black community at large. So when black trans people make progress, it is not only a win for us, but a win for the entire black community.

It's important for our trans kids, our people, our allies, and for you to know that black trans people are not 'tragic transsexual' victims, but people who are trailblazing leaders, talented artists, thought leaders, and folks who are shaping the destiny of our community.

Black trans people—just as they have always done and will continue to do until the end of time—are making black history.

*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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want to move with the impact of the ongoing energies. It's very easy to overload your schedule this month, especially toward the end of the month. Be realistic about what you can do, and don't wait until the last minute to do it! Your creative energies remain strong throughout the month.

**LIBRA (September 23-October 23).**

This month continues to be busy, demanding a lot of time for both home and relationships. This is a good month to renew those vows with your partner. If you haven't been paying enough attention to this area of your life, you will see anger and disappointment in your partner's face. Family continues to demand your attention. Take on family responsibilities only if you want to, and avoid saying yes if you don't mean it. This will only increase your resentment. Projects for home improvement continue. You are looking for a break in the action so you can get some rest after midmonth. By the end of the month, you are making your workplace a happier place to be!

**SCORPIO (October 24–November 21).**

You are continuing to work at improving your communication and organizational skills this month. This is a very good month for writing, taking classes, or working on your social-media connections. By midmonth, home and relationships take the focus. This can be a good time for home projects, or just for getting closer to your family! Your relationships will need some attention after the 14th. This can be a super time to get away and replenish your emotional connections. Avoiding that could create even more problems. Your creative energies are stronger at the end of the month. Find an activity to entertain your inner child!

**SAGITTARIUS (November 22–December 21).**

Your ruler, Jupiter (planet of travel, personal expansion, optimism, and overdoing it), continues to visit your sign through November 2019. Jupiter tends to make us believe that everything is better, even if it's not! You are communicating more clearly this month, and trying to balance your commitments with your available time. Home and family take over your focus toward the end of the month. You will want to take some time for yourself and escape to your own sanctuary. This is a great time for writing, travel, or taking classes to enlarge your vision. Health routines become more important over the next couple of months. Try not to overdo what you start!

**CAPRICORN (December 22–January 19).**

The intensity of the last couple of months continues. You will feel this building through March and April. Watch your boundaries, and try not to overcommit and do everything on your own. Seek help from friends and associates—they are only too willing to help! Finances are the main topic as the month begins. This is a great time to get your taxes in order before the April deadline. Home life remains somewhat edgy. You are certainly not as patient, and we are seeing the cracks in your body armor. Take action to project yourself rather than avoiding the conflict. By the end of the month you are communicating more clearly about your needs, and that should help to reduce your stress.

**PISCES (February 19–March 20).**

Although the activity in your community and friendship sector remains very dynamic, you are looking for some personal rest and retreat time to recharge your batteries. Career energies are still very busy, and there are lots of opportunities for you. This is a great time to promote your work or services, or even to look for a better place to work! Toward the end of the month, you are more energetic and more ready to interact with other humans on the planet. You will feel more confident about your decisions during this time. Watch your spending, as you are more impulsive and will want to satisfy your needs, despite the immediate cost. You are more direct in your communication after midmonth. People will hear you and be more responsive!

For more astro-insight, log on to [lillyroddy.com](http://lillyroddy.com).



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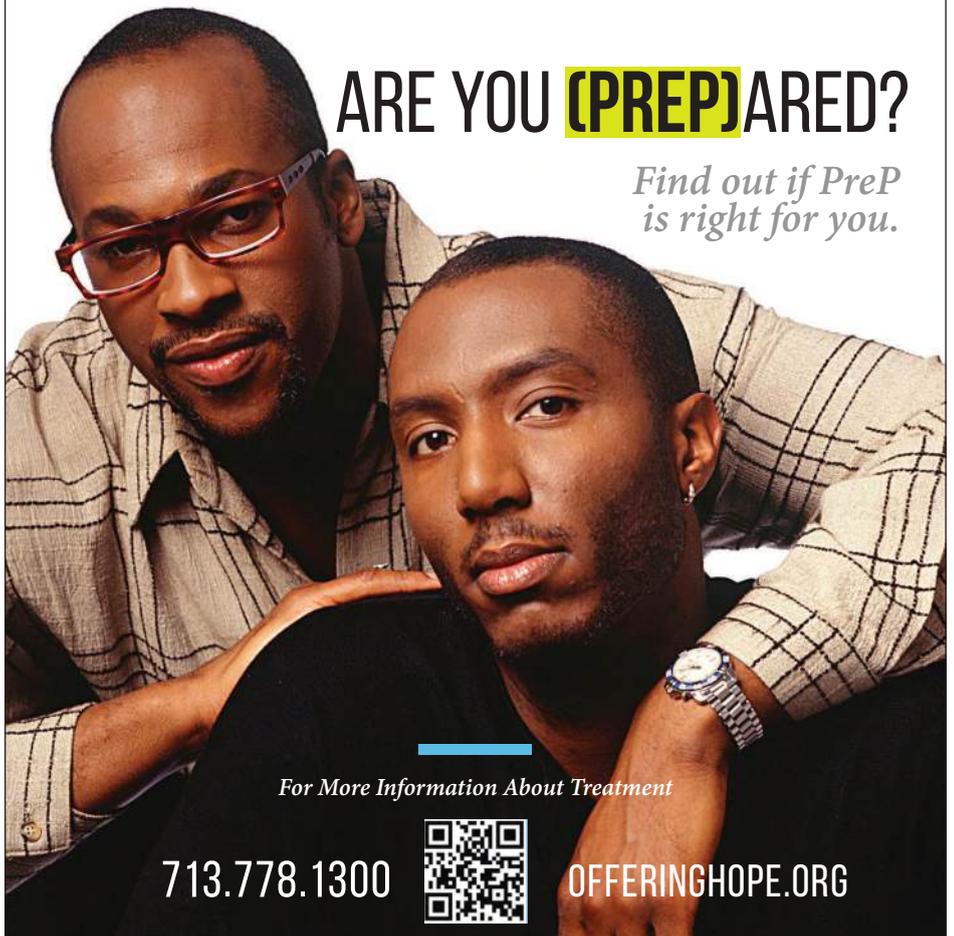
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to retire. These income-producing strategies can include annuities, dividends, bonds, and income-producing rental real estate.

To learn more about the importance of lifetime income, as well as some of the strategies that should be considered, you can visit the Alliance for Lifetime Income at [alliancefor-lifetimeincome.org](http://alliancefor-lifetimeincome.org).

In drawing up your future income plan, it is also essential to ensure that your principal is safe and that you are able to reduce or eliminate any taxes that may be due, as this can provide more money for your living expenses. The more income you can guarantee, the better.

When working with clients, financial advisors who specialize in income planning may initially work to determine your “income stability ratio.” This ratio is a proprietary calculation developed from one of many software programs income advisors use, and it compares the percentage of retirement income that is being generated from known or guaranteed sources versus the percentage that is dependent on market performance.

As an example, if you need \$10,000 per month in retirement and you have a 90 percent income stability ratio, that means \$9,000 of your monthly income is guaranteed, and the remaining \$1,000 is dependent on the whims of the stock market. With that in mind, the higher your income stability ratio is, the less stress you should experience.

By running a financial plan now to see where your income stability ratio is, there may be things you can do now to increase your ratio.

Unfortunately, those who are not familiar with how to protect their incomes are often-times the ones who end up taking the most risk with their savings and putting the most pressure on their portfolios—and themselves!

### How to Work toward a Viable Retirement Income Ratio

Because not everyone will have the same retirement-income needs, it is important that you work with a financial advisor who can guide you through the process of protecting your savings and converting an appropriate percentage into a guaranteed income stream.

Likewise, working with a professional who is familiar with the LGBTQ community can also help you construct your future income stream based on the benefits that you are eligible for, either as a single individual or with your spouse or partner.

*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 Group LLC in Houston and was recognized as a “Five-Star Wealth Manager” in the September 2017 issue of Texas Monthly. Yung can be reached at [grace.yung@lpl.com](mailto:grace.yung@lpl.com).*

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# Laugh Riot Grrrls

MATCH launches an all-female production of David Mamet's *Boston Marriage*.

By DON MAINES

Photo by GARY GRIFFIN

“Wickedly funny AF”—as in All Female—is how the women of *Boston Marriage* describe their production of the 1999 David Mamet drawing-room comedy that plays Feb. 8–23 at Midtown Arts & Theater Center Houston (MATCH).

“It’s just so female,” says director Linda Phenix, comparing its same-sex sensibility to what she’s heard about the Oscar-nominated lesbian film *The Favourite*.

“Almost every woman involved in the show has seen it,” said Phenix. “Doing this play is the top reason I plan to sneak off in the next few days and see the movie.”

*Boston Marriage* is set in a New England home shared by two women, Anna and Claire, around the turn of the 20th century.

“We feel like it’s about 1910,” said Phenix. “In that time period, no matter what your sexual orientation, you had to navigate a man’s world because women didn’t have a lot of rights.”

Anna and Claire, as “more flamboyant,” artsy types, delight in gaming the patriarchy by pooling their resources (and their cunning resourcefulness) to live independently of a male protector.

“It’s an arrangement—perhaps romantic, perhaps just for survival,” teases Phenix.

The audience soon learns that the enormous emerald that Anna wears came from her married male suitor, but she is jealous that Claire has become infatuated with a wealthy young woman and wants to bring her home for sex.

Caustic barbs ensue.

“The way that Anna and Claire talk to each other, the language they put together, is a delicious concoction,” says Phenix. “The way they

speak, you can tell they are creative people. Their repartee is witty, but they also speak honestly, for example, in scenes where they fess up. It is a very rich spectrum of emotions.”

Mamet’s dialogue, its language and rhythm, “is poetry,” says Phenix, “and it’s difficult. It takes considerable acting chops.”

The concept of Anna (played by Malinda L. Beckham) and Claire (played by Melissa J. Mayo) as artisans helped inform the creative team’s design for the show. Behind the scenes, the all-female crew includes assistant director Lydia Meadows and production stage manager Barbara Alicea-Aponte. The production features Beckham’s costume and set design, set dressing by Ananka Kohnitz, lighting design by Kris Phelps, and sound by Elizabeth Nguyen.

Jenna Morris portrays a maid, but Phenix says, “She is more than meets the eye. The typical maid in an Oscar Wilde drawing-room comedy, that is not quite our maid.”

Phenix is well-known to Houston audiences, having directed 13 shows at Theater LaB Houston beginning with *The Big Bang* in 2002. Most recently she directed *The Chosen* (2017) by Aaron Posner and Chaim Potok, and *Kiss Me* (2018) by Richard Bean. Her work on those two shows was especially instrumental in Dirt Dogs choosing Phenix to direct *Boston Marriage*.

“Watching her direction and blocking was like witnessing an exquisite dance,” says Beckham, who is the group’s artistic director. “I knew immediately that her choreographic style was a perfect complement to our all-female production.”

**What:** *Boston Marriage*

**When:** February 8–23

**Where:** Midtown Arts & Theater Center Houston, 3400 Main St.

**Info:** matchouston.org





**Funny Girls**

Melissa J. Mayo (left) as Claire  
and Malinda L. Beckham as Anna

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# Ohmmm... Mark Price

Houston native stars  
in TUTS' *Mamma Mia!*

By DON MAINES

**B**aby makes three for out actor and meditation teacher Mark Price and his longtime partner, Broadway production manager Jeff Rodriguez. Coincidentally, Price is playing a closeted gay man who's surprised to learn he might have fathered a child in the Feb. 19–March 3 production of *Mamma Mia!* at Theatre Under the Stars.

Since performing at the Alley Theatre in 2017, the couple has adopted an eight-month-old boy, Kotah, who's now 2.

"I will be bringing him with me," the actor said by phone last month. "It's too cold here in New York. He needs to run around the backyard in the sun. The little dude will be spending a lot of time with his grandparents in Katy."

Price is cast as Harry Bright, "a lonely homosexual who finds himself on an island in Greece," in the jukebox musical of hits by the Swedish pop group ABBA. Harry arrives in Greece at the invitation of 20-year-old Sophie, who believes the well-dressed British banker might be her father. Back home in England, Harry's only companions are his two dogs, so he's delighted at the prospect of having a long-lost child from his days as a heavy-metal rocker.

"His buttoned-up job is so vastly different from how he was 20 years ago, so Harry is a really, really fun, fun character to play," says Price. "His journey to the wedding gives him a new lease on life as he rediscovers his past sense of fun and abandonment."

Price appeared in the original Broadway production of *Mamma Mia!* as Pepper. It opened just a month after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. "We saw tons of shows closing around us, while we were

incredibly popular," he recalls. "There was such fear and uncertainty. People were afraid to spend money. I think our show offered a needed mental vacation from the horrible news in the world."

Price has also performed in Broadway productions of *The Rocky Horror Show*; *Mary Poppins*; *All Shook Up*; *Wonderful Town*; *Dance of the Vampires*; *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; *The Capeman*; and *Chicago*.

Growing up in Houston, where he graduated from Stratford High School in 1992, Price says, "I was a late bloomer." However, he never questioned his sexual orientation.

"I feel like I came out at, like, eight," he says. "Same-sex attraction never felt wrong to me. I had a crush on Rick Springfield on *General Hospital*. The only struggle I had was people's acceptance" of it.

"Junior high was pretty much torture," he adds, tipping his hat to his theater-arts teacher, Beverly Bubenik, for steering Price to his life's work. "She gave me something to care about and believe in. She instilled in me the drive to be an artist."

In high school, director Tim Driscoll cast Price as The Baker in Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. "Tim really changed my life. If anyone ever needs someone to plead the case for arts education, I am living proof of its importance. I was comfortable with my sexuality before that, but in theater I found a community of oddballs and friends and artists. Finding that place for diversity was my saving grace."

Price credits both Driscoll and a favorite professor at Ithaca College in New York with pushing him out of his comfort zone and giving him a work ethic. "[Professor] Corsaro told me, 'If you have fun out there, the audience will have fun.'"

Price is as surprised as anyone regarding how his three favorite teachers somehow inspired him to become a teacher of meditation in the past 10 years.

"I think there is a connection there," he says. "Even though the content is completely different, I think they laid the path for me by demonstrating 'how' to teach. Essentially, teaching is about human psychology and human development, which I think really good acting is, too."

Price plans to teach a few classes in Vedic meditation while in Houston for *Mamma Mia!* this month. "Meditation is gaining a lot of momentum in Houston," he says. "Classes happen through word of mouth. Sometimes, a former student will offer their home or know of a yoga studio that can be rented. Information will be posted on my website at [alchemycollective.org](http://alchemycollective.org)."

For further information about *Mamma Mia!* at TUTS, visit [tuts.com](http://tuts.com).





Nicolas Moufarrege, *Narcissix of One and Nick's of the Other*, 1983. Thread, pigment, glitter, and brooches on needlepoint canvas. 18 x 84 inches. Image courtesy CAMH. Photo by Emily Peacock.

ART

# Seduction in the Surfaces

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston spotlights gay artist Nicolas Moufarrege.

by ANDREW EDMONSON

Queer 1970s artist Nicolas Moufarrege exuberantly embraced a wide array of disparate elements in his work: embroidery; Islamic wall tiles; appropriations from Picasso and pop-artist Roy Lichtenstein; buff, homoerotic male nudes; and comic-book heroes like Spiderman. Even Santa Claus makes a surprise appearance in his tableaux late in Moufarrege's career.

A true citizen of the world, Moufarrege's journey took him from Beirut to Paris in the mid-1970s, and to New York City in the early 1980s—a time when the burgeoning downtown art scene burst forth with extraordinary vibrancy. He integrated influences from East and West into his artistic practice. He was also a curator and critic. In these roles, he helped bring to light the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Fab 5 Freddy, Greer Lankton, and David Wojnarowicz when the East Village arts scene was blossoming.

A decade of exhilarating creativity was cut

tragically short in 1985 when Moufarrege was felled by complications from AIDS at 37. In the view of Roberta Smith, co-chief art critic of the *New York Times*, he left a unique legacy.

"It's hard to characterize the combination of decorative intensity, measured calm, and generous pictorial wit that Mr. Moufarrege (and the craftspeople who worked with him) wove into his surfaces, but it seems to define some unique midpoint between American and Eastern Mediterranean cultures," Smith wrote in a review of a posthumous 1987 exhibition of his works.

"Mr. Moufarrege's work bridges traditional factions of East Village art. It combines conceptually-based appropriation with the visual energy of the graffiti art made famous by the now-defunct Fun Gallery, where the artist's second one-man show opened a few days after his death.

"But Nicolas A. Moufarrege lived long enough to become completely himself and to make art that reflects a particular time and place, while also transcending them." →



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Three decades after his death, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents the artist's first solo museum exhibition, Nicolas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign, which has been organized by CAMH curator Dean Daderko and is on view through February 17. The exhibition will then travel to Queens Museum in New York from October 5 through February 16, 2020.

For Daderko, Moufarrege's oeuvre remains remarkably fresh. "I think that a lot of people are surprised that this work was made in the 1970s and 1980s," he observes. "It looks like a lot of work that artists are thinking about and making currently.

"He was living in the East Village in New York City in the 1980s. It was still a gritty place, and home to many artists living cheek-by-jowl in cold-water flats," continues Daderko. "They put together exhibitions in small artist-run spaces. His work from the 1980s—with all its glitter and brooches and fake gems pinned to the surface—has a bit of this gritty glamour, which I think is really attractive. These appeal just as much to folks today as it would have then. There's a type of seduction in the surfaces."

### Finding his *métier* quite by accident.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, to Lebanese Christian parents in 1947, he studied chemistry at the American University of Beirut. In 1968, he came to America to continue his chemistry studies at Harvard University on a Fulbright grant, earning a master's degree. While there, he developed a hole in his jeans and couldn't find a patch to his liking to purchase. He embroidered a strawberry patch, and thus discovered his passion for embroidery. (The first room of the exhibition contains some wonderfully casual snapshots of a young Moufarrege ebulliently modeling some of his patches on his blue jeans.)

He returned to Lebanon, and in 1973 held his first exhibition at Triad Condas gallery in Beirut, featuring a number of modestly sized portrait tapestries. He called his works "experimental weavings," and the Lebanese artist Etel Adnan observed, "This is how traditional craftsmanship becomes a personal art full of promise."

In 1975, with a civil war about to erupt in Lebanon, he relocated to Paris. Although he was an immigrant adapting to a new culture, his work continued to evolve. "In Paris, the scale of the work increases a great deal," Daderko notes. "That is certainly a reference



Portrait of Nicolas Mufarrege by Cosimo Di Leo Ricatto, 1983.

to European-painting traditions and easel-painting traditions. But what he is doing is stretching an embroidery canvas.

"It feels like Nicolas is thinking about the place that he left, and the people he left behind. He's pulling from different cultural traditions. That sense of intellect is in the work—this real curiosity about other cultures."

In 1981, he moved to New York City and came into his own, both professionally and personally. In an essay in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, critic Kaelen Wilson-Goldie notes of this period, "Moufarrege was a fabulous gay man from a deeply conservative family and culture. In New York, none of that seemed to weigh on him. His work celebrated the many worlds that had made him, without finding fault in any of them."

"The moment he gets to New York, there

was a movement called 'Appropriation,'" Daderko observes. "This involved artists taking things from other artists, borrowing them, and often making direct copies of things. They were questioning ideas about originality, about authorship. Nicolas establishes himself as someone participating in dialogues around appropriations."

In Manhattan, his work was influenced by other gay artists including Andy Warhol and Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden, a German photographer in the late nineteenth century known for his homoerotic photos of nude Sicilian men.

In 1985, Moufarrege developed a rash on his skin, and within weeks was diagnosed with HIV. In the early days of the AIDS crisis, when fear and loathing reigned, he struggled to find a hospital in New York City that would accept patients with AIDS.



Nicolas Moufarrege, Edward Brad Munch, 1984. Thread and pigment on needlepoint canvas, 40 x 32 inches. Collection Bradley and Holly Cole, Wichita, Kansas. Image courtesy CAMH. Photo by Emily Peacock



Nicolas Moufarrege, The Fifth Day, 1980. Thread and pigment on needlepoint canvas, 51 x 64 inches. Collection of George Waterman, III. Image courtesy CAMH. Photo by Emily Peacock

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“I WANT YOU TO KNOW MY NAME. I WANT YOU TO RECOGNIZE MY SIGN.”

—Nicolas Moufarrege

“When he passed away in 1985, he was one of the first artists we knew personally who was lost to the AIDS epidemic,” recalls Daderko. “He was surrounded at the end by a loving group of family and friends alike.”

Moufarrege’s family, based in Shreveport, Louisiana, has been instrumental in preserving the artist’s work. “Nicolas was so deeply loved by his family, and so deeply supported,” commented Daderko.

Daderko has been looking forward to staging a solo exhibition of Moufarrege’s work for over a decade. He feels that the moment is ripe for a rediscovery of the artist, both in Houston and later this year in New York. “As

someone who passed away in 1985, there are a lot of people who knew him as an artist and a writer,” Daderko says. “Because of his absence for several decades, I think that people are ready to rediscover his work. I also think that an entirely new generation of folks will be able to discover his work.” ▼

**What:** Nicholas Moufarrege: Recognize My Sign

**When:** Through February 17

**Where:** CAMH, 5216 Montrose Blvd.

**Info:** camh.org

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



SCHULZ SCHMITT

PETER EMPL

ART

# A Lasting Temporary Community

Julia Claire Wallace on Experimental  
Action Performance Art Festival

By NEIL ELLIS ORTS

**P**erformance artists from around the world will convene in Houston February 21–23 for the second biennial Experimental Action, an international performance-art festival. This year features many Houston- and Texas-based artists, as well as performers from Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, and Chile. To find out a bit about the event, **OUTSMART** spoke to creative director Julia Claire Wallace.

**Neil Ellis Orts: Do you have a guiding definition of “performance art” as you build the festival?**

Julia Claire Wallace: I do! I’ll say first that if you go to [performancearthouston.com](http://performancearthouston.com), I have collected my favorite links that define performance art, and there’s a “Performance Art?” link to some of my favorite guides. But for me personally, performance art is creative action that creates transformation in myself and those around me. The reason I do it is because it is one of my favorite ways to grow personally.

**Do you recall when you first encountered performance art as a specific category?**

I don’t remember when I found out what it was, but my real introduction came when I was going to the University of Houston and I took Elia Arce’s performance-art class. She’s been a huge influence on me. Definitely, Elia was my teacher and mentor in learning this medium. I discovered that if I listen to myself, listen to my body, listen to my →

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mind, then ideas come forth about actions that I could do. Performance art really opens up the door to some creativity that can be really powerful.

**Tell us a bit about how the festival got started.**

I'm the director, but a management team of artists leads the festival. I have set up the festival much more like a social sculpture than a logical festival that makes sense. [Laughs] One of the unique things about it is the community aspect. I worked really hard to make sure that the artists coming in get to really spend time with each other and the artists from Houston. I also make pathways for volunteers to very easily come and really get to know these artists from all over the world. Any artist that agrees to come understands that this is the festival that is all about getting to know everybody and having an exchange with Houston, instead of just coming in and doing your work. Creating a short-term community that has lasting impact is important to me.

**The history I was taught says that contemporary performance art comes out of 1960s female artists who couldn't get their work into galleries— places that were full of paintings of women. So they said, "You want to look at women's bodies? Here, we'll give you women's bodies to look at."**

I'm not incredibly well-versed in the history, but I have sensed that [dynamic], for sure. Since performance art is rooted in the body, people who have had painful experiences related to their bodies have used it, historically, in order to work through that oppression or to create activism to address those issues.

**My experience is that performance art attracts a lot of queer bodies.**

Yeah. I grew up in a very restrictive Christian [environment] that taught me the carnal, the body, was evil. I knew I was bisexual in high school, so I already felt the conflict of that. My body was telling me this one thing, but then all the people around me were telling me this other thing. So performance art taught me to honor what my body was telling me in a really powerful way. It has been incredibly healing. So that's my personal experience.

**I know it's not a "gay festival," but can you tell us about a couple of the queer artists?**

It's a funny thing [to ask] who the queer ones are. I don't know! I didn't ask everyone their sexuality! [Laughs] I will say our management team has a lot of queer people on it, but it's a diverse queerness where every sexuality is represented. I'm really excited to be hosting Jose Villalobos. Cassie Mira is a trans artist who

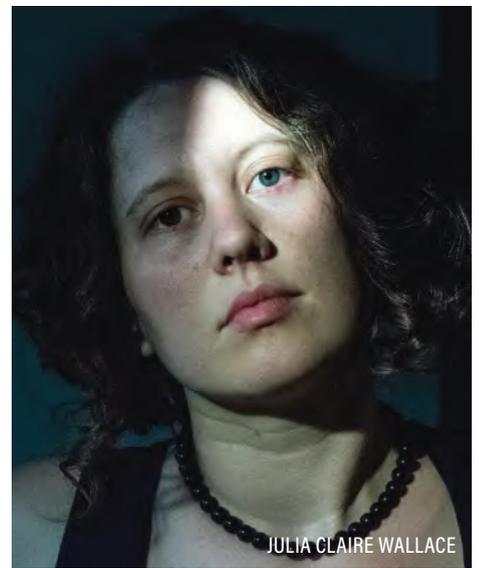


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**"SINCE PERFORMANCE ART IS ROOTED IN THE BODY, PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD PAINFUL EXPERIENCES RELATED TO THEIR BODIES HAVE USED IT..."**

—Julia Claire Wallace



JULIA CLAIRE WALLACE

is doing some really cool things—some of the most powerful work I've seen in Houston. She has a really strong voice. Jonathan Lopez is a member of our management team. He won't be performing, but he's doing all the videography on our website. Antonius Tin-Bui is an amazing nonbinary queer artist who is currently doing a residency at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.

**Anything you want to say about Experimental Action that we haven't covered?**

I want people to come to this festival and have powerful, mind-altering experiences that leave them better off than when they came. I want this festival to change the lives of the

audience, the artists, and the volunteers. And I do encourage anyone who wants to volunteer to let me know, because there are some really incredible opportunities to be engaged with the short-term community that's going to be created. ▼

**What:** Experimental Action Performance Art Festival  
**When:** February 21–23  
**Where:** various venues  
**Info:** [experimentalaction.com](http://experimentalaction.com)

*Neil Ellis Orts is a writer and performer in Houston. He can be found on the web at [neilellisorts.com](http://neilellisorts.com).*

STAGE

# FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Behind the scenes  
with the Cowardly Lion.

By MARENE GUSTIN

**N**icholas J. Pearson has always been a big film buff. In particular, the 1939 musical *The Wizard of Oz*, based on the beloved L. Frank Baum book, is one of his favorites. He owns the three-disc commemorative version with behind-the-scenes footage.

“Oh God, yes—I loved that movie growing up; it was always on TV,” says the 34-year-old New York-based actor. “There’s something so simple about the message that there’s no place like home—there’s nothing like family. I always try to make a family wherever I go. In gay culture, we tend to do that.”

Right now, his family is straight out of the Land of Oz while he stars in the Broadway touring production of *The Wizard of Oz*, coming to Houston’s Jones Hall February 23 and 24. Pearson plays the dual role of farmhand Zeke and the Cowardly Lion. →





Nicholas J. Pearson  
as the Cowardly Lion

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It's basically like seeing the movie, live and onstage," Pearson says of the production. "It's all the songs and the lines from the movie." One of those lines comes at the end of the story when Dorothy is leaving Oz and has to say her goodbyes to the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Man, and the Scarecrow.

**Dorothy:** *Goodbye, Tinman. Oh, don't cry! You'll rust so dreadfully. Here's your oil can.*

**The Tin Man:** *Now I know I've got a heart, 'cause it's breaking...*

**Dorothy:** *Goodbye, Lion. I know it isn't right, but I'm going to miss the way you used to holler for help before you found your courage.*

**The Cowardly Lion:** *I never would've found it if it hadn't been for you...*

"I just cry my eyes out at that point, every single performance," sighs Pearson. "Dorothy was the first one to believe in the Cowardly Lion. She gave him that courage."

Pearson loves the entire cast and crew he's touring with, but there's one pretty cool cast member that he says everyone loves.

"Murphy is just the most chill dog ever," he says of the rescue dog that plays Toto. "Everybody loves him and loves to cuddle with him. He's actually the pet of our musical director,



Nicholas J. Pearson

Lizzie Webb. It took him a while to get used to everything onstage, but now he'll just yawn in the Wicked Witch's face when she threatens him!"

But it's not all love and laughter for Pearson when he's onstage. After all, there's what he calls his "fur-lap sack."

"It's basically like wearing a carpet," Pearson says of his lion suit. "It's very sweaty. It smells. After the show, if someone is unzipping me in the back, I warn them to move as soon as the zipper is open. It's like steam just rises up as I take it off."

He estimates he burns 1,300 calories per

performance. But on the plus side, the six-foot-two-inch 250-pound actor says it's the best weight-loss program he's ever found.

And then there's that tail.

"The biggest problem is actually maneuvering that mechanical tail. I fall down several times in the show, and I have to make sure the tail is out of the way or I can really hurt myself. But it's a great costume—I feel like a drag queen. I'll look in the mirror when I'm all made up and I say, 'Hello, gorgeous!'"

Pearson is dedicating all of his performances to his father and brother, who both passed away in recent years. Pearson grew up in Columbus, Ohio, where his mother and younger sister Laura still live. He earned a music-education degree, but instead of teaching he moved to New York in 2009 to try his hand onstage. He's had roles in *Monty Python's Spamalot*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *The Rocky Horror Show* where he played Eddie. When he's not on tour, he enjoys cooking, baking, and throwing movie-themed parties in his Manhattan home.

"We usually have a Harry Potter birthday party, or we throw one for the opening day at Hogwarts," he says. "And of course, an Oscar party!"

He's thrown bashes for Hollywood's big night for the last 13 years, but he'll be performing in Houston when the Academy Awards roll around this month.

"It started in college with a couple of us around a TV set with some Totino's pizza rolls," he recalls. "But it's much more elaborate now—I buy special shot glasses and plan a menu of movie-themed food. We have ballots and a big board of nominees, and we play trivia games during the commercials."

Maybe this year he'll just celebrate with some great Tex-Mex.

"That's what I'm looking forward to in Houston," says Pearson. "I love a big bowl of guacamole and a good margarita."

**What:** *The Wizard of Oz*

**When:** February 23-24

**Where:** Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana St.

**Info:** spahouston.org



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## Jake Choi

### LGBTQ?

Jake Choi (seen here promoting the ABC series *Single Parents* on the Red Carpet at New York City's Tavern on the Green in May 2018): what doesn't he want to argue about?

(*The Advocate*, Feb/Mar 2019, Desirée Guerrero)

Re: his fluid sexuality.

I just don't feel comfortable or honest when I say I'm straight or gay—I can be attracted to anybody, regardless of gender. . . . I feel like a lot of people understand it better if you just say “bisexual,” which is not the same thing, but it's like sometimes when people say, “Oh, so you're bi?”—I don't even want to argue anymore. It's just like, “Yeah—sure.” I feel like the term pansexual is a little bit closer. With me, I say fluid because it's always changing.



### Lubricant for Your Toast?

On *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, Jane Fonda (l) and Lily Tomlin dish about their Netflix series *Grace and Frankie*, now in its fifth season. It has been renewed for another season, which starts in 2020.

# Mollee Gray

(*The Advocate*, Feb/Mar 2019, Desirée Guerrero)

Re: her sexuality.

I kept it hidden. I was so scared what it would do to my career. . . . But I also never really understood it. I was attracted to girls but not all girls, so I was battling what that meant.

[When I did come out] I got so much hate. “How could you do this? You were my role model, now I can’t even look at you!” But I feel so much better. I would rather deal with all the negativity from people sitting behind a computer or phone, rather than feeling like I’m hiding the best part of my life.



**It Gets Better**

Mollee Gray (seen here in a promotional photo for Disney Channel’s *Teen Beach 2* in 2015): what’s the best part of her life?



**Penetratin’ Putin**

Bill Maher wants to know what’s up with Trump and Putin.

# Bill Maher

(*Real Time with Bill Maher*, 1/18/19, Desirée Guerrero)

Re: why Trump is a Russian agent.

Trump did nothing when they told him Russia was meddling in our elections, he fired Comey when he was looking into that shit, he wants to get out of NATO, and he met Putin five times—that’s a lot of times in just a couple of years, always with nobody around. . . . nobody can know what they’re doing. Forget collusion—I want to know if there’s penetration.



# Jane Fonda & Lily Tomlin

(*The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, 1/15/19)

Re: *Grace and Frankie* (Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin, respectively, play the title characters on the Netflix show) are in the business of selling vibrators, but Frankie had considered selling a lubricant made from organic yams (spoiler alert: until she learned unnatural chemicals were going to be added to it).

**Jane Fonda:** [Before we were selling vibrators] Frankie was trying to sell this yam thing, and I put it on my toast, and then I found out it was vaginal lubricant.

**Lily Tomlin:** A good rule to abide by is “Don’t put anything ‘there’ that you wouldn’t put in your mouth.”



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## READ OUT

By **TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER**

# 'Perfectly Clear'

## Escaping Scientology and fighting for the woman she loves.

Once, you believed in fairy tales. Santa came down the chimney, the Easter Bunny hid colored eggs, and the Tooth Fairy left money for your molars. You were once wide-eyed and innocent, too, but those days are gone—even though, as in the new book *Perfectly Clear* by Michelle LeClair and Robin Gaby Fisher, you still believe in love.

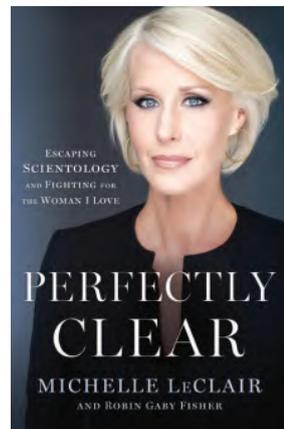
For most of her young life, Michelle LeClair was a worrier. She had to be: her mother was somewhat of a free spirit who married often and “was gone a lot.” That caused LeClair to grow up as the independent, responsible child—the one who, as a teen, wanted a job so she could pay for her own car.

And so LeClair's mother helped her get a job selling training materials for Sterling Management, an organization run by L. Ron Hubbard's Scientologists. It didn't take long before LeClair surprised everyone, herself included, by excelling beyond expectations.

Her success—and her mother's influence—led the church to invite LeClair to one-on-one member counseling, ostensibly to determine her “purpose on earth,” but also to lead her deeper inside Scientology. Church members offered her their friendship, but LeClair noticed that she was always being asked for more money. As her career rose, so did the church's requests for donations, and soon she was writing astoundingly frequent five-figure checks to the organization.

And it might've continued that way, if not for one thing.

As a teenager, LeClair fooled around once with a female friend, which she had to confess to a fellow Scientologist who put that information into a file. Even after LeClair married and had children, her long-ago fling was flung in her face repeatedly—particularly after she tried to divorce her abusive husband. Scientology has long considered homosexuality to be repugnant, she was reminded, and that nagged at her enough to make her question this faith in which she'd been raised.



**Perfectly Clear**  
• by Michelle LeClair and Robin Gaby Fisher  
• 2018  
• Berkley (penguin.com)  
• 289 pages  
• \$27

She questioned it even deeper when she fell in love with a woman named Charly.

Halloween is long over. The decorations have been put away. But if you didn't get scared enough back then, *Perfectly Clear* will finish the job perfectly.

In the opening pages, author LeClair is arrested for a crime that never happened—fabricated, she says, by Scientology members. It's a small story compared to what else follows, but its heart-pounding presence in the front of the book takes readers by the scruff and shakes us.

That leaves a lingering feeling of alarm that continues to run in and out of the rest of this memoir as LeClair and her co-author let readers see what she herself did not see. We're privy to the manipulation she recalls but didn't notice then, the pressure she felt but dismissed, and the dawning fear that she could never get away.

That makes for an excellent real-life love story wrapped up in a psychological thriller that will make you pick your jaw up off the floor about every third page. If you think *Perfectly Clear* is a book you'll like, you'd better believe it.

*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.*

**COMMUNITY**

Photos by  
DALTON DEHART and EDGARDO AGUILAR



New Year's Eve party at the home of Ken Ng and Charles McFerrin. Pictured are **Gustavo Macias, Calvin Azzam, Ken Ng, and Xandro Canales.**



On January 15, the Lone Star Veterans Association LGBT Affinity Group held a career workshop at the Montrose Center. Pictured are **Luis Gonzalez (Gonzo), Roy Alvarez Jr., Kham Vargas, Deborah Lawson, Anne Le, Mark David Gibson, Tammi Wallace, Jimmy Moreland, Alex Chang, Cress Clippard, Stephan Cooke, and Leslie Bryant.**



On December 14, a reception was held at LaGrange supporting new Harris County district clerk Marilyn Burgess. Pictured are **Steven Duble and Kimberly Harvey.**



On January 16, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted its Brewing Up Business at Maggiano's Little Italy. Pictured are **James Boswell and Corrie Domingo.**

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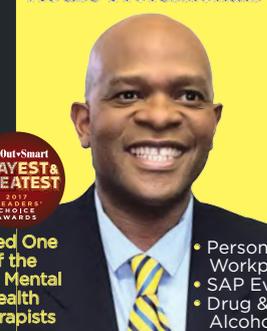


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## GROOVE OUT

By GREGG SHAPIRO

# Yesterday Again

The Carpenters, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and Maggie Roche.



Say what you will about the Grammy Award-winning Carpenters' choice of material (both cover and original), but there's no disputing that Karen Carpenter had one of the most extraordinary voices in late 20th-century music. So clear and pure. It was stunning and inimitable. Plus, she was a great drummer! It's difficult to believe that Karen (whose struggle with anorexia was an open secret and well-documented following her death) has been gone for 25 years. In the interim, technology has evolved to the point that we can have an album such as *Carpenters with the Royal Philharmonic* (A&M). Not a new concept (see 2015's very posthumous *If I Can Dream*, which pairs Elvis Presley recordings with London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra), but one that is a surprisingly good fit for the Carpenters. Karen's brother and musical partner, Richard, was already incorporating orchestrations in some of the duo's recordings, so there's nothing jarring about hearing these 17 songs with lush orchestrations. Perhaps the most exciting outcome of this project is the possibility of a whole new generation experiencing songs such as "(They Long to Be) Close to You," "Rainy Days and Mondays," "I Need to Be in Love," "Hurting Each Other," "For All We Know," "Superstar," "We've Only Just Begun," "Top of the World," "Goodbye to Love," and the holiday classic "Merry Christmas, Darling" for the first time.

*Sex, Dope & Cheap Thrills* (Columbia/Legacy) is a double-disc compilation of live tracks and alternative cuts commemorating the 50th anniversary of the release of the groundbreaking 1968 Big Brother & The Holding Company album *Cheap Thrills*. (The full original title was considered "too risqué" by the label at the time of its original release.)

At the complete opposite end of the vocal spectrum from Karen Carpenter, this new release is a reminder of the genius of the late Janis Joplin. Her rough, ragged, and lived-in vocals were a good match for the blues rock of the band—just listen to her reading of the Gershwins' "Summertime" as proof. The first disc's 30 songs, presented in various takes, closely follows the original running order on the expanded 1999 reissue of *Cheap Thrills*, with additions such as "Harry (Take 10)," "It's a Deal (Take 1)," "Easy Once You Know How (Take 1)," "How Many Times Blues Jam," and "Farewell Song (Take 7)." The second disc features 16 more takes, and songs that didn't make the cut on the album, such as "Misery'n."

Maggie Roche, who died in 2017, was a singer/songwriter who was every bit as distinctive an artist and deserving of praise as Karen Carpenter and Janis Joplin. Whether performing as half of a duo with sister Terre or as a third of the trio The Roches (with sisters Terre and Suzzy), Maggie Roche's artistic talents would always shine through. The double disc set *Where Do I Come From: Selected Songs* (Storysound), lovingly assembled by Suzzy Roche, is comprised of 32 songs, including four unreleased recordings. Maggie's work is represented by five songs from the 1975 Maggie and Terre album *Seductive Reasoning* (such as "Jill of All Trades," "Underneath the Moon," and the incredible "West Virginia"), as well as selections from eight of The Roches' albums. The only minor complaint is that there are no songs from The Roches' 1985 disc *Another World*. Other than that, *Where Do I Come From* is actually an out-of-this-world tribute to an incredible woman.

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

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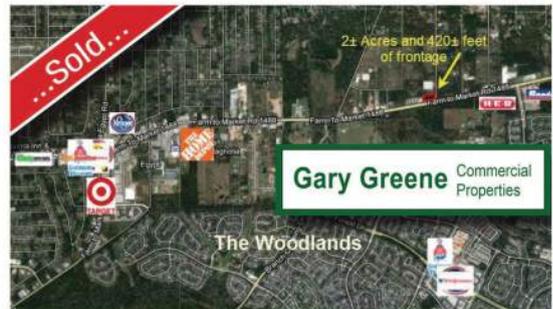


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# WEDDING GUIDE

## PUPPY LOVE

Darryl Wilson and Jarod Moore

By HENRY V. THIEL  
Photos by CHARLTON INIJE  
@INIJEPHOTO

**D**arryl Wilson, owner of D'Concierge Wedding Creative and a Navy veteran, met Jarod Moore, a business account representative for Enterprise Rental, when he joined the Delta Phi Upsilon fraternity and became his big brother. After watching Moore date a friend of his and seeing first-hand how thoughtful and kind he was, Wilson decided to get to know him better after his friends broke up. "I literally felt like I was stalking Jarod before he accepted my date request," Wilson said with a laugh. →

Moore (l) and Wilson



“After all that, he then made me wait eight months before he kissed me or did anything intimate, which I was totally not used to,” added Moore with a wink. “But I was totally intrigued by the chase.”

“When I first saw Darryl, I thought for sure he was of African descent and would have an adorable, sexy accent,” said Moore. “But he is from East St. Louis, Illinois. He is my tall, dark, and handsome prince—with a proper accent,” he added with a laugh.

Wilson, 34, was taken with Moore’s beautiful eyes and large ears. “Jarod was perfection. I couldn’t keep my eyes off of him. I am sure he thought I was a little full of myself, because my first pickup line was a text in which I asked him, ‘Do you think I’m sexy?’”

“Jarod and I started dating at a very young age, so we basically grew up together during our twenties,” shared Wilson, who is also 34. “We experienced a little bit of everything in our ten-year relationship, including a year-and-a-half breakup when I moved to Los Angeles for business.”

That time apart allowed them to grow as men and eventually end up together again thanks to their two dogs, miniature dachshunds Cupcake and Rudy, who gave them a reason to call each other and keep the lines of communication open. “Without them, we probably wouldn’t have had the courage to call each other after the breakup” Moore said.

“I knew Jarod was the one for me, even before we started dating seriously,” shared Wilson. “Jarod would spend the weekends at my place, and I would always slip on the marble tile getting out of the shower, almost killing myself on a daily basis. Then one day I got out of the shower, got dressed, and thought, ‘Wow, this is the first time I didn’t slip getting out of the shower, because Jarod had put a rug down.’ That’s when I knew I was going to marry him.”

“We both credit our healthy relationship to great sex, communication, and having other healthy relationships with other couples, because you can’t take this journey alone,” added Wilson.

All it took for Wilson to propose to Moore on November 17, 2017, was family, friends and one little lie. “How else can you propose to someone who was a PI in their former life?” asked Wilson.



**“WE EXPERIENCED A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING IN OUR TEN-YEAR RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING A YEAR-AND-A-HALF BREAKUP WHEN I MOVED TO LOS ANGELES FOR BUSINESS.”**

—Darryl Wilson

To set the stage for his proposal, Wilson told Moore that he was going to be a part of a wedding reality-show episode, and that the producers had sent a crew to follow him around and get behind-the-scenes footage for the show. Moore happily agreed because he knew that Wilson had a major celebrity wedding the next day. Wilson had cast friends to play the TV producer and crew, and had hired a cameraman to capture every moment.

Right on cue, Wilson’s assistant called in a panic saying he needed to come to the LifeHtx venue (where the next day’s celebrity wedding was scheduled) to deal with a power outage. When they entered the darkened building that had only a few candles lit, TV screens throughout the venue suddenly turned on with Wilson’s voice saying, “Boo. Let’s take a walk down memory lane.” The video included a montage of the special moments they had shared throughout their 10-year relationship, including many photos of family members and friends.

Unbeknownst to Moore, watching from the darkness were 30 very



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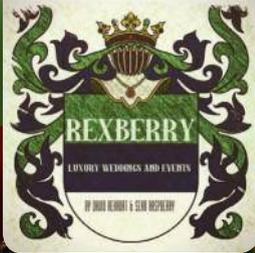
close family members and friends who drove or flew in just to be a part of the proposal. When it was time for Wilson to propose, he walked his mother with the ring and the hidden guests.

They were married on November 17, 2018, at the River Oaks Civic Forum, with TV host Diann Valentine as their officiant.

It was very important for both men to include their mothers in the wedding, and not just have them there to give them away. So each mother wrote a note that was read by friends as the grooms walked down the aisle, arm in arm with their mothers. There was not a dry eye in the room. The vows they exchanged were spoken from the heart, and very emotional.

All of their event vendors—florist, photographer, videographer, caterer, and bartenders—were from LGBT-owned businesses. The newlyweds live in Houston, and will honeymoon in Paris during the 2019 Fashion Week.

*Henry V. Thiel is a frequent contributor to OUTSMART. He was the ring bearer at his oldest brother's wedding.*



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On January 29, Bunnies on the Bayou held Snow Bunnies 2019 at Rich's. Pictured are **David Goldberg, Kurt Grether, Andrew Chaney, Carlos Sotelo, and Dale Labang.**



LIFE HTX held an open-house tour on January 23. Pictured are **Shawn Wainwright, Monsour Taghdisi, and Randall Valentino Gonzales.**



On January 15, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber partnered with Comcast to host a meet-and-greet with author Mark David Gibson. Pictured are **Deborah Lawson, Carolyn Shaff, Samantha Smith, Vanessa Boyd, Ray Purser, Tasha Johnson, Tammi Wallace, Luis Chen, and Montrice King.**



On December 15, the Lone Star Volleyball Association held its end-of-season party and awards bash at Mary's Alibi. Pictured are **Shawn Kuehn, Sean Peace, Clay Allen, Daniel Carrera, Chris Bui, Rich Borucke, Eric Mata, Jackson Andrade, Jerome Moore, Maddison Osters, Bryan Pedroza, Farhan Shariff, Eloy Flores, Michael Crook, Joshua New, and Evan John.**



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On January 1, Harris County hosted the Swearing-In Ceremony and Celebration at NRG Center. Pictured are **Gordon Quan** and **Silvia Quan**.



On January 16, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted its Brewing Up Business at Maggiano's Little Italy. Pictured are **Tony Martinez** and **Michael Hickey**.



On January 1, Harris County hosted the Swearing-in Ceremony and Celebration at NRG Center. Pictured are **Jerry Simoneaux**, **Scot Dollinger**, and **Christopher Bown**.



On January 16, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted its Brewing Up Business at Maggiano's Little Italy. Pictured are **Kim Cook** and **Zach Martinez**.

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# OUT THERE

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## Saturday, January 19

The 2019 Women's March Houston was just one of many marches held in major cities all around the country. While definitely for and by women, the event attracted an array of supporters. Houston's third annual march attracted nearly 10,000 people.



For more event photos, please visit [TinyURL.com/OSMPhotos](http://TinyURL.com/OSMPhotos)



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## Friday, January 11

Hundreds flocked to Discovery Green on Friday, Jan. 11, for **Rainbow on Ice**, the park's annual LGBTQ ice skating dance party. Tunes were provided by gay Houston DJ Joe Ross, and Drag Houston reenacted Ariana Grande's "Thank U Next" music video. The event also included a mini fashion show featuring costumes by Yahaira Dehill.



For more event photos, please visit [TinyURL.com/OSMPhotos](https://tinyurl.com/OSMPhotos)



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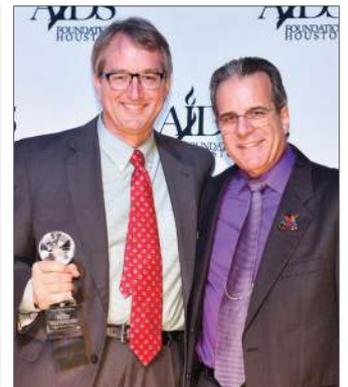
**Sunday, January 20**

Bunnies on the Bayou held their 2019 **Snow Bunnies** fête at Rich's. Despite the cool weather, it was plenty hot in Rich's as many snow bunnies dressed like it was summer.



**Friday, November 30**

Event co-chairs Jacob Sudhoff & Jerry Hooker hosted a gala crowd for the **World AIDS Day Luncheon**. The event, sponsored by Chevron and others, brought in actor Tituss Burgess as the featured keynote speaker, honored those who have paved the way, and celebrated the future leaders who continue their legacy.



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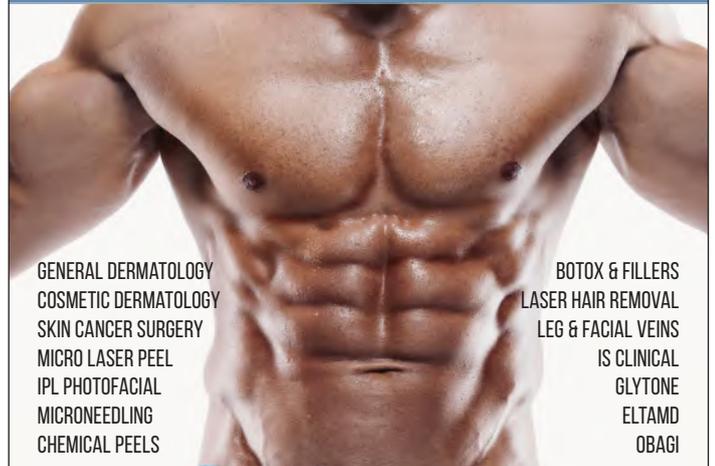
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**Saturday, January 12**

"Laissez le défilé rouler" (Let the parade roll) was the theme for this fundraiser thrown by the **Krewe of Olympus**. The event, hosted by Central Houston Cadillac, featured hors d'oeuvres, complimentary drinks, and a silent auction.



**Monday, January 14**

The **Harris County Democratic Party** held a fundraiser on January 14 at the swanky Chapman and Kirby in EaDo. Attendees were able to meet incoming Harris County judges and county-wide officials.

For more event photos, please visit [TinyURL.com/OSMPhotos](http://TinyURL.com/OSMPhotos)



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## BAR & CLUB GUIDE

### HOUSTON

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

#### GUAVA LAMP

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

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#### EAGLE

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#### 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  
[jrbarandgrill.com](http://jrbarandgrill.com).

#### LA GRANJA DISCO Y CANTINA

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#### MICHAEL'S OUTPOST

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

#### NEON BOOTS DANCEHALL & SALOON

Houston's only LGBTQ country dancehall opens Wednesday-Sunday. Wednesday features Steak Night and Bingo. Free dance classes on Thursdays, and karaoke. 11410 Hempstead Hwy 713.677.0828 • [neonbootsclub.com](http://neonbootsclub.com).

#### Pearl BAR

This LGBT-friendly lounge in the Washington corridor features daily highlights like open mic night, steak night, and drink specials. 4216 Washington • [pearlhouston.com](http://pearlhouston.com).

#### RICH'S HOUSTON

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#### 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

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#### VIVIANA'S

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Reyna: Cucumber Shot, sweet and spicy, just like me!

Isaac: Green Tea Shot

#### Where is your favorite place to drink when not on duty?

Isaac & Reyna: The Eagle

#### What are you best known for?

R: "My beauty and aggressive attitude"

I: "My looks, honey..."

#### What is the best and worst holiday to work? Why?

R: I love working all holidays except Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve  
I: Thanksgiving is best; New Year's Eve is the worst

#### Who are the hardest customers to please?

I: The ones on a budget.  
R: The ones that just turned 21.

#### If you weren't a bartender... what career would you choose?

R: I'd probably be going to school.

I: I would be in the medical field.

#### Do you have any pets?

R: A Great Dane named Prince. He's my baby!

I: No. I can barely take care of myself...

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R: \$200

I: \$100

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### BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION

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### GALVESTON

#### 23RD ST. STATION

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#### ROBERT'S LAFITTE

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#### RUMORS BEACH BAR

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By LILLY RODDY

Illustration by JANIEWHATEVA

# Bending Over Backward

February's a month to be flexible.



## AQUARIUS (January 20–February 18).

You have been in a time of rest and retreat. You may even be isolating yourself from work and people who are too demanding. Friends can help give you a better perspective and avoid a myopic view of your situation. This birthday month is your yearly personal cycle of renewal—an excellent time to review what you accomplished last year and set up some new goals for yourself this year. You are working to make better use of your money and resources, especially at midmonth. Home projects and family responsibilities become very important toward the end of the month. Be careful that you don't take on too much!

leadership role at work, especially after the 16th when Mars, planet of courage and action, enters your sign for a 40-day visit! You will be more outspoken and direct with those around you. This continues to be a time of educational expansion, solidifying contracts and agreements, and being clear about your belief systems. Friendships are very important toward the end of the month, and may provide some needed support. You will have to ask, but friends are only too ready to give!

## GEMINI (May 21–June 21).

You continue to be busy this month. This is a great month for you to create partnerships, generate more intimacy, and open yourself up to new ideas. Be careful that you don't take on too much and overestimate

your capabilities. You can see the bigger picture this month, and that should help you to make decisions. This is a good time for a vacation, writing your novel, or just sharing your views with friends and community groups. Interacting with foreigners or foreign-owned businesses can be very beneficial, especially through this month. Your career becomes more of an emphasis as we get to the end of the month. Keep your options open!

## CANCER (June 22–July 22).

Relationships, both business and personal, are very important this month. You are evaluating which relationships need attention and which ones you are considering letting go of. Having shared long-term goals can really help add some assurance and safety in your commitments. You are also working on getting your finances in order. This is a great month to get that done early, before April 15. You are still exploring new ground and are more willing to take on a leadership role at work. That stays strong through midmonth. Your attention turns to friends and reaching out to expand your social network. Watch your boundaries, and budget your time better this month.

## LEO (July 23–August 22).

You are taking a long-term view as you continue to work on improving your health, your work environment, and your personal routines. You are re-evaluating and changing negative behaviors. Relationships take on more emphasis this month. This is a good month to renew your vows or to meet new people for potential relationships, both business and personal. You will be paying more attention to your career or taking on more of a community leadership role by midmonth. Getting your finances in order comes into play by the end of the month.

## VIRGO (August 23–September 22).

You are in an organizing mode as the month begins, looking to improve your work environment and generate more efficiency in the process. You may also seem more direct and less flexible to others. Home projects continue to fill your dance card. You may even

**F**ebruary should be a calmer month overall. We should see more constructive behavior in all areas of life. Worldwide economic news is especially challenging, with March and April bringing possible corrections in the stock market. Keep a good handle on your finances, and focus on conservative investments. Mercury goes retrograde on the 27th and will remain retrograde until April 4. Mercury will be retrograde in Pisces, which affects the mutable signs of Pisces, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Gemini. This retrograde will affect the U.S. very strongly. Get your projects started before February 27.

- The sun begins the month in Aquarius and enters Pisces on the 18th. Mercury also stars in Aquarius and enters Pisces on the 10th. Venus finishes her journey through Sagittarius and quickly enters Capricorn on the 3rd. Mars has been traveling through Aries, its home sign, but enters Taurus on the 13th. Maintain your flexibility this month.

## ARIES (March 21–April 19).

There has been a lot of focus on your career and security over the last two months. That will lighten up some as you expand your work and social circles. Community organizations and business groups can offer an outlet for your interests and generate friendships as well. It's better to have people helping you this month on any projects you are working on. Your confidence remains very strong through midmonth, but you will slow down some after that time. The latter part of the month is a better time for rest and retreat. You will need to balance your responsibilities at work with better boundaries and making better use of your time toward the end of the month.

## TAURUS (April 20–May 20).

You are focused on your career and long-term security as this month begins. This is a good month to take a

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## SCENEOUT

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On January 1, Hon. Charles Spain was sworn in as the 14th district appeals court justice at the home of Spain and John Adcock. Pictured are Hon. **Murry Cohen**, Hon. **Phyllis Frye**, Hon. **Charles Spain**, Hon. **Alice Oliver-Parrott**, and Hon. **Steve Kirkland**.



On January 11, an investiture ceremony for judge Jerry Simoneaux was held at the Harris County Civil Courthouse. Pictured are judge **Jerry Simoneaux** and family.



On January 13, Harris County held a volunteer voter registrar training. Pictured are **Idon Akogun**, **Leticia Martin**, **Zakiya Hamm**, **Brian Baltazar**, **Tyett Pham**, **Alex Stroud**, **Pamela Dora-Thomas**, **Stroud**, **Debra Slider**, and **Cassandra Foster**.



On January 15, The Executive and Professional Association of Houston (EPAH) held its monthly dinner meeting at Maggiano's Little Italy. Pictured are **Jessica Celaya**, **Aaron Menchaca**, and **Dr. Cynthia Corral**.



On January 15, a biomedical summit local committee meeting was held at the Houston Health Department. Pictured are **Jason Black**, **Cathy Wiley**, **Barry Barnes**, **Elia Chino**, **Tom Lindstrom**, **Larry Roberts**, and **Kevin Anderson**.



On January 15, AIDS Foundation Houston kicked off its 2019 AIDS Walk at El Tiempo Westheimer. Pictured are **Margarita Perez**, **Travis Torrence**, **Nicholas Guidry**, and **Craig Miles**.



On January 16, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber hosted its Brewing Up Business Special Edition at Maggiano's Little Italy. Pictured are **Roy Alvarez Jr.**, **Deborah Lawson**, **Corey Allen**, **Mark Gibson**, **Gary Wood**, and **Tammi Wallace**.



A reception for Harris County District Clerk Marilyn Burgess was held at LaGrange on January 23. Pictured are **Roland Garcia**, **Marilyn Burgess**, and **Mike Doyle**, president of the Harris County Democratic Lawyer's Association.



On December 12, E.R.S.I.C.S.S. held its Coronation XXXV at the Sheraton Brookhollow. Pictured are Empress 34 **Martinique Bouvier**, Emperor 35 **JJ Fulton**, Empress 35 **Morgan Fairview**, and Emperor 34 **Michael G. Clayton**.



On January 19, the Women's March was held in downtown Houston. Pictured are **Januari Leo**, **Vince Pryor**, **Shubhra Endley**, and **Linda Cantu**.



January 13 was Recruitment Day at the Meyerland Park softball field for the Montrose Softball League Association. Pictured are MSLA recruits and MSLA volunteers.

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