

LATINX LEADERS: Spotlighting our LGBTQ advocates and champions Pg.30

SEPT. '22

HOUSTON'S LGBTQ MAGAZINE

OutSmart

Purple Love,
Trevon Latin's
multimedia work
inspired by his
Houston childhood
memories

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT ISSUE

SUBLIME TAPESTRY

**QUEER ARTISTS ENRICHING
THE CITY'S CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

Pg.55



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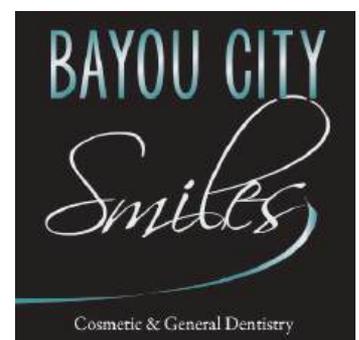
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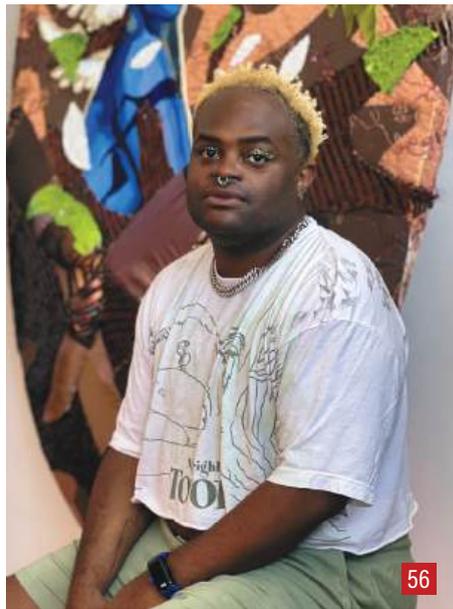
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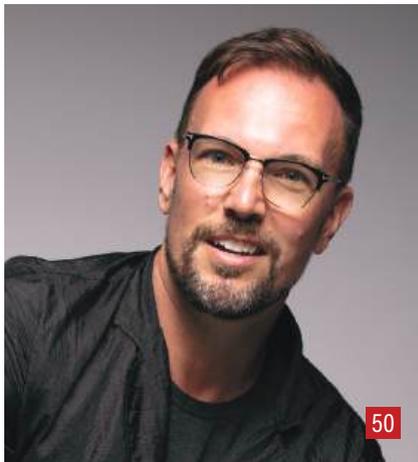
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SUBLIME TAPESTRY

QUEER ARTISTS ENRICHING THE CITY'S CULTURAL LANDSCAPE Pg. 55

Artwork by Trevon Latin

Purple Love - Paint, fabric, barrettes, pony beads, sequin, story book pages

Photo by Jacob Cohen

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The only thing that's constant is change, as they say, and there's been a few changes at

OUTSMART this summer. Long-time managing editor Lourdes Zavaleta left the organization last month to pursue a career in law, and we wish her much success in her new endeavors.

Lourdes left behind some big shoes to fill, and I'll be stepping into them for a few months as a search goes on for a new managing editor. Eventually, I'll settle into my own role as OUTSMART's web editor, while Michael Gurnas joins our administrative team as the projects manager.

As a contributing writer since the magazine's earliest days, I'm glad to be joining OUTSMART as a staff member. Coming on full-time gives me a chance to

continue the work of documenting LGBTQ stories, celebrating members of the community, and chronicling our history here in Houston.

As a native Houstonian, I've seen Houston's LGBTQ community evolve from the "Shoot the Queers" days of former mayor Louie Welch to Annise Parker's successful runs for mayor with support from all segments of the city. I'm an out lesbian who is happily married to my high-school sweetheart, but I remember well the days when being married to the woman I love was illegal.

I also want to welcome a new staff writer to our ranks: Morgan Gage, who is originally from Whitehouse, Texas, a small town in the piney woods of East Texas. She tells me that one of the first things she did when she got to Houston a few years ago was

to pick up a copy of OUTSMART. (Smart move, Morgan!) She'll be focusing on arts and entertainment, with a few forays into news coverage. She's an incredibly strong and versatile writer, and we're very lucky to have her.

This September issue covers a lot of ground. Singer/songwriter Rufus Wainwright, who comes to Houston this month, tells us about leaving his wild days behind and settling down with his husband and child.

And don't miss our look at a few of Houston's influential Latinx leaders working to advance the LGBTQ community, including playwright and former *Houston Chronicle* staffer Fernando Dovalina. He has lots of stories to tell, and is finding the perfect platform on Houston's theater stages.

Finally, we spotlight some

imaginative LGBTQ artists working in a variety of media. Stephanie Gonzalez, Trevon Latin, Eddie Divas, and others are all doing their part to enliven our city's thriving performing- and visual-arts scene.

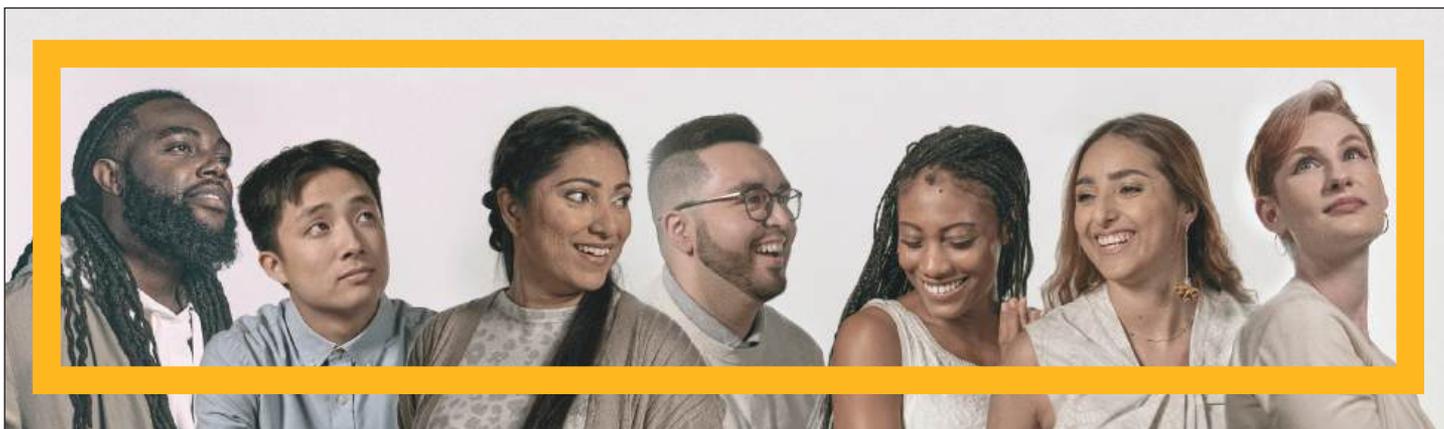
I firmly believe that we are the ones who tell our own stories best, and I hope to help OUTSMART do exactly that. Please feel free to reach out by emailing me with your story ideas!

See you next month!

Olivia Flores Alvarez
Interim
Managing
Editor



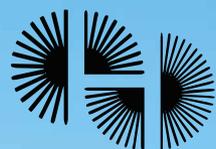
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QUEER THINGS to DO

For a weekly roundup of LGBTQ happenings, visit www.OutSmart-Magazine.com



ARTS
September 22
TROY MONTES-MICHIE:
ROCK OF EYE
OPENING RECEPTION

Queer visual artist Troy Montes-Michie's new exhibit Rock of Eye comes to the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. The El Paso artist's first solo show focuses on classic Black male fashion-model images. (Through January 29)
tinyurl.com/2p95wyfz

Troy Montes-Michie, *Paisano*, 2018. Paper, photographs, gloves, shoe fragment, and acrylic on wood, 36 x 30 x 2 inches. Courtesy of Antoine Drye and Jacqueline Moline.



COMMUNITY

September 24
HOUSTON TRANSGENDER
UNITY BANQUET

The largest annual transgender event in Houston is at the DoubleTree Intercontinental Airport Hotel this year. The banquet raises funds for a variety of activities including scholarships, small grants, and Pride activities. It's also a chance to celebrate community accomplishments and raise awareness about future goals.

tinyurl.com/bdejzhet



COMMUNITY

September 2-4
GALVESTON PRIDE WEEKEND

Join the LGBTQ crowd on Galveston Island for Galveston Gay Pride Weekend. The Mister & Miss Pride Galveston Pageant kicks things off on Friday night, with drag brunches, performances, and impromptu fun throughout the weekend.

(More on Galveston's LGBTQ community in our July issue.) tinyurl.com/57x3se9s

SPORTS

September 6–November 15
LGBTQ KICKBALL LEAGUE

The LGBTQ Kickball League is an extremely casual group that gets together just to kick the ball around. No uniforms, and everything's free!

Tuesday afternoons, 2–5 p.m.
tinyurl.com/32hzb3yk

STAGE

September 9–18
PETER PAN

Choreographer Trey McIntyre's Houston Ballet favorite is told through the eyes of a child, with spectacular flying sequences, giant puppets, and daring sword fights. (Read more about this new *Peter Pan* production on page 50.)

tinyurl.com/4wv4nvj8



COMMUNITY

September 15
LGBTQ-INSPIRED COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

The owners of Benny Thunders commissioned three heARThentic LOVE murals by Artista Elisabet, and before she seals the first mural, the public is invited to add small, meaningful items that will become part of the work. tinyurl.com/ydtmjf9c



MUSIC

September 16
THE ULTIMATE DONNA SUMMER TRIBUTE

It's time for some hot stuff when Rainere Martin comes to Miller Outdoor Theatre (direct from Las Vegas!) for The Ultimate Donna Summer Tribute. The disco queen's hits will be recreated, including "Bad Girls" and "Last Dance." tinyurl.com/yd4hbbke

COMMUNITY

September 24
LGBTQ YOUTH HOMELESS PREVENTION INITIATIVE FORUM

Come to the Montrose Center to find out how your group can help eliminate homelessness among LGBTQ youth, one of the most deeply affected populations. Expect an informative, enlightening session. tinyurl.com/n6b4h7cu

COMMUNITY

September 24
DRAG QUEEN BINGO

Hosted by the ever-wonderful Kiki Dion Van Whales, VIP tables are available that include food, drinks, a personal server, and bingo swag! Or you can go the regular route and just play the heck out of your cards. Held at First Christian Church Katy (Disciples of Christ), where everyone is loved and welcome.

tinyurl.com/spmu6pyw



ARTS

September 29
AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' OUT@TUTS NIGHT

Theatre Under the Stars' new production of *Ain't Misbehavin'* celebrates the music of Fats Waller and other Black artists of the Harlem Renaissance. LGBTQ fans and their friends can meet cast members after the Sept. 29 show for a decidedly queer afterparty with free food, drink specials, and live music. tinyurl.com/4m9yp3rj

More QUEER THINGS TO DO →

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FASHION
October 10
THE QUEER KOUTURE FASHION SHOW 2022
 Get ready to see the latest in innovative, forward fashion at the Queer Kouture Fashion Show 2022 at The Ballroom at Bayou Place. Local fashion designers, Houston celebrities and influencers, and other couture devotees will gather to watch a grand parade of models and drag queens strutting down the runway. Sponsored by The LGBT Marriage Club, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting healthy relationships in the LGBTQ community.
tinyurl.com/2c7wrzra

COMEDY
November 3
QUEER IMPROV JAM
 Work on your comedy chops at the free Queer Improv Jam, a workshop especially for LGBTQ performers, students, and allies. Hosted by Aaron Michaels, this is an open practice, not a show. All levels of experience are welcome, from complete newbies to seasoned veterans. Everyone attending must be willing to perform. At Station Improv & Sketch Comedy Theater.
tinyurl.com/f4tmtjy

Host Aaron Michaels

COMMUNITY
November 5
EXTRA LIFE WITH HOUSTON GAYMERS 2022
 Have some fun (and save a few lives while you're at it) at Extra Life, a 24-hour game-a-thon to raise money for Texas Children's Hospital. This is an all-ages, in-person game-a-thon and sleepover event for LGBTQ gamers. So hit up your Discord servers, stream on your Twitch accounts, and get the party started.
tinyurl.com/4rys8be4

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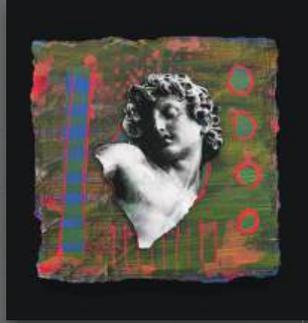
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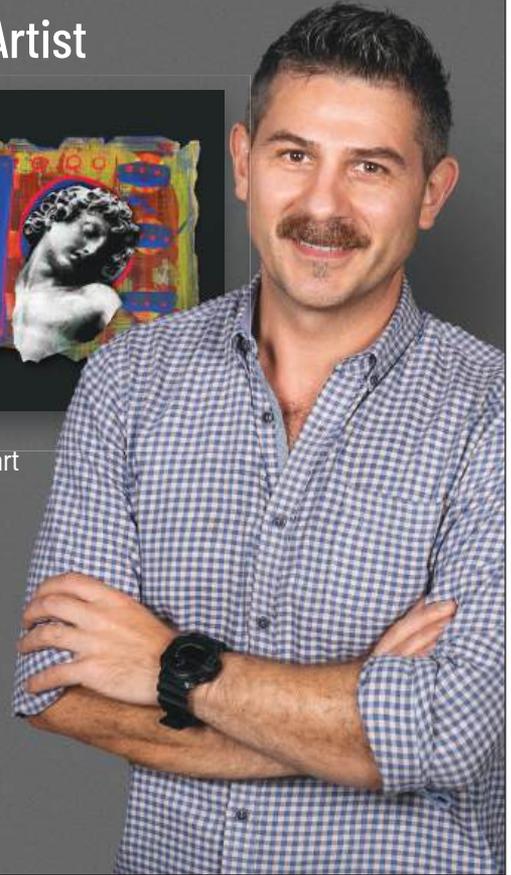


Visual artist Bogdan Mihai works in fine art photography, abstract painting, mixed media and video production.

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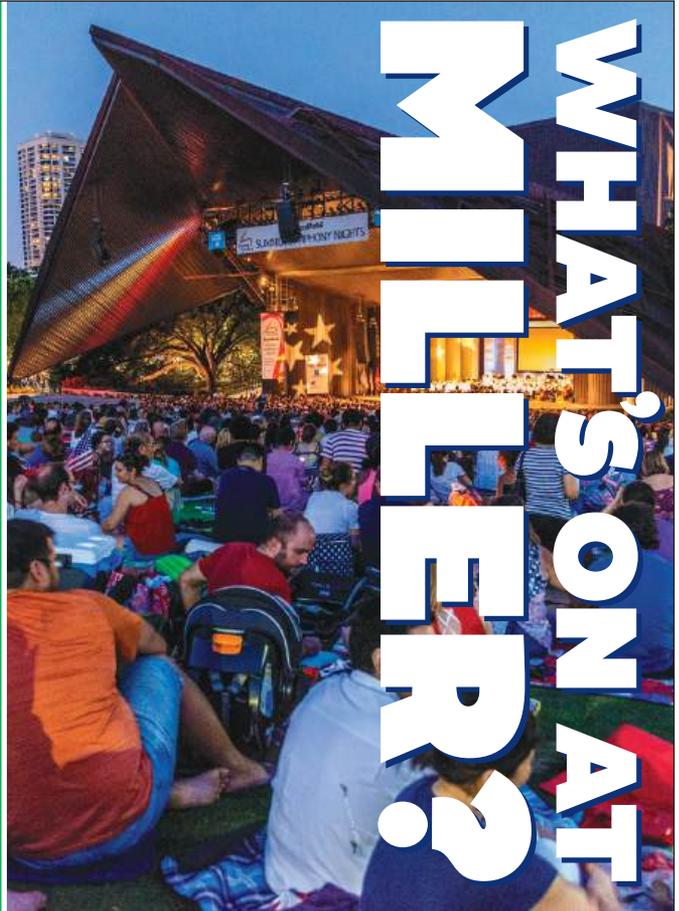


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**WHAT'S ON AT
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Texas School District Moves to Ban More than 700 Books

Keller ISD is reviewing the Bible, an Anne Frank adaptation, and several LGBTQ titles.

By CNN

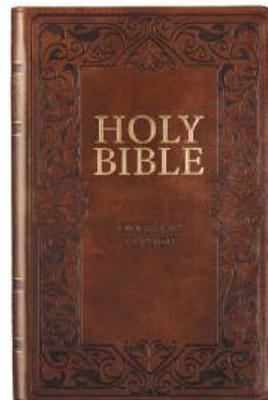
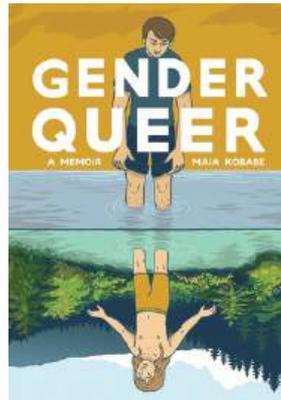
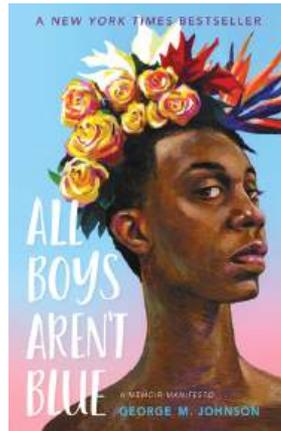
Officials in a school district near Fort Worth have directed school staff and librarians to temporarily remove books that have been challenged through the district's formal complaint process in the past school year, including the Bible and an illustrated adaptation of Anne Frank's diary.

The Keller Independent School District board of trustees adopted policies last week that set new standards for how books and other instructional materials are chosen for schools, including putting books up for 30 days of public review before they are purchased by libraries and removing challenged materials from shelves while they are being reviewed.

"Right now, Keller ISD's administration is asking our campus staff and librarians to review books that were challenged last year to determine if they meet the requirements of the new policy," the school district said in a statement after an email sent to principals about the policy was obtained by the *Texas Tribune* newspaper.

"All of the books included in Tuesday's email have been included on Keller ISD's Book Challenge List over the past year. Books that meet the new guidelines will be returned to the libraries as soon as it is confirmed they comply with the new policy," the statement said.

The Keller school district allows parents, employees, and district residents to file formal objections, or challenges, to books and instructional materials used in schools. A committee then considers whether the materials are educationally suitable and makes a decision on whether the material will remain in schools, the district's website says.



A sampling of the books reviewed by Keller I.S.D.

The group may also decide to limit the use of the materials to particular grade levels, or to students who get parental permission.

Books that were challenged in the past year include some that explore LGBTQ experiences, such as *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson, which the committee decided to keep in high schools, and *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, which was removed from the district's campuses, according to the district website. Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* was also challenged and kept by the committee.

The new library and educational-materials policies were approved unanimously by the board on August 8. The decision came as discussions over school library books and curricula have become key issues across the coun-

try. An April analysis from PEN America, a literary and free-expression advocacy organization, found that 1,586 books were banned in 86 school districts across 26 states from July 31, 2021, to March 31, 2022. Texas led the country with the most book bans at 713, the analysis found, followed by Pennsylvania and Florida.

"We are very pleased that our new un-woke school board has made these changes," one speaker said during the public-comment portion of the August 8 Keller school board meeting. "This is just the beginning, I hope."

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

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

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

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

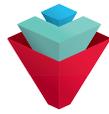
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GET MORE INFORMATION

- ▶ This is only a brief summary of important information about BIKTARVY. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.
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Please see Important Facts about BIKTARVY, including important warnings, on the previous page and visit [BIKTARVY.com](https://www.biktarvy.com).



Scan to see Chad's story.

Progress for Houston's LGBTQ Mexican Community

Names and gender markers can now be changed on government IDs.

By MARENE GUSTIN

Angelina DM Trailz, a Lady Gaga impersonator and classically trained violinist who performs at the new South Beach and JR's, is used to getting second looks.

"I get misgendered every day. People will stare at me in the bathroom. Sometimes they go out and check the door to make sure that they are in the right bathroom," Trailz says.

"At Miller Outdoor Theatre, I once had a policeman follow me into the restroom. But once I get my new [identification card], at least I'll have proof to protect me."

Trailz is referring to her government ID documents that she is having changed at Houston's Mexican consulate—for a second time—to reflect her gender-neutral status.

Unfortunately, when Trailz initially got her card changed last month, she was unable to change the gender marker on her Mexican birth certificate and passport to reflect her gender-neutral status. Since January 20, the Houston's Mexican Consulate has helped more than 70 trans Mexican nationals change the gender markers on their documents from male to female, or vice versa. But the gender-neutral "X" marker isn't widespread here, and the U.S. Department of State has only been issuing passports with X gender markers since March of this year.

The Mexican government issued its first X-gender birth certificate earlier this year to Fausto Martínez, a nonbinary Mexican native, and now they have notified Trailz that she can have the X gender marker placed on her documents.

"It's a very simple process," says Trailz, who was performing at the Mexican consulate when she met Ambassador Alicia Kerber-Palma and they discussed it. "She told me I don't even need an appointment. I'm just waiting to get a few friends to go down there with me



COURTESY OF ANGELINA DM TRAILZ

Ambassador Alicia Kerber-Palma (l) and Angelina DM Trailz

for support, and then I'll get it done. They tell me I'll be the first one in Houston to get the X gender marker.

"It's good news, bad news. It's a learning process, but I'll keep fighting. I'm not male or female, I'm somewhere in the middle," she says. "And sometimes I don't even know which bathroom to use."

Kerber-Palma calls it a step forward in the fight for human rights. "This is in response to the demand from a very important sector of our community—the LGBTQ+ community," she told KTRK-TV.

"For us, it's taking someone in hiding and allowing them to be open. You don't need to hide how you identify or who you love just because other people consider that that's not normal. They need to feel proud of who they are, and that they are secure here at the consulate."

Elia Chinó, the founder and executive

director of Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social (FLAS), a local nonprofit that provides wellness services to the LGBTQ and Latino communities, agrees.

"This was a long, long fight," she says. "There was a lawsuit against the federal government, and finally, last year, they made it so the community can change their name and gender on their birth certificates and passports. Now, anyone who wants to change their name and gender can do it at any [one of the 50] Mexican consulates in the US."

"I've also met with the Honduran consulate in February about doing the same, and I would like to meet with the other Latin consulates," Chinó says.

Trailz, who has several friends who work at the consulate, applauds Kerber-Palma in particular for helping trans women Mexican nationals change the gender markers on their documents.

Trailz will be playing her violin again at the consulate this month for Fiestas Patrias, Mexico's independence day. And there will certainly be a lot for Houston's community of Mexican LGBTQ nationals to celebrate.

But beyond that celebration, there is still more work to be done.

"It's amazing, because we never thought we would get to this point," says Chinó. "This is the best accomplishment we have won for the Mexican LGBTQ community. But we have to continue the fight for protection," she adds, referring to Marisela Castro, the fourth trans woman to be killed in Houston this year.

"We don't want any more murders or hate crimes against us."



For more info, visit consulmex.sre.gob.mx/houston



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SCENE OUT

Photos by
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On July 2, 2022, at Buddy's Houston, Space City Rugby presented Maxie Lashes' production of This Ruck & Tuck, featuring Jacqueline Dior and Summer Rayne. Pictured are team members who appeared in the production.



On July 23, 2022, Team Ann Johnson and Team Lizzie Fletcher held a campaign headquarters open house. Pictured is **Rep. Lizzie Fletcher** with members of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.



Lululemon and Hugo Pérez held a "Rep. Your City" launch party at the Ronin Harrisburg event space on July 28, 2022. Pictured are (top, l-r) **David McClintock, Asher Payne, Hugo Pérez, Brian Hull,** (bottom, l-r) **Brionne C. Dunham, and Jay Ware.**



On July 28, 2022, the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber presented a Brewing Up Business event at SignatureCare Emergency Center. Pictured are **Shanice Wilson, Brittany Davis, Terri Robertson, Richard Mansfield, Tammi Wallace, Thomas Lopez, Claudia Hodgden, Jessica Adams, and Mayra Cruz.**



Alley Theatre hosted its ActOUT at the Alley event before a performance of Clue on July 28, 2022. Pictured are **Nelda Brooks, Jerry "Moose" Peterson, Lauren Pelletier, Stephanie Patrisso, Nelda Jobe Williams, Elle Anders, Tina Berry, and Gregory Steven Herzog.**



On July 30, 2022, Equality Texas 2022 hosted a Houston-area meetup at Buddy's Houston. Pictured are Equality Texas staff, volunteers, and political candidates.



On August 11, 2022, OutProfessionals (OutPro) held a Lounge Social event at Pearl Bar. Pictured are **Jacques Bourgeois, Jeremy Ronquillo, Ryan Wilson, Emma Weyand, Tara Bates, Zeljka Mijic, and Terence Daniels.**



A campaign fundraising event for Lina Hidalgo was held at the home of Blake Ellis and Shaun Nelson Ellis on August 15, 2022. Pictured are **Blake Ellis, Lina Hidalgo, Sylvia Garcia, Lizzie Fletcher, and Shaun Nelson.**



On August 16, 2022, EPAH held its dinner meeting and program at The Health Museum. Pictured are **Todd Shell, Jim Jemelka, Frank Dominguez, Deborah Lawson, Jeffrey Winans, Brian Hlavinka, Brian Kapchinskier, Fran Smith, Mike Bodin, Jack Berger, and Michele Laprade.**



On August 17, 2022, the Diana Foundation held its August membership meeting at the Montrose Center. Pictured are **Jeremy Ronquillo, Sharon Lord, Perry James, Gregory Brown, and Howard Huffstutler.**



The Houston LGBTQ+ Political Caucus held its annual donor dinner at The Houston Club on August 20, 2022. Pictured are **Richard Holt, Jovon Tyler, and David McMasters.**



The closing day of "And Through Their Eyes Grow Thorns - An Artist Exhibition Explored through a Queer Lens of Color" was held at MATCH on August 21, 2022. Pictured are **Kevin Dapree Anderson, Lesley Marie Diaz, Aaron Perez, and Manuel Lara.**

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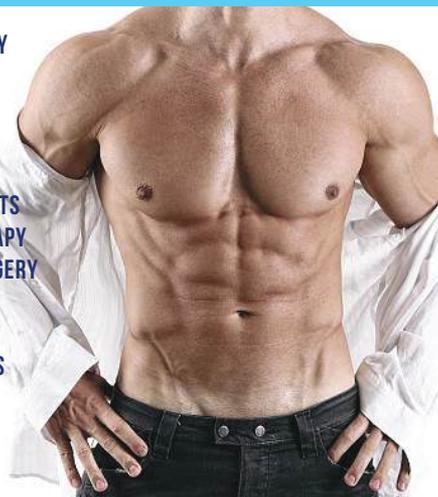
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By DARYL SHORTER MD



Making Sense of Monkeypox

Questions and answers from an expert about the country's latest epidemic.

Last month, monkeypox was declared a public health emergency by the White House. With over 16,000 cases detected in the US—primarily among gay and bisexual men—it is natural for members of the LGBTQ community to feel anxiety and concern.

What is monkeypox?

Monkeypox is an illness caused by infection with the monkeypox virus—a type of virus that belongs to the same family of viruses that causes smallpox. There are two types of strains, or variants, of the monkeypox virus: West African and Congo Basin. The West African strain is responsible for the current outbreak in the US and Europe.

Where did monkeypox come from?

Monkeypox is not a new virus. First discovered in 1958 in monkeys, it was not until 1970 that a human case of monkeypox was identified. This first case was found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and up until recently, most cases occurred in Africa. However, there was a relatively small outbreak of 47 cases that occurred in the US in 2003, the first instance of monkeypox found outside of Africa. These cases were all due to contact with infected pet prairie dogs that were carrying the virus.

While the natural reservoir of monkeypox is unknown, it has been detected in many animals, including rodents and monkeys.

How is monkeypox transmitted?

Generally, it takes anywhere from 5 to 21 days to go from infection with the virus to a manifestation of symptoms. Past outbreaks could be attributed to animal-to-human contact

characterized by bites, scratches, or simply touching an infected animal.

Transmission in this current outbreak is attributed primarily to prolonged skin-to-skin contact with a symptomatic person. According to the Centers for Disease Control, monkeypox can spread through direct contact with a monkeypox rash, scab, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox. Transmission also occurs by touching objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels) and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox, or contact with respiratory secretions.

Monkeypox can also be spread by sharing fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with monkeypox and have not been disinfected. This includes bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

People who contract monkeypox usually first develop a flu-like illness characterized by fever, chills, headache, and myalgia (muscle aches). Swollen lymph nodes (lymphadenopathy) is also commonly seen with monkeypox, and this swelling distinguishes it from other viral illnesses such as smallpox.

A rash typically develops within three days of the first symptoms. The rash starts off as flat or mildly raised bumps that go on to become vesicles (blisters) filled with liquid. The lesions then crust over and the scabs fall off.

It is important to note that a person with a rash or blisters is contagious until the rash has fully healed, which can take anywhere from two to four weeks. Transmission of monkeypox is possible from the time symptoms start until the scabs have fallen off and the rash is fully healed.

So monkeypox is not an STI?

Whether or not monkeypox is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) has been a confusing part of the conversation. It is important to note that monkeypox is *not* currently classified as an STI. This means that while it can be contracted *during* sexual contact of any kind, monkeypox is *not* thought to be spread specifically by or through semen, vaginal fluids, urine, or feces. When a disease is proven to spread through those specific body fluids, it is classified as an STI.

Researchers from the World Health Organization have found monkeypox present in body fluids such as semen. However, the current understanding remains that transmission is driven primarily by skin-to-skin and skin-to-mouth contact. This could mean that even though monkeypox can be detected in semen, there is not enough of the virus to cause another person to develop illness from it.

How can I avoid catching monkeypox?

The good news is that you may already be practicing some elements of prevention. With COVID, we have all honed our practice of excellent hand hygiene through hand washing and using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. You should continue to wash your hands to reduce your risk for contracting either illness.

Although this may go without saying, you must avoid skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has a rash that looks like monkeypox. Do not touch the rash or scabs, and do not hug, kiss, cuddle, or have sex with someone who appears to have these symptoms. Avoid sharing eating utensils or cups, and do not touch the bedding, towels, or clothes of a person with these symptoms.

Stay informed by reading public health information from reputable sources such as the CDC and our local health departments. Be aware of the prevalence of monkeypox in places you are traveling to. These resources can help you to ascertain your level of risk, guide decision making, and keep you and your loved ones safe.

What vaccines and treatments are currently available?

Vaccines are available to prevent and treat monkeypox infection. JYNNEOS, which is the same vaccine developed to protect against smallpox, is administered as a series of two injections, with the second dose being given four weeks after the first dose. →

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Due to a limited local supply, the Houston Health Department currently gives priority (as of the time of this writing) to:

- People with confirmed high- or intermediate-risk contact with someone who has been diagnosed with monkeypox,
- People who attended an event or venue where there was a high risk of exposure to someone with confirmed monkeypox virus through skin-to-skin or sexual contact,
- Men over age 18 who have sex with men,
- People over age 18 whose sex partner is suspected of having monkeypox due to a rash or sores,
- People who are HIV positive or on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), or
- People who have had a diagnosis of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or early syphilis within the previous three months.

Antiviral medications such as Tecovirimat have been studied in animals, but there is currently no efficacy data in humans. Such medications may be helpful in persons exposed to monkeypox who are at high risk for severe illness.

How can the LGBTQ community deal with the emotional fallout of monkeypox?

For some members of our community, monkeypox is a painful reminder of the earliest years of the AIDS epidemic when HIV was identified as a “gay disease” and the public health response was steeped in homophobia. For others dealing with the emotional fallout of COVID, adding another viral illness into the mix feels like a burden that is almost too much to bear. Increased anxiety about public gatherings and sexual contact is the last thing any of us needs.

It’s not an unreasonable approach to consider taking a brief hiatus from sexual activity and close contact with others for a time, to see how things develop. However, it’s important to not withdraw from all social contact indefinitely. Our ability to connect with others physically—through hugging, kissing, and sex—is (for many of us) an important part of having fun as well as developing and maintaining intimacy.

Daryl Shorter, MD, is a Diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and is board certified in both general and addiction psychiatry. His clinical practice focuses on veteran care, and he lectures widely on LGBTQ mental health. Dr. Shorter can be reached at dr.darylshorter@gmail.com.



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Have You Received an Inheritance?

The Do's and Don'ts of a sudden financial windfall.



An inheritance can come in many different forms, including investments, real estate, cash, and life insurance proceeds. While most people relish the idea of receiving a nice wind-

fall, the passing of assets and property doesn't always go as planned or expected.

Statistics show that the average inheritance is spent within 18 months. This can be due to several factors, but more commonly it is because people just don't know how to manage money.

Because of this, it is recommended that you get advice as soon as possible from financial, legal, and accounting professionals. Otherwise, you may find yourself with far less money than you had hoped for.

Devising a Good Strategy

Whether or not you anticipated your windfall, it may be tempting to go out and spend it all right away. But that might not be the best idea, especially if you don't already have enough money set aside for the future.

Here are a few strategies that can help you manage inherited funds:

- Work with a professional financial planner to build a financial road map. This is critical in keeping you on track with preserving, growing, and protect-

ing your newfound wealth. Also, your planner can act as the “quarterback” of a planning team that includes a CPA and an attorney to help you with tax and legal matters. There may be tax liability on what you inherit, and the CPA can help you from that standpoint. (For instance, some inherited funds such as life insurance proceeds are not taxable as income to the beneficiary upon receipt. But if you generate interest or other earnings on the inherited cash, investments, or property, these earnings could be taxable.) And an attorney can help you establish or revise a will or trust as a way to help you protect your assets from liability and to transfer them in the future.

- Carve out some fun money. While you shouldn't spend all of the funds that you receive from an inheritance, individuals who leave inheritances often want their loved ones to have some enjoyment with the money.
- Lay out a plan to generate current and future income to make your inheritance work for you. Your planner can help you design an income plan that coordinates with your other income sources like Social Security, a pension, and/or government retirement-plan benefits.

Other Inheritance Options

There are other options for your inherited funds, depending on your goals. These may include:

Donating to a charity or other similar organization.

If there is an organization that is close to your heart, you could consider donating some of the inheritance. Doing so may produce tax advantages for you, as well.

Paying off or reducing debt.

If you have any outstanding loan balances—including a home mortgage—you may want to pay down some of the balance with the funds you've inherited. Each situation is different, so it may or may not make sense to keep a mortgage. Your advisor can evaluate your particular situation.

Building an emergency fund.

An emergency fund can provide you with a financial cushion if you need to make unexpected home or auto repairs, pay for medical expenses, or if you lose your job or other sources of income.

Establishing a college fund for children or grandchildren.

Higher education costs continue to rise, so if any loved ones plan to attend college in the future, some of your inheritance could go to pay these costs. Discussion with your

advisor here is also important, as you want to be aware of the pitfalls of gift taxes.

Leave a legacy to honor your loved one.
You could honor the individual you received the inheritance from by creating a legacy in their name. This could take on many forms, such as establishing a school scholarship fund or providing the needed cash to build an animal shelter.

Other Things to Consider

Any time large sums of money are involved, there are important issues to be aware of before moving forward, such as:

Risk.

If you want to grow the money you have inherited, it is critical to avoid risky investments where you could lose some—or possibly even all—of your inheritance.

Taxes.

You could owe taxes on interest, dividends, and/or gains that you generate from the money you have inherited. Also, if you inherited an IRA account or other retirement funds, there will be ordinary income taxes due on withdrawals—or hefty penalties on any account funds that are not withdrawn in accordance with IRS timelines.

Asset transfers.

While most people don't like to think about it, you should put a plan in place specifying what will happen to any unspent funds remaining at your death. If you have a domestic partner or a marriage that isn't legally recognized, it is important to take precautions to ensure that the money goes to the person you intend it for. This can be particularly important for those in the LGBTQ community facing uncertainty over same-sex marriage laws.

Getting Additional Guidance

While receiving a large sum of money can be exhilarating, it can also cause some challenges with regard to how you should protect, spend, save, invest, or donate it. With that in mind, working with a qualified planning professional is recommended.

Grace S. Yung, CFP® is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER practitioner with experience in helping LGBTQ individuals, domestic partners, and families plan and manage their finances since 1994. She is the managing director at Midtown Financial Group, LLC, in Houston. Yung can be reached at grace.yung@lpl.com. Visit letsmakeaplan.org or midtownfg.com/lgbtqplus.10.htm.



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HOUSTON IS HOME TO THE THIRD-LARGEST HISPANIC POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH MORE THAN 2 MILLION LATINX PEOPLE LIVING IN THE AREA. AND MANY EMERGING VOICES ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF HOUSTON'S LGBTQ COMMUNITY.

LATINX LEADERS

In this issue of OUTSMART, we introduce you to seven of these LGBTQ Latinx leaders who are fighting for civil rights and making inroads in the business community. First is **Christina Ferraz**, a public-relations specialist who helps small businesses incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in their operations. Next is playwright **Fernando Dovalina**, who started writing stage plays when he retired as a *Houston Chronicle* editor. **Gilbert Perez** is an interior designer, prolific fundraiser, and home-preservation advocate, while Jonatan Gioia leads **SOMOS LOUD**, the AIDS Foundation Houston affinity group that advocates for Latinx people living with HIV/AIDS. Then veteran bar owner **Joann “Michy” Garcia** tells us about her new Club Geminis, and **Elia Chinó** discusses her life-saving health and wellness organization Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social, Inc. (FLAS). Finally, **Gabe Cazares**, who recently joined LINK Houston as its executive director, explains how his work is making Houston's transit system not only more robust, but more equitable.

Dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Christina Ferraz's public-relations firm helps nonprofits succeed.

By LILLIAN HOANG



Local public-relations specialist Christina Ferraz provides nonprofits and small businesses with “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace” (DE&I) tools to help them thrive in today’s competitive business environment.

“I created Thirty6five to diversify media outreach and partnerships so clients reach a broader audience—not necessarily to grow market share, but because it’s the right thing to do,” says Ferraz, a queer, nonbinary Puerto Rican who uses they/them pronouns.

Ferraz coaches clients in public speaking, what to share during interviews, how to form partnerships with specific groups (like the LGBTQ community), and more.

Local advocate Jenna Pel first met Ferraz when the two volunteered together on the University of Houston LGBTQ Alumni Association’s board of directors. Pel describes Ferraz as a creative, meticulous, and passionate person whose Thirty6five platform is a key resource for historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

“Thirty6five serves as a strong and vital voice on topical social issues,” Pel explains. “It takes a holistic and authentic approach to PR, crisis communications, and media relations.”

Ferraz was born in Brooklyn, New York, but spent their formative years in Houston. They received a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Houston in 2007.

Growing up, they always felt different due to their gender and cultural identities. Spanish was Ferraz’s first language, so English was a struggle in early childhood.

“That played a big role in shaping my identity as a person who works in communication today,” they note.

As Ferraz learned English, their Spanish transformed into “Spanglish,” which informally combines the two languages.

Ferraz quickly realized the importance of clear communication, which sparked a love of storytelling. “I really enjoy sharing other people’s stories, and being entrusted with that gift.” →

They started their communication career at Houston's Pacifica radio station KPFT at age 17, reporting on the conditions of the local Latinx community. Later work in TV, marketing, and advertising convinced Ferraz to become a public-relations specialist.

"While I wasn't aware of my gender or sexuality, I understood I didn't feel comfortable with the public consuming me as a journalist [in front of] a camera. I was hyper-aware of how people were perceiving me," they admit.

Public-relations work allowed Ferraz to continue telling stories while avoiding the judgment and hyper-sexualization that women and other marginalized groups often experience on television.

"You had to exist in a very specific way if you wanted to make it in [broadcast] media. While you could be a woman, it was a man's world, and I did not feel comfortable knowing what could happen to me in those environments," Ferraz says. "Working in PR was taking my power back."

However, that PR work wasn't without its issues. Early on, Ferraz worked with many organizations that claimed they were committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, only to ignore Ferraz's suggestions for increasing their impact on marginalized communities.

"THIRTY6FIVE TAKES A HOLISTIC AND AUTHENTIC APPROACH TO PR, CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS, AND MEDIA RELATIONS."

—Christina Ferraz

"It took me some time to understand that I never wanted to sit at anyone else's table. I wanted to make my own," Ferraz says.

So in 2013, they created Thirty6five.

They've helped many organizations in the past decade, including a group that serves LGBTQ youth struggling with their gender identity, sexuality, and faith. Ferraz stepped in and convinced local news outlets to highlight the organization's services and mission.

"I talked [to the media] about not perceiving people as a monolith and giving the youth agency coverage, because young people shape the future," Ferraz shares.

They say forming Thirty6five has been fulfilling. "It gives me the opportunity to give back to my community by staying local and creating

change in ways that make a difference for people who share the same vision of diversity and inclusion for Houston."

To continue giving back to the community, Ferraz is organizing a partnership program to engage with local graphic designers, photographers, and other marketers who need increased PR exposure to launch their businesses.

Ferraz is also putting together a space for Latina and Latinx folk who work in communications, helping them network, share their experiences, and create an inclusive, empowering community.

Since starting Thirty6five, Ferraz has learned many important lessons. "You have to be open to being a constant learner—otherwise, you will no longer be relevant. I learned that things continue to change in the field of communication. When I started working, we were sending press releases through fax machines and having to chase down journalists," they laugh.

"I also learned that there is strength in diversity."



For more info, visit thirty6five.com.

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(kab’ en ue vah)

ABOUT CABENUVA

CABENUVA is a complete prescription regimen used to treat
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 - rifabutin
 - rifampin
 - rifapentine
 - dexamethasone (more than a single-dose treatment)
 - St John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

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Story



Ask your doctor about CABENUVA

*Undetectable means the amount of HIV in the blood is below
the level that can be measured by a lab test. Results may vary.
Jayson has been compensated by ViiV Healthcare.

BEFORE RECEIVING CABENUVA

Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical
conditions, including if you:

- have ever had a skin rash or an allergic reaction to medicines that contain cabotegravir or rilpivirine.
- have ever had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection.
- have ever had mental health problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if CABENUVA will harm your unborn baby. CABENUVA can remain in your body for up to 12 months or longer after the last injection.

Please see additional Important Facts About CABENUVA
on the following page.



CABENUVA

cabotegravir 200 mg/mL; rilpivirine 300 mg/mL
extended-release injectable suspensions

Important Facts About CABENUVA (cont'd)

BEFORE RECEIVING CABENUVA (cont'd)

Tell your healthcare provider about all your medical conditions, including if you: (cont'd)

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed if you take CABENUVA.**
 - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby. It is not known if CABENUVA can pass to your baby in your breast milk.
 - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby during treatment with CABENUVA.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Some medicines interact with CABENUVA. Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with CABENUVA.

Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take CABENUVA with other medicines.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF CABENUVA

CABENUVA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Allergic reactions.** Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with CABENUVA. **Stop receiving CABENUVA and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms:**
 - fever
 - generally ill feeling
 - tiredness
 - muscle or joint aches
 - trouble breathing
 - blisters or sores in mouth
 - blisters
 - redness or swelling of the eyes
 - swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue
- **Post-injection reactions** have happened within minutes in some people after receiving their rilpivirine injection. Most symptoms resolved within minutes after the injection. Symptoms may include:
 - trouble breathing
 - narrowing of airways
 - stomach cramps
 - sweating
 - numbness of your mouth
 - pain (e.g., back and chest)
 - feeling anxious
 - feeling warm
 - rash
 - feeling light-headed or feeling like you are going to pass out (faint)
 - blood pressure changes

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF CABENUVA (cont'd)

CABENUVA may cause serious side effects, including: (cont'd)

- **Liver problems.** People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus or people who have certain liver function test changes may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during CABENUVA treatment. Liver problems have also happened in people without history of liver problems or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver function. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems:**
 - your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice)
 - dark or “tea-colored” urine
 - light-colored stools (bowel movements)
 - nausea or vomiting
 - loss of appetite
 - pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area
 - itching
- **Depression or mood changes.** Call your healthcare provider or get emergency medical help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:
 - feeling sad or hopeless
 - feeling anxious or restless
 - have thoughts of hurting yourself (suicide) or have tried to hurt yourself

The most common side effects of CABENUVA include:

- pain, tenderness, hardened mass or lump, swelling, redness, itching, bruising, and warmth at the injection site
- fever
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle or bone pain
- nausea
- sleep problems
- dizziness
- rash

These are not all the possible side effects of CABENUVA. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
- Go to CABENUVA.com or call 1-877-844-8872, where you can also get FDA-approved labeling.

March 2022 CBN:4PIL

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Art Imitates Life

Out playwright **Fernando Dovalina** draws inspiration from LGBTQ and Mexican-American influences.

By **SAM BYRD**

Fernando Dovalina didn't start out as a playwright, but he's found a knack for the small stage. He has been writing plays since he retired as an assistant managing editor for the *Houston Chronicle*.

"I took early retirement about 20 years ago and decided I would try to write for the stage, so I took a number of courses and got started. I just have fun writing, and I've had some successes," he says.

Dovalina took continuing-education courses at Rice University and the University of Houston. At UH, he studied under notable names like Stuart Ostrow and Edward Albee.

Ostrow's roster of original award-winning Broadway and West End productions includes *M. Butterfly* (which won the Tony Award for Best Play), *Pippin*, and *1776*, which received both the New York and London Drama Critics awards, as well as a Tony Award for Best Musical.

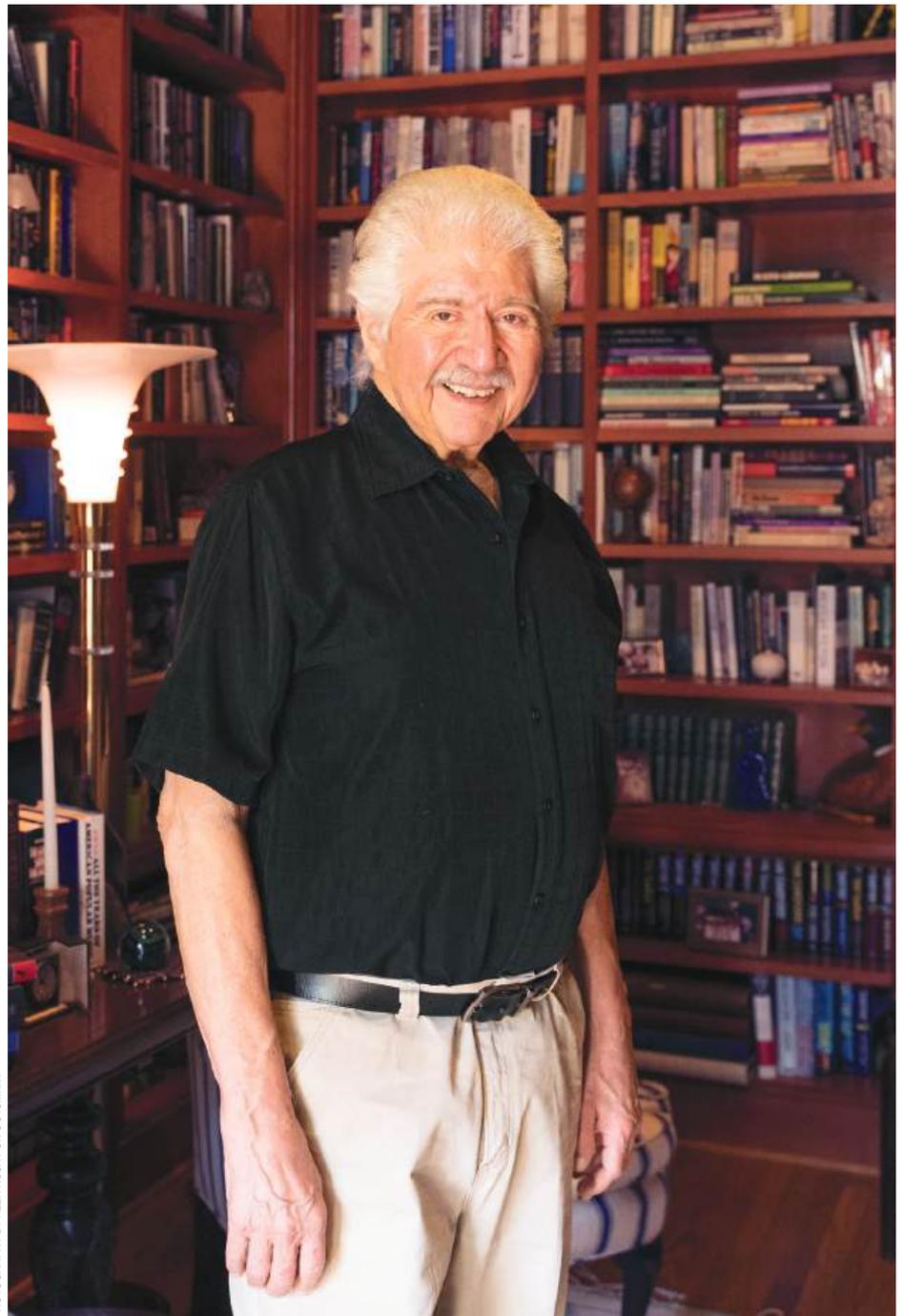
Albee is a Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright perhaps best known for penning *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

"Albee was very encouraging. He told me I was a fine writer, and I'll never forget the use of the term 'fine.' So, I kept writing and then started submitting my work to local theaters, and several of [the plays] were accepted and produced," he recalls.

It is no surprise that Dovalina's creative works have been well received, especially given his pedigree. His plays tend to focus on Mexican-American life, LGBTQ issues, the elderly, and death—as well as one well-known religious figure.

He wrote the book for a composer/lyricist's work based on Tammy Faye Messner

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX ROSA FOR OUTSMART



(formerly Baker), titled *The Gospel According to Tammy Faye*, that earned not only a fan following but also the attention of the titular televangelist.

"When we finished it, we got to meet her and interview her," he says. "That show went to the Cincinnati Fringe Festival, and it's been done in a half-dozen states."

Adding to his recognitions, he recently accepted the Griff Singer Award from the Friends of The Daily Texan. He was honored for his work at the UT student paper during his college years, and later as a visiting instructor for the editors and reporters. The award cita-

tion also celebrated his lifetime achievements in journalism and theater.

In his acceptance speech, Dovalina credited his husband for much of his success. When he mentioned that they had been together for 52 years, the crowd (made up mostly of more-than-50-year-olds) broke into applause.

Most recently, he staged two works, *Mysterious Ways* and *Emergency Room*, and he's planning a series of readings to take place at his residence later this year.



For more on Fernando Dovalina, visit fdovalina.org.

Preservation and Persistence

Gilbert Perez champions the historic Heights.

By ANDREW EDMONSON

When Gilbert Perez arrived in the Bayou City in 1985, he viewed it as a pit stop in the larger trajectory of his life. He would spend a few years in Houston to get a law degree, and then set sail for greener pastures in Los Angeles or New York.

Almost four decades later, he has built a life in Houston, created two thriving businesses, and become a champion for historic preservation in the Heights district where he lives.

Perez has lived a quintessentially American life, coming to the US as an immigrant, building a successful career through hard work and risk taking, and giving back to his community with a strong sense of volunteerism.

Born in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, in 1961, he came with his family to Miami when he was 11 months old.

“My parents came from an affluent family in Cuba, and they lost everything,” he recalls. “My parents struggled financially at first when they came to the US. My mother had never worked in her life, and she had to work for the first time in her 30s while raising three kids. We were poor, but I never felt that I was poor.”

He graduated from Florida International University in 1985 with a degree in communications, and moved to Texas with his then boyfriend.

“When I was in Houston, it was the first time that I could experience being a free gay man,” he observes. “I could go to bars with my ex-partner. I went to Rich’s one night, and realized that my entire gym was there. All of a sudden, I had all these friends. I established relationships with all these people, and some of them are still friends today.

“Coming to Houston, I fell in love with the people,” he remembers. “The gay community was really tight, and there was a sense of community that I’m not sure is there anymore.”

Sadly, Houston also provided Perez with his first experience of overt discrimination.

“The first or second job interview I went on at a bank, they called [my name to begin the interview, but when I went in], the woman looked at me and said, ‘No, I said Gilbert Perez.’

When he told her that he was indeed Perez, she responded, “You’re awfully tall for



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX ROSA FOR OUTSMART

a Mexican.”

“And I remember people asking me, ‘Are you white? But your last name is Perez?’ It never happened in the gay community.”

In the late 1980s, Houston was reeling from the devastation of the AIDS crisis. Feeling a need to respond, Perez volunteered in 1988 for AIDS Foundation Houston’s buddy program that offered logistical and emotional support for individuals living with HIV.

“I was a buddy for Rick Wilson, who lived on Missouri Street and was originally from Louisiana,” Perez remembers. “I remember the first time I went to his apartment. I’ve always been an anti-smoking person, and he smoked like a chimney. I remember thinking, ‘I don’t know if I can do this.’

“But we became really good, very close friends. He was really funny. I was his buddy for about three years. In 1991, he died. It was a big loss for me, because I really cared for him.”

In 1992, he lost his close friend Steve Thomas to HIV—another devastating blow.

He began to volunteer for Pet Patrol and also joined the board of Body Positive, two grassroots community organizations serving those living with HIV.

With his passionate commitment and charismatic manner, he made a strong impression on Tori Williams, the founder of Pet Patrol, which was created in 1986 to help people living with HIV keep their pets as long as possible.

“Gilbert walked dogs, transported pets (and sometimes their owners) to the vet clinic, delivered pet food, and much more,” Williams remembers. “Everyone loved Gilbert, and I often got calls after food-delivery day asking if ‘that handsome man’ could continue to be their volunteer.

“Gilbert was also famous for sweet-talking the nurses at Park Plaza Hospital into letting him sneak a dog in to visit with the owner,” she continues. “Technically, that was a no-no, but Gilbert was never turned down.”

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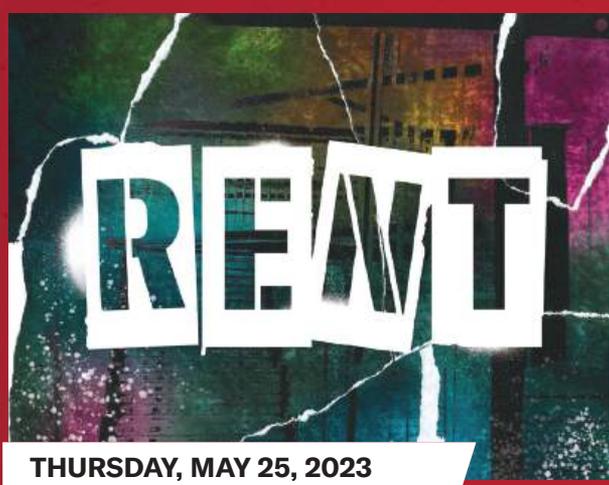
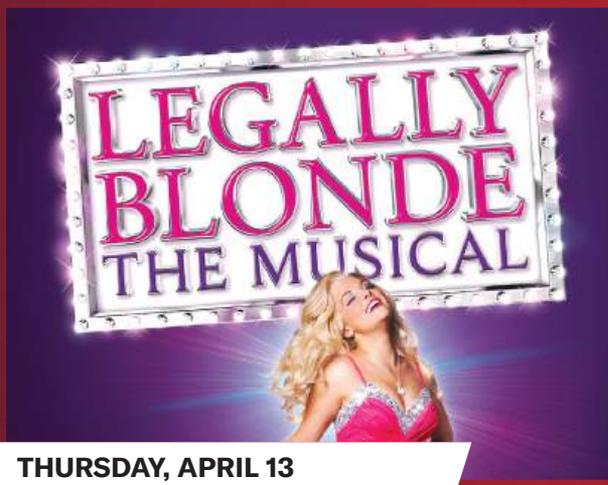
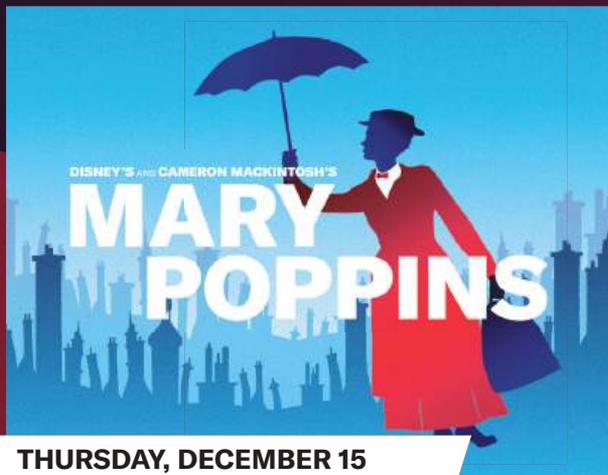
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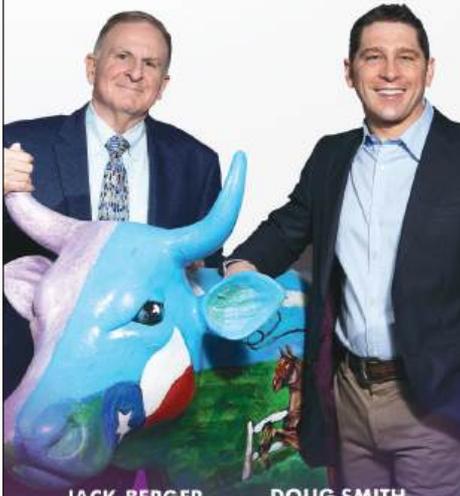
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“To say that Gilbert has a heart of gold is an understatement,” she observes. “He has been a lifesaver and dear friend to those lucky enough to know him.”

Perez had worked for several years at EDS before quitting his job in the early 1990s to pursue his passion for interior design. He studied at the University of Houston and Houston Community College, landing an internship with noted designer Tim Hamrock. In 1995, Perez opened his own design firm, Bespoke by GJCD.

He also emerged as a prodigious fundraiser during the 1990s, which proved to be the darkest days of the AIDS crisis. He was a leader in organizing two of the most popular LGBTQ social events of that era—Halloween Magic and Jungle Lust, which helped to raise over \$1 million for AIDS charities in the process.

At one point, Perez was invited to participate in a Halloween Magic satirical performance that raised funds for HIV-related causes. “They were looking for someone Hispanic to play a drag queen in the production of *The Roxie Horror Beauty Shop*,” he recalls. “For that first year of Halloween Magic, I had a lot of friends, and brought a lot of sponsors to the table, and raised \$10,000.”

The character he created and portrayed, Venezuela Maria Concepción de Los Angeles Valdez Vallejo Gonzalez, caused a sensation.

Over the years in different Halloween Magic productions, she morphed into a woman and became a fan favorite. Crowds flocked to Halloween Magic year after year, providing a crucial source of funding for grassroots AIDS organizations struggling to keep their doors open. Perez played a pivotal role, both on stage and behind the scenes, organizing the event.

In 1996, he moved to the Houston Heights. “We were on the west side of Heights Boulevard, the ‘wrong side,’” he comments. “The west side was a much more marginal neighborhood than it is now. It was artsy, and there were a lot of gays living here. I liked the eclecticism of the neighborhood.”

A few years later, he remodeled his house, and the results were so impressive that it was featured on the Heights Home Tour. He then began receiving numerous requests from others to renovate their homes. Eventually, bungalow renovations became the primary focus of his business, and in 2003 he founded Bungalow Revival.

Over the years, as gentrification in the Heights increased, he grew more and more concerned. By 2006, more than two bungalows were being torn down each week, on average. He came together with a group of other concerned citizens to form Save the Bungalows.

Eventually, the group succeeded in having various parts of the Heights declared historic



PHOTO COURTESY OF GILBERT PEREZ

Gilbert Perez in drag as Venezuela Maria Concepción de Los Angeles Valdez Vallejo Gonzalez

districts. After a protracted battle, historic-district designations were affirmed by the Texas Supreme Court in 2021, a significant victory for preservationists.

Today he focuses on finding unique products for Bespoke, his home-décor store which stocks chic and innovative items. The shop is housed in a historic Heights bungalow that Perez lovingly renovated at 501 West 11th Street. He travels to New York City twice a year to go to the markets.

He’s also on the lookout for inventory during his world travels. “When I go to Chicago, I love looking for Mid-century glassware and barware because there’s a large supply there,” he notes.

Perez and his partner, Andre Avina, travel often, whether it’s a getaway to their beach house in Galveston or trips to New York City to catch the latest Broadway shows. But the Heights still maintains an irresistible allure for the couple, despite the gentrification that has changed the neighborhood over the last two decades.

“What I love about the Heights is that it feels like you’re driving into a small town in the middle of a big city,” he notes. “When you come in from Montrose, you almost feel like you’re in a different town. It doesn’t feel like you’re in the rest of Houston.”

➔ For more information, visit bespokebygjcd.com.

Fighting for Houston's Queer Youth

SOMOS LOUD
refuses to
stay silent.

By **CONNOR BEHRENS**

Jalil Cantarero (l), Jonatan Gioia,
and Hiram Rivera-Mercado

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX ROSA FOR OUTSMART



For Jonatan Gioia, helping those who are underrepresented in his community has been a longtime goal. That passion has now led him to SOMOS LOUD (translated as “We are LOUD”), an organization helping queer Latinx youth.

“I want to see our beautiful Latinx community united and conscious of our socio-political power,” he says. “We need to continue fighting for Latinx representation across the board.”

LOUD is actually an acronym referring to the Latinx Outreach and Understanding Division, an affinity group created by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). The volunteer-based organization strives to educate, motivate, and advocate for the Latinx community.

Serving as the national organization’s director for advocacy, Gioia helps oversee the group’s educational messaging and capacity-building for local chapters across the nation.

“We support the Houston community with a wide range of initiatives,” he says, “from back-to-school drives, event sponsorships, and community collaborations to networking and recreational events with a strong educational purpose. We have a big heart for advocacy!”

“We promote education and provide resources for people to get tested for HIV and other STIs, get on PrEP, or access HIV treat-

ment. We aim to fight stigma around HIV and replace it with education and empowerment while creating non-judgmental spaces for people to express themselves freely. We are proud of working side-by-side with so many great advocates. *Somos LOUD, somos familia.*”

LOUD has grown tremendously in Houston over the past few years, and Gioia hopes to continue this growth by providing more community events for people to come together and embrace their individuality.

“During the COVID-19 lockdown, we helped many Latinx organizations, distributed resources all over town, and found ways to continue engaging with the community while the world was turned upside down,” he emphasizes.

“As it opened up again, we started having more in-person events. We are proud to host ‘Juntas’—Houston’s Latinx queer festival—every year in November. We had an amazing Latinx queer poetry night with vendors and entertainment last year. This year’s theme is *Queerciañera*, so we are planning a little gala for everyone to embrace the queer quinceañera they’ve always dreamed of.”

Gioia sees his role as someone who builds spaces for people to celebrate and learn about their Latin identity. “We do our best to uplift

Latinx voices and embrace the diversity within our community,” he notes. “At the end of the day, my community work is a love-letter to the queer community, to my Latinx immigrant identity, and to Houston.”

That diversity is exactly what makes Houston such a special, unique place for Gioia to work in. “When I heard about a job offer in Houston, I thought I would find cowboys, cacti, and rockets. I was pleasantly surprised to meet a vibrant, diverse community. Diversity makes my daily experience an educational roller-coaster. I always say Houston for me is a salad bowl rather than a melting pot. There is not just one Houston identity that blends together. Like in a salad, each ingredient is visible and brings a unique flavor to the whole. I could not be happier to be part of this city.”

Gioia sees the Supreme Court’s recent anti-abortion ruling, which is sending fear through the LGBTQ community, as a sign that the fight is far from over.

“Our LGBTQ+ community is resilient, creative, and outspoken. We cannot stay silent.”



For more on SOMOS LOUD, visit somosloud.org.



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Every Friday and Saturday at midnight, the DJ at Club Geminis plays “the shot song” and everybody lines up at the bar for a shot of tequila. If you’re not in line, the bartender will come to you with a spray gun to squirt a shot into your mouth.

“It’s what made us famous,” says owner Joann “Michy” Garcia. “It’s just a lot of crazy fun, and we’re known for our \$3 shots now.”

The club is also known for its social-media presence complete with fun-loving TikTok videos and Instagram photos. (You might recognize Garcia from her occasional music-video appearances.)

Just opened in May, Club Geminis is one of the city’s newest Latin LGBTQ clubs that brings the cool kids to the Southeast side for those \$3 shots, fireballs, Mexican beers, hot DJs, and even hotter bartenders. The interior pulses with neon signs and a huge dance floor, and the club often hosts live music. The club caters to the queer crowd, but all are welcome.

Garcia, a 33-year-old single mother of three, is also a part-owner of two other clubs. She actually started out as a welder before getting into the bar business.

“When my eldest, now five, was born, I wanted to quit my welding job to spend more time with the baby,” she says. “And the man who used to do my taxes said I could make as much money bartending. I made \$700 in tips my first night.”

That was five years ago, and she hasn’t looked back since.

“Then I was offered a management position at a local icehouse, but after about a year they lost their liquor license. I offered to put the bar in my name [and become] an equal part owner, since I was solely running it,” Garcia explains.

“Within six months, we opened another location in the Pasadena area. But then COVID hit and we had to sell our original bar and close down our second location. After the shutdown ended, we thrived at our next location, making close to \$30 thousand a month. I had the extra license from our original location, so I opened Club Geminis. And this is where I am now.

“Although it’s been a struggle getting accepted by the community and finding the right staff, I feel like we’re finally getting there. As a pansexual woman growing up in the Southeast area, it’s always been a struggle to be accepted by my peers and family members who are mostly *machista*. I wanted a place where the LGBTQ community could come hang out and feel at home, close to home.”

There used to be a gay club in Pasadena



Joann “Michy” Garcia at Club Geminis

Shooting Tequila at Club Geminis

The Southeast Houston Latin LGBTQ club has a bright future.

By MARENE GUSTIN

called Capricorn. “I was too young to go to Capricorn, but my sister did,” says Garcia, who is a Gemini (or Géminis). “But I liked the idea of the name, so I called my dance club Club Geminis.

“Having run a bar before, I knew what to expect. It’s been a little slow, but it’s starting to really take off. If we can make it here, I’d like to open a Club Geminis in Dallas.”

Garcia also has plans in the works to further develop the club here. “It’s a 4,000-foot space. I want to divide it into a Latin dance club on one side, and a hip hop club on the other.”

With her three clubs, a day job as general

manager of a TitleMax and, of course, raising her three children under the age of 6, Garcia has little time for anything else.

“I don’t sleep at all,” she admits. “I live off of Red Bull. I’m in my 30s, so I’ll sleep in my 40s or 50s. Right now, I’m building an empire for my children.”

What: Club Geminis

When: Tuesdays through Sundays, 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.

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A Latina Champion

Elia Chinó is leading the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Latino community.

By LILLIAN HOANG



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLAS

Elia Chinó has touched thousands of lives through her nonprofit dedicated to the health and wellness of Houston's Latino LGBTQ community.

Since the start of the AIDS epidemic, over 60 million have been infected and over 30 million have died, according to the World Health Organization.

After her best friends died from HIV/AIDS, in 1994, Chinó created Fundación Latinoamericana de Acción Social, Inc. (FLAS). "We are here to provide free services to everyone, and to embrace people with love and compassion with passion," says Chinó, a transgender Latina. "I am proud to have saved so many lives throughout my life."

Chinó originally founded FLAS to prevent the spread of HIV by educating the local Latino LGBTQ community about the AIDS epidemic. FLAS has provided HIV testing to over 25,000 people and informed over 500,000 Latinos about HIV and AIDS. The organization has since expanded, and now offers behavioral-health services such as mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment.

Victoria Williams has worked with Chinó for over 15 years through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, an organization committed to helping Houstonians living with HIV.

"Elia and FLAS are safe harbors for those who need a space to grow themselves," Williams says. "She has been a generous teacher to those of us who are not Latinx or transgender, and an important leader for those who are."

FLAS' data manager, Jorje Lopez, met Chinó in 2009 through community service and has worked with her ever since. He describes Chinó as a passionate leader committed to serving humanity. "She is a *guerrera* (a warrior) who has broken several barriers in

the community involving homophobia and transphobia."

Chinó has been honored for her advocacy and for educating thousands about preventable diseases, mental illness, and more.

In 2016, she was recognized by OUTSMART magazine as one of Houston's top LGBTQ Hispanic leaders. In 2021, she was honored by Comcast with their Hispanic Hero award for playing a vital and positive role in her community.

Her journey to success has been rife with hardship. Born in 1962 in the small Mexican village of Agua Blanca, she didn't have time to play with toys because she was too busy helping her parents and eight siblings. When her father had to take her mother to see a doctor, or while her parents worked, the 4-year-old Chinó took care of her 6-month-old sister and 18-month-old brother. She cooked, cleaned, and had to walk to a river to wash her family's clothes.

Still, she made time to go to school in La

Huacana, the next town over. She remembers waking up at 4:00 in the morning to walk to school. Sometimes she carried her mother's handmade tortillas filled with beans to eat for lunch, and sometimes she went to school hungry.

Growing up in a Christian household and a predominantly Catholic country, she was told that gay people would be burned and fried in oil when they died. She was targeted for being feminine, and suffered from extreme bullying. She also recalls being robbed and sexually assaulted on her way home from school.

"For me, it was normal how I was looking, acting, and walking, but for other people, it was not normal. That's why they always called me faggot, bitch, or gay."

When she finished her elementary and middle school in La Huacana, her parents told her they could not afford to support her further. Chinó cried for two months, which led the heartbroken parents to change their

minds and sacrifice what little they had to pay for her high school education.

At age 14, Chinó moved to Uruapan, the second-largest city in the state of Michoacán, to continue her educational journey in high school. She faced many hurdles.

The aunt she had moved in with kicked her out because of her gender identity and sexuality. Homeless, she headed to Mexico City to work and continue her education, but found no respite.

She remembers waking up before dawn to go to school, and then taking several buses to her evening job. She worked until 1:30 in the morning for two years before dropping out of high school.

While Chinó's life was difficult, it wasn't without levity. During this difficult period, she met her best friend, Gustavo De La Vega, a nearly 50-year-old gay man who provided her with food, housing, transportation, and entertainment. He even took her to her first gay bar.

When she decided to move to the US for a better life, her brother connected her to a family she could live with and a mentor who would help her navigate life in the United States. Her brother asked Ed Wells, a member of the Church of Christ, to watch over her, and he helped Chinó find her first and second jobs. He also connected her to a school that taught her English and taught her how to drive.

"He taught me the culture. He taught me everything in this country," she says. "He really was my father in this country."

But life in America for Chinó wasn't any easier. She missed her family, her country, and had to juggle three jobs. She didn't have a car, so she'd have to wake up at 1 a.m. and walk in the middle of the night, even when it was raining, to get to work.

The manager at a restaurant she bussed tables at recognized her hard work and promoted her to wait on customers. She was finally able to pay for a one-bedroom apartment and the bills that came with it, and even send money back home.

And then she was fired.

She later learned that her former manager fired her because at one point she lived with someone who was diagnosed with HIV.

Then in 1989, her best friend in Mexico died due to complications from AIDS.

"He was more like my brother. He taught me the flavor of life," she says with tears in her eyes. Four years later, Wells also died due to AIDS complications. "He was like an angel to

"NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN YOU HAVE LOVE IN YOUR HEART TO HELP ANYBODY."

—Elia Chinó

me. It really hurt so bad when he died."

Accurate information about HIV/AIDS was limited at the time, especially among the Latino community, which faced language barriers. Chinó wanted to educate the Latino and LGBTQ communities and fight misinformation—especially the idea that AIDS affects only the LGBTQ community.

"I was hungry to help the community," she emphasizes. And since other organizations were providing information that was not in Spanish and seemed to alienate the Latino community, she decided to form FLAS.

Chinó also volunteered at AIDS Foundation Houston to learn more about the disease. She remembers walking into a hospital and seeing three floors of beds full of people dying from AIDS complications. She would help patients when they were too sick to feed themselves and walk them to the bathroom when they were too weak to stand. She prayed and read the Bible with them, and often held them in her arms as they took their last breath.

She continued volunteering with AIDS Foundation Houston while building a rapport with the Houston Health Department and Texas Southern University. Both institutions provided her with condoms and pamphlets about HIV/AIDS to hand out. She stayed out all night offering information about HIV and AIDS to people at several local nightclubs, bars, and cantinas.

"I wanted people to receive the information because I didn't want to see any more people dying," she says.

After years of hard work, she was able to open an office for FLAS and help people in the Latino LGBTQ community.

However, her struggles didn't end there. In 1995, she lost her apartment and car because she was dedicating all her time and resources to establishing FLAS. She was homeless for nearly eight years, but never gave up.

In 2017, she was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer. She underwent chemotherapy, radiation, and surgeries to remove her gallbladder and repair her hernia. She is currently in remission.

"I wasn't scared to die. I was scared to leave my community behind without the services and empathy and quality [care they deserved]," she says.

"Our community is treated badly by health providers because we are different—because we are trans, gay, lesbian, or whoever we are. But in the end, we all are human beings, and we deserve to be treated with dignity and respect."

While Chinó continues to experience a great deal of turmoil—her mother passed away last April—she says she now lives in peace.

She was recently recognized by TelevisaUnivision for serving the local Latino community, and she will receive an honorary doctorate from the Universidad Veracruzana.

"I just ask God to continue giving me life [so I can] continue giving hope and life to people who are really underserved and marginalized by society," she says.

She encourages people to give back to their community by either volunteering or donating to organizations such as FLAS whenever possible. "Nothing is impossible when you have love in your heart to help somebody."



Elia Chinó (fourth from left) with FLAS staff and volunteers.

For more information, visit flasinc.org.

Transportation Equity Gets Personal

Gabe Cazares spearheads new solutions to Houston's mobility woes.

By DAVID CLARKE

For many residents of Houston and Harris County, getting from point A to point B can be frustratingly complex. That's something the transportation-justice nonprofit LINK Houston aims to correct. The organization's goal is to make navigating Houston without a car equitable and inclusive for all—a task that executive director Gabe Cazares, a blind and queer Latino, is more than ready to tackle.

Cazares was born and raised in West Houston's Spring Branch area and got his start in nonprofit activism by working with civil-rights organizations. He has notably served as Houston's director of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, as well as the government-affairs manager at the National Federation of the Blind in Baltimore, Maryland.

Recently appointed to his LINK Houston position, Cazares is especially passionate about transportation equity for the LGBTQ, disabled, and people of color populations.

"Many of us don't drive, and rely on public transportation and multimodal transportation to be able to participate fully in our communities. That is what led me to this role."

For decades, Houston and Harris County prioritized moving as many private vehicles as possible over great distances. "That means more lanes, wider streets, faster speeds for vehicles," Cazares explains. "That has resulted in a lot of injury and death on our roadways."

He emphasizes that these car crashes are not "accidents" at all, because "accidents presume that nothing could have been done to [prevent them]. That's not accurate."

The mounting fatalities and traffic congestion have necessitated a change in the built environment for vehicular traffic, and that is where Cazares' advocacy work in Mayor Turner's office, and now with LINK Houston, comes into play.

"We're seeing the City and the County invest in pedestrian walkways, bridges, and bike facilities—including protected bike lanes—more than ever before," Cazares says. "That's because if we're going to be a city of the future, it's going to be critical that people have other [options beyond requiring every person



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINK HOUSTON

to] own a vehicle."

Some of the mobility improvements Houstonians are already seeing include the design and implementation of rapid-transit routes for Metro bus lines. LINK Houston steps in during the design phase to ensure plans like this are fully equitable and serve the needs of historically excluded communities such as Gulfton, Magnolia Park, the Second Ward, and Cashmere Gardens.

"We 'co-power' with communities so that they can harness their own power. We provide them with the tools and the knowledge to successfully advocate for transit investments in their community," Cazares explains. "[For example], Metro's Gulfton Circulator was done because of LINK Houston supporting community advocates on the ground."

He also notes that the effects of LINK Houston's work are felt beyond the city's bus and rail corridors. "There's an undeniable

correlation between transportation equity, affordable housing, and environmental justice," states Cazares. This means that LINK Houston will push policy makers to ensure that affordable housing is built near equitable, multimodal transportation options.

Additionally, LINK Houston is spearheading other initiatives in several Houston neighborhoods.

"Areas of Montrose have broken or no sidewalks, making it impossible for older adults, young families, parents who use strollers, or people with disabilities [who require] mobility devices to safely navigate in the community," says Cazares. "So we're going to be making sure that as the City redesigns and rebuilds Montrose, those pedestrian amenities are built."

Additionally, LINK is paying attention to what is happening in the downtown area with the Complete Streets initiative that has transformed Bagby Street. Downtown residents are also being encouraged to take advantage of the completed multimodal transportation options throughout the area.

And the mobility needs within the LGBTQ community is also a LINK priority. "We are part of the LGBTQ community ecosystem, because transportation impacts all of us," says Cazares.

The fact that he is a differently-abled member of the LGBTQ community brings additional meaning to his work. "I think society tends to have a negative view of people with disabilities, and I'm just grateful that, through my lived experience, I'm able to offer a different perspective that a lot of people don't see," he says.

And when it comes to LGBTQ venues, he points to the effects of ableism in the community. "We still have a lot of work to do so that LGBTQ people with disabilities can participate in our spaces, fully and inclusively," Cazares adds. "I look forward to continuing my work so that LGBTQ people with disabilities can show up and benefit from what our community has to offer."



For more information, visit linkhouston.org.

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The Alley Theatre kicks off its 2022–23 season with a good ol’ fashioned screwball comedy, and this time it’s the ladies who are in charge. Ken Ludwig’s side-splitting *Lend Me a Soprano* is a new take on his 1980s classic *Lend Me a Tenor* with flipped gender roles.

“It’s a wonderful thing that Ken has done in going back to one of his own plays and realizing there were ways to improve it, and also to reflect a more current state of mind in the world,” says actor Ellen Harvey, who plays an opera company manager.

Set in 1934, the play features world-class soprano Elena Firenzi (played by Alexandra Silber) starring for a one-night-only production of *Carmen*. Surrounding the demanding diva is company manager Lucille Wiley (Harvey), her passionate, jealous husband (Orlando Arriaga), and her mousy assistant Jo (Mia Pinero).

In contemplating the role reversals, Harvey suggests there’s room for exploration given the new dynamics of the characters, and she says the show comes at just the right time. “Even though it’s the 1930s, it gives women all the power. There’s a certain empathy that women naturally bring to their characters and to their work, so it’s not all slamming doors and slapstick.

“There’s a lot of depth in this, as well. Right now, in this country and this world, we need to be able to laugh—especially with what we’ve just been through,” she says.

Ladies Take the Spotlight

Alley Theatre’s ‘Lend Me a Soprano’ brings new perspectives to an old favorite.

By SAM BYRD | Photo by LYNN LANE

Although the source material is decades old, Ludwig’s dynamic, adaptable script still allows for nuances to mirror today’s norms.

“We have a different sensibility nowadays. What Ken has done brilliantly is to understand the structure of the original play’s framework and build upon it. In many ways, it might be funnier because it also puts the men in the play in a different perspective,” she says.

Laughs aplenty are what we would expect from the prolific comedy maker. Ludwig is the mastermind behind recent Alley hits *The Three Musketeers* and Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, as well as titles like *Crazy for You* and *An American in Paris*.

Since this Alley season opener doubles as the world premiere for Ludwig’s new work, the writer is actively participating in the final rehearsals to fine-tune the work, including taking advice from the leading ladies.

“My input is going to be noted,” Harvey adds. “If I say, ‘Ken, would this character rather

use this colloquialism?’ Ken might say, ‘Oh yeah, that’s great. Put that in.’ We feel like we are a tiny part of the collaboration with his genius. For me, it’s an enormous honor.”

As a veteran performer with credits including Broadway’s *The Music Man* and *The Phantom of the Opera* and national tours of *Mamma Mia!* and *Mary Poppins*, Harvey appreciates the return to theater’s pre-pandemic vigor.

“For all of us that have been acting in our living rooms for the last few years, there is nothing like live theater. With live theater, especially a comedy, you breathe together and there’s an energy and a commitment,” she explains. “You’re including a new member of the cast every night, which is the audience. You have to be present, you have to be awake, you have to be giving, and the reward for live theater is tenfold.”



[More info at alleytheatre.org.](http://alleytheatre.org)



Houston Ballet's 'Peter Pan' Soars with Imagination

The classic tale gets new wings under choreographer Trey McIntyre.

By SAM BYRD

Photo by GUZMÁN ROSADO;

Courtesy of Houston Ballet

Houstonians wanting to zip away to Neverland need only head downtown to Wortham Center this month for Trey McIntyre's *Peter Pan*, presented by the Houston Ballet.

McIntyre, the openly gay artist whom audiences will remember from his most recent work on the David Bowie-inspired *Pretty Things*, choreographed the show. Now in its fourth iteration on the ballet's main season since its debut in 2002, *Peter Pan* is full of multigenerational charm.

Based on the popular children's story by Sir James M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* follows Wendy, John, Michael, and Peter's escape to Neverland. Told through the eyes of a child, McIntyre's current interpretation features elaborate flying sequences, swashbuckling sword fights, giant puppets, and costumes inspired by punk fashion.

"It was important to me that the show appeal to not only children, but also to the adults who are there with them," McIntyre notes. "I think it's a show with themes that are so universal, from the perspective of both children and adults—what it means to grow up and move away from how you experience life as a child. It's so full of creativity. The show delights the parts of ourselves that are connected to imagination." →



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Houston Ballet Principal Skylar Campbell as Peter Pan, Demi Soloist Kellen Hornbuckle as Wendy and First Soloist Christopher Coomer as Captain Hook in Trey McIntyre's *Peter Pan*.

While the main thrust of the story has stayed the same with each Houston Ballet staging, the production becomes more meaningful for McIntyre each time he works on it. "I'm really proud to say that each time I re-approach it, it becomes so much more about deepening the understanding of the narrative and how I might communicate with dancers and [bring new] ideas, because I've learned so much about life in the time between each staging," he says.

McIntyre has also taken a few creative liberties to update the show by introducing new beast-like characters, costumes, and choreography in the second act. That creative inspiration came from an unlikely source: giant moths.

"I've gotten pretty fascinated recently with slow-motion, close-up videos of moths to examine these incredibly beautiful creatures. They really do look like little beasts when you see them up close," he explains.

The show's most famous airborne creature, though, is its namesake character, and McIntyre is uniquely qualified to take the production's trademark aerial element to new levels. He previously worked in a show led by Michael Curry—known for *The Lion King* on Broadway, the Olympics opening ceremonies, the Met Opera, Cirque du Soleil, and other worldwide spectacles—that gave McIntyre the hands-on experience he needed for this Hous-

ton production.

"I was in an extended flying sequence that we spent eight months choreographing. I was up in the air for a really long time working with the team and really learning what was possible," he recalls.

"In approaching *Peter Pan*, I intended to carry that knowledge forward to make the dancing in the air something really special. I didn't want it to look like someone going straight up and down while dangling from a wire. I wanted to make it something that felt like it was an extension of their natural dancing."

"There are several big flying sequences. There's a bombastic, showy solo that Peter Pan does, and there is also a very lyrical, contemplative and sweet adagio that all the characters participate in. There's a lot of different dynamics explored in the flying," he adds.

McIntyre hopes this month's *Peter Pan* will fuel everyone's sense of youthful wonder. "I hope people reconnect with that magic sense of boundaryless, unlimited possibility that comes with seeing the world from a child's perspective."

For more info, visit houstonballet.org.

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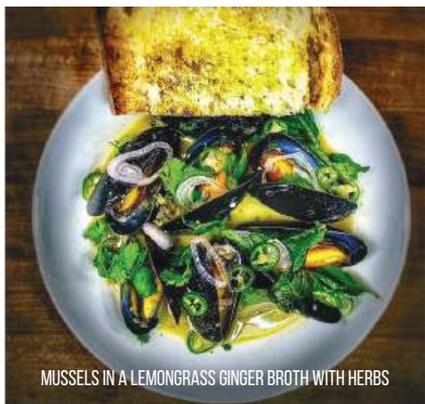
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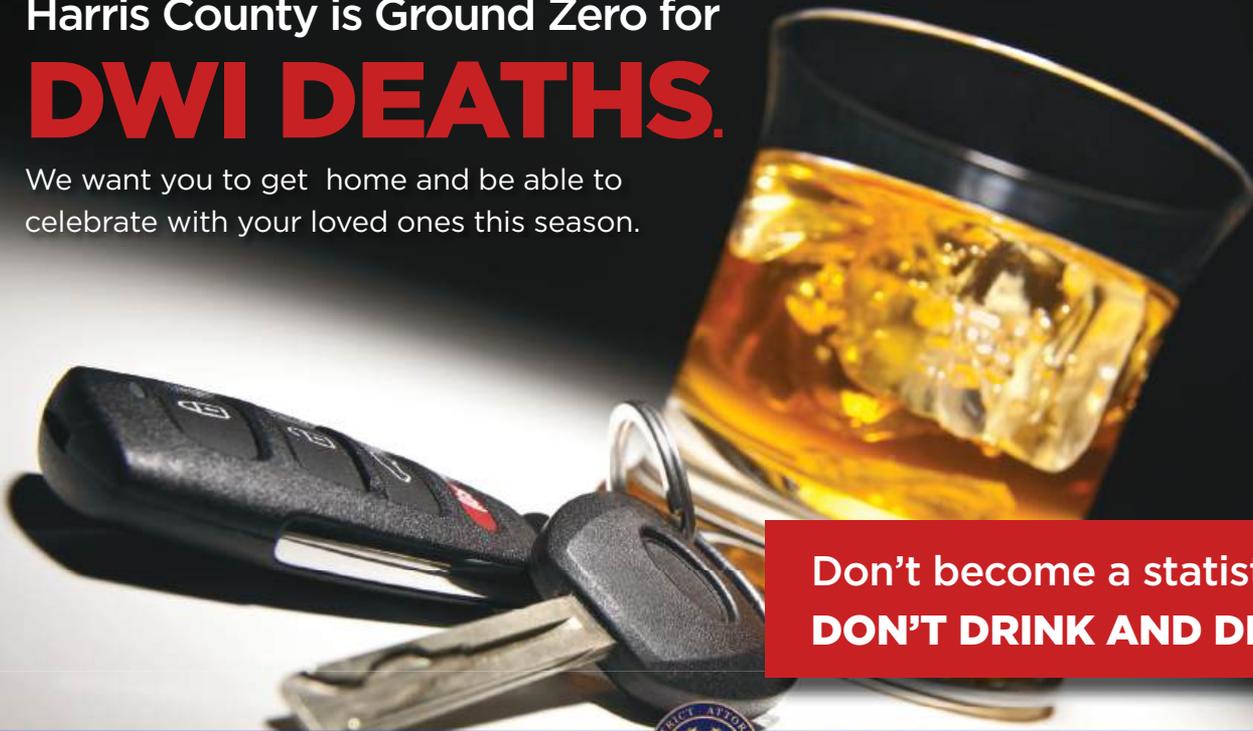
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QUEER CREATIVES

Meet four of these LGBTQ visual and performing artists who are making their mark on Houston's arts scene. First is New York artist **TREVON LATIN**, whose creations are a reflection of his childhood in Houston. Next is **STEPHANIE GONZALEZ**, a multimedia artist whose work both reflects and challenges the troubled times we live in. **JULIE TALBERT** is a trans woman who grew up in the Houston suburbs and found her calling in comedy, while **EDDIE DIVAS** is an alternative drag burlesque artist who enjoys breaking boundaries and defying expectations.





From Acres Homes to Yale

Artist **Trevon Latin** is inspired by memories of his childhood in Houston.

By ZACH MCKENZIE | Photo by JACOB COHEN

Trevon Latin's art is a reflection of his early life.

Growing up in Acres Homes, a historically Black community in Houston, Latin's love of art blossomed. His unique outlook on the world is thanks to his being raised in part by his grandmother in that rural neighborhood.

The multimedia artist uses sculpture, painting, performance, and more to express himself, while also inviting others to explore their own history and pay homage to the children they once were.

"I lived with my grandmother for a lot of my childhood," Latin recalls. "It was very country-esque living—there weren't a lot of things going on, and it was very slow and quiet.

"My childhood was very interesting because I moved a lot. I bounced back and forth between Spring ISD and Aldine ISD," he explains. "There were times when I felt like I could be myself, and times when I couldn't. I was able to see two different spectrums of living—how the school system worked, and how that played out in my life."

Latin escaped into anime cartoons (*Cardcaptors* ranks among his top favorites) and video games—both of which would ultimately inform his career aspirations.

"I started drawing at a very young age. I loved being around anime and video games, so a lot of that really solidified what I was going to do," the artist recalls. "I eventually chose to go to college for graphic design. I thought I was destined for digital art, so I had tailored my path around that. I really didn't have my sights set on fine art or academic art at that point."

That was all before he was accepted into the University of Houston's graphic-design program. "At the University of Houston, I was introduced to fine art and started looking up all these different artists. Graphic design was my main interest until I actually took a class," he says with a laugh. "I was like, 'I hate this, this is terrible.' I'm happy I had that experience, because it inspired me to go to school for art to see what would happen."

Upon graduating, Latin knew he needed



to expand his horizons. "I moved to New York because I wanted a change of pace. I realized it was the best place for me to comfortably be myself." And while New York is a far cry from Latin's low-key Houston upbringing, those childhood memories have continued to inform his work.

After spending some time in the Big Apple, Latin took another chance on himself and his career. "I had lived in New York for three years before I applied for Yale. I applied because a lot of the artists that I enjoyed went to Yale. I got in, and at the time, I didn't even realize how significant that was."

After graduating from Yale, Latin got back in touch with his younger self in a much deeper way.

"My childhood plays such a huge part in how I express my gayness, or anything in my life. It's not that I just express my masculinity. I also express my femininity," he explains. "I express all of these things through the lens of my childhood self, which I really don't think I was able to do in my youth. I had to [work] through a lot of things that were going on in my life as an adolescent, and I had to process that childhood trauma. I really think there's some connection to that in my art. A lot of that is really coming out in my work now."

"I'm changing elements to fit into this world that I'm making. As a kid, I would build and create stories all the time, maybe because I didn't want to be in certain circumstances," he admits.

"I think when I was in school as a child, I would create these scenarios. I would daydream, and a lot of that is in my work today—daydreaming, thinking outside of my body and inside myself, putting elements together that might not go together."

Lately, Latin has looked to childhood memories for some visual inspiration. "I'm using a lot of aesthetics and things that I found from childhood. I never really noticed how influenced I was, and still am, by my grandmother, my youth, and growing up in Acres Homes. A lot of people had chickens in the yard, and horses and pigs. I look at it all in a kind of romantic Southern way. It really plays a part in the future of my work, and how it is evolving and taking shape."

It is those elements of childlike curiosity and whimsy that have made Latin a force in today's art scene. He is currently focusing his creative energy into sculptures consisting of found objects and "the shit-tons of fabric" that his grandmother sends him in the mail.

"The sculpture works are these amorphous-looking soft sculptures—almost like I've taken a plushie and morphed it into something," he explains. "New Yorkers throw away a lot of furniture throughout the year. I've been finding things that remind me of my grandmother's house and splicing them into these figures, giving them more of a video-game-character feel."

Ultimately, Latin sees these reflections on his childhood as more than a nostalgic indulgence. He hopes that people who view his works are inspired and made to feel comfortable engaging in introspection about their own upbringing and the future they envision for themselves.

"With a lot of my work, I want people to see someone who is coming into their own, [and whose] childhood was something very near and dear to them," he says. "My work is going to change, but right now I just want people to feel inspired to be themselves and really look into their own childhood, see what they really want in life, and apply that to their adulthood. I don't think we get that opportunity often, so I guess maybe I'm trying to give that back in some way."

➡ Follow Trevon Latin at @s.relentless.

Art Beyond the Canvas

Artist **Stephanie Gonzalez** finds universal connection through mixed-media explorations.

By **JENNY BLOCK**
 Photo by
PAMELA ASHLEY



As a kid, Stephanie Gonzalez always fantasized about performing onstage as a musician. Somewhere along the way, however, the Latinx lesbian who is currently “in love and happily partnered” became a visual artist instead.

Her earliest memories of painting include watching artist Bob Ross’ instructional videotapes with her grandfather at his home in Reynosa, Mexico.

Once she started using the techniques she learned from Ross and her grandfather, she realized she could escape the three-dimensional plane through painting.

“I started painting a lot while attending high school in Pharr, Texas. My family had moved to Texas from Mexico for a better

life, and I struggled with feeling like I didn’t belong there. Later, I felt like I didn’t belong in Mexico, either.”

She felt split between two worlds—both geographic and emotional. “[I also had] to deal with hiding my sexuality and identity.”

She turned to art as a form of escape. “It was while I was searching to escape that I found my true calling. There was nothing that made me feel as free [as art]. I knew I had to do art for the rest of my life.”

Gonzalez, 34, originally from Monterrey, Mexico, earned a bachelor’s degree in interior design from the Art Institute of Houston and a master’s in painting from Houston Baptist University.

Her public murals and collections can be seen at Starwood Hotels, Le Méridien

Saigon, Lot 8, Chloe Dao Boutique, Skyline Art Services, the Make a Wish Foundation office in the Stafford area, and at Houston’s Pearl Bar.

Her list of awards is extensive, including honors bestowed by Houston’s Glassell School of Art, the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, and Rising Eyes of Texas.

She’s worked in a wide variety of media, including aerosol paint, watercolors, acrylics, oil, pastels, and china ink. She also incorporates lighting and musical elements in her work.

“Art is a feeling,” she says. “It can take many forms. It is not confined to a canvas, paint, and a brush. Art is life—a way to connect with the people around us and around the world. →

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Gonzalez explains that her best work comes to her through play and exploration—and it shows. Her pieces are filled with movement and inherent playfulness.

“I am simply the vessel for the work. I use mixed media and acrylics to convey an idea fed to me through an unknown source.”

For her, the point is not for viewers to understand her work, but rather to be moved by it.

And it’s hard not to be moved. The colors and shapes, the lines and designs, the strokes and scraps all combine to make viewers want to linger and further absorb the paintings.

**ART IS LIFE—A WAY TO
CONNECT WITH THE
PEOPLE AROUND US AND
AROUND THE WORLD.**

— Stephanie Gonzalez

Her works are beautiful, but that beauty feels more like a happy byproduct rather than a studied calculation.

“They say good art should document the times. I also believe art can *distract* from the times,” Gonzalez notes. “Art can make the heaviness of existence a bit less heavy. The artists of the Dada movement took a different route and created works that did not focus on depicting [the horrors of World War I].

“We tend to forget that issues will always arise because humans fail to see that we are one. But I find it beautiful that people with different beliefs can come together through appreciating art.

“As long as we have art, we have a connection. Creating and appreciating art goes hand-in-hand with stopping to smell the roses in an ever-changing universe where the natural state of things is—and will always be—chaos.”

Gonzalez is currently working on a mixed-media series titled Geometric Landscapes, for which she is creating serene landscapes using acrylics on canvas, paper, and scrap wood. She is also working on a series titled Earth Forms.



For more information, visit
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Finding the Funny

Starting a comedy career while transitioning was a good move for Julie Talbert.

By JENNY BLOCK
Photo by @THERIOHTX

When 26-year-old trans woman Julie Talbert was growing up in suburban Katy, Texas, she wanted to be an inventor.

“I thought that was something you could just do. I wanted to be a Steve Jobs type,” she recalls. “You just make something in your garage and make a lot of money. But I don’t think I’m quite cut out for *Shark Tank*.”

The inventing thing never panned out for Talbert. Instead, after a short stint at the University of Houston studying computer science, she found her way to comedy.

“I’ve never been good at being sincere, so anything I did would have to be steeped in irony,” Talbert admits. “I would tell my friends jokes that they wouldn’t laugh at, and I’d think, ‘OK, but if I said this onstage with a microphone, this would be funny.’”

Likewise, when people ask her to tell them a joke, it’s always awkward. “Stand-up needs the context of a stage and a crowd and a microphone.”

Four years ago, Talbert started where most comics start: open-mic nights at the local comedy clubs. “The first time I ever [did an open-mic], there was someone who lived in my dorm who was there, and it was his first time, too. I went up and I did pretty well, but he bombed the whole time. I felt bad for him.

“It’s hard for me, even now, to see someone not do well. It makes me think of [all the times that] I’ve bombed.”

Bombing comes with the territory, Talbert says. But when you do, “It’s not good form to blame the audience. You have to think, ‘What



can I do better?’”

Like most comics, Talbert writes her material ahead of time.

“Sometimes a joke will be half-formed and I’ll try it at an open-mic to get a sense of where I can go with it. But never for a paid gig. I’d even go so far as to say that anyone who does entirely improv sets isn’t a real comic. But I digress.”

Talbert describes her comedy as “dark and sarcastic, but also silly.”

“I like to dig into things that I feel like most people probably think about at some point, but don’t talk about openly—whether that’s about being trans, or just weird social etiquette.”

Talbert began performing just before she transitioned—which was just before the pandemic started.

“It was very convenient timing. It gave me a long time to adjust.”

She now regularly hosts shows and performs at The Secret Group comedy club, as well as at Rudyard’s Pub for their Riot comedy shows.

Doing the comedy circuit after she transitioned was an adjustment for Talbert. “Everyone in the comedy community has been really great. But there was obviously gossip for a bit.”

Her main concern was that people wouldn’t think she was funny anymore.

“I didn’t want being trans to be the main part of my comedy identity.”

Talbert knew she was trans when she was 16 or 17, but she didn’t transition until she was 24.

“There were a lot of reasons, but one was that I was worried I wouldn’t be pretty as a girl. As a trans person, the more conventionally pretty I try to be, the more people like me. People respond better to trans [women] who are more conventionally pretty. I get misgendered a lot by customers at work. It’s hard when you hit a wall and the hormones have done all they can.”

Despite the gender-identity issues, Talbert says it’s all worth it. For one thing, everyone has to listen to you for that brief moment onstage.

It also helps that people can relate to Talbert’s conviction that “if the world’s falling apart, we may as well laugh about it.

“In general, I’m pretty quiet, and I get talked over. But when you have the microphone, it’s all *you* at that point. There’s nothing that feels as good as crushing a set. I have a bit of an addictive personality. It’s all about that dopamine rush.”



For more on Talbert’s comedy, visit [@cruellyjulie](#) on Instagram.

Drag Burlesque that Flips the Binary

Eddie Divas talks about their makeup, magic, and rule-breaking performances.

By DAVID ODYSSEY
Photo by VICTOR CONTRERAS

Whether they're performing in straight or queer spaces, the alternative drag burlesque act Eddie Divas knows how to make a statement. A number will often start with the star's back to the audience. "I always have my hair down," Divas says, "and I wear heels, so you assume I'm a woman."

When they turn around, revealing a full beard, the crowd goes wild. "You can hear everyone saying *It's a boy!*"

Imbuing the traditional art of the burlesque striptease with the daring of contemporary aerialism, Divas raises the stakes by playing with gender norms. You can catch the lithe showstopper delighting queer audiences at spaces like ReBar, Ripcord, and Numbers. "In the gay community, everybody is super-welcoming."

But after hitting straight stages for years, Divas can get off just as vividly on more traditional crowds. "I started burlesque dancing downtown," Divas notes, "where guys would come in suits with their beautiful wives, all done up. They expected an only-female show, so when I would come onstage, I would look at the tables and I could see the girls were excited while the guys were trying to look away."

Divas has asked show producers if such a bold *sans vêtements* act would scare off ticket buyers offended by nudity. "They were like, 'Just do you. That's their problem.' That gave me more confidence to step up in front of these tables [with the embarrassed husbands] and say 'You're not going to see me? Then I'll just dance in front of you until you have no choice.'"



By the end of the show, Divas' manic mash-ups would inevitably win the straight boys over. "They'd approach me and go 'Bro, what you do is awesome.' They don't have the confidence to view the male body as feminine. But when I'd get in the air and hang from my toes, they'd be like *What the fuck is going on?*"

Moving to Houston from Caracas, Venezuela, in 2016, Divas had a passion for dancing, makeup, and aerialism, but no fixed ambitions to perform. Shortly after arriving in town, Divas was told by a friend about a vacancy for a performer at the now-defunct Prohibition Theater.

"It felt really good," they recall. "People were having fun with me; I got to express ideas and be creative."

Soon, the act evolved to blend in elements of circus, drag, and burlesque. Divas would draw ideas based on the season of the show, the music they liked, or even the outfits they had gathering dust in the closet.

They would cut together multiple songs and tell stories through each piece. A classic routine begins with a zipped-up bodysuit and Betty Jean Newsome and James Brown's "It's a Man's Man's Man's World."

As Shania Twain's "Man, I Feel Like a Woman" surges, Divas strips, giggles and

flirts, and then goes into full man-eater mode for Britney Spears' "Womanizer." Garments go flying, audience members in the splash zone receive intimate visits, and the cartwheels and splits are met with roars of applause. "I try to hit a little of every note in my numbers, so everyone has fun with it."

**"I DO A BIT OF EVERYTHING.
I JUST HAVE FUN WITH IT,
AND PEOPLE ENJOY IT."**

— Eddie Divas

Houston proved to be a warm and welcoming home for Divas, who likens its tightly-knit gay neighborhood to Caracas. "I love the gay scene in Houston and how the bars are all close together. That reminds me of home. I'm a foodie person; I love to eat everything, and I love that you can find any kind of food anywhere you go."

Divas admitted to a childhood buzzing with electric curiosity, too wild to tame or constrain in any one box. "I was always a hyperactive kid. My mom would put me in every sport to tire

me out. She didn't know she was only building endurance. I would come home asking *What's next?*"

Though Divas remembers Caracas as a generally accepting environment for gay youth, they were still singled out. Happily, the budding performer chose to push the limits rather than play it safe. "I was very *extra*—I would dye my hair when it wasn't allowed at school."

Divas' high-energy routines have brought them to Numbers' Kinky Circus, the Houston Zoo's After Dark series, the Renaissance Festival, and shows in Dallas and beyond. Right now, they're delighted to be "riding the wave" and learning from other performers, in hopes of hitting Austin next.

"It's been amazing to think: *You can actually do this!*"

Divas' prime base is ReBar, where they'll take the stage early this month and every Saturday in October. They promise more shows to come as Halloween approaches, complete with a guaranteed-outrageous wardrobe.

"Meeting with drag queens recently, they pointed out that what I was doing was kind of drag—alternative drag. I do a bit of everything. I just have fun with it, and people enjoy it."

 For more information, follow @eddiedivas on Instagram.



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Life on the Mature Side

Rufus Wainwright performs his 'Unfollow the Rules' album this month in Houston.

By SAM BYRD

COURTESY

There's no denying the power of a climactic ending to a first act. Look no further than *Wicked's* "Defying Gravity" or *La Cage aux Folles'* "I Am What I Am" as proof. For singer and songwriter Rufus Wainwright, his latest album *Unfollow the Rules* is the Act 1 finale highlighting his artistic growth. Luckily for his Houston fans, the singer will deliver an intimate performance of his album at The Heights Theater in mid-September.

Inspired by married life, fatherhood, middle age, and loss, *Unfollow the Rules* captures Wainwright at a crossroads—ready to tackle new challenges, yet compelled to confront his past.

In the album, he takes stock of more than two decades of running riot with the rules, making sense of how he has matured as a musician since his 1998 debut, and celebrating the contented family man he has become.

"I was edging toward the 20th anniversary of my first record, and once again I was living in California. There was a circular situation

where I was revisiting and reassessing my pop career. It felt like a homecoming in a lot of ways," he says.

Much has happened in the last two decades for Wainwright. He dropped eight albums between 1998 and 2012 before taking a self-imposed hiatus from pop music. He overcame an addiction. He and his husband, Jörn Weisbrodt, expanded their family with the birth of their daughter via a surrogate.

Unfollow the Rules reflects his development over that period. "I started in the late '90s, and it was very much this kind of old-school Hollywood fable. I was a regular guy, and then next thing you know I was flying first-class to Los Angeles, staying at Chateau Marmont, and taking limos everywhere. It was a fabulous emergence into showbiz. I ran on that scene for many years and had great fun—but also some trials and tribulations."

"Somehow, I managed to survive, both career-wise and health-wise, because there were a lot of shenanigans," he admits.

"Now, I have a husband and a child. I'm just living my life as a normal person. It's sort of

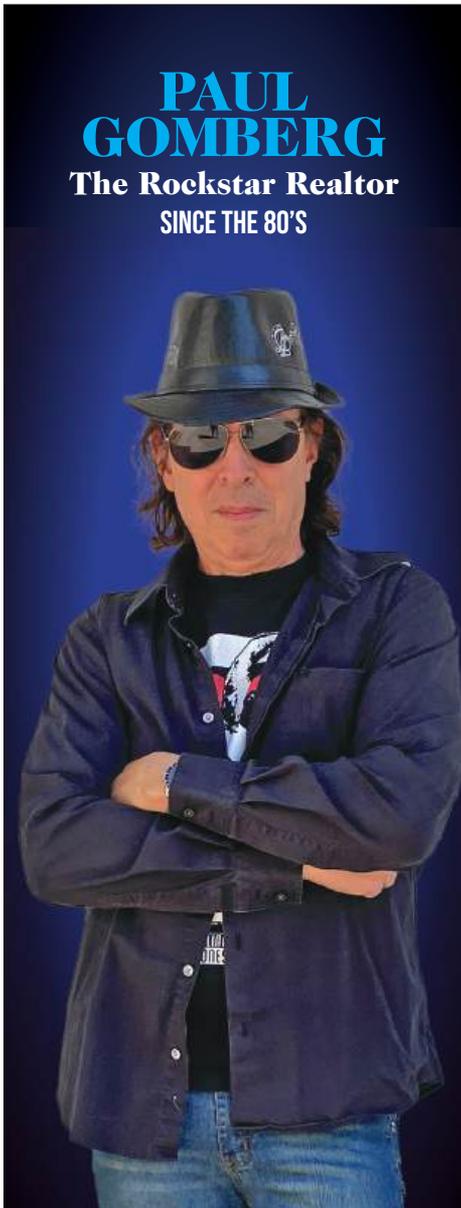
like the before-and-after shots, which is less cinematic than your typical rock-and-roll story, but it's also kind of a beautiful-sunset ending."

A few things haven't changed, though. He's continued a tradition established long ago by his musical family by including songs on the album for his loved ones.

"It started with my grandfather on my father's side. He was a writer for *Life* magazine in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. He would write about his life and family. My father, Loudon Wainwright III, ended up continuing with folk music during his singer/songwriter career—and my mother, Kate McGarrigle, as well. It eventually became kind of a language that we all utilize to both understand each other and also occasionally attack each other, depending on what was at stake," he says.

The other constant is that Wainwright has unabashedly remained true to himself, both as an artist and as a gay man.

"I am technically the first out gay artist in the mainstream who really succeeded—



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and made it about the music. There were certainly other gay artists at the time, but most of them did start in the closet.”

“I was very direct with my label at the time, that I was going to be me and sing songs about men, and so forth. At the time, I wasn’t being political or strategic about it. I was afraid, frankly, because AIDS was so rampant at the time,” he recalls.

“In hindsight, that was a very important move, and I’m very proud of that. When I look back at that era, especially after getting married and having a child, it’s been a wild ride for gay men over the last 40 years. Unimaginable things have happened, both good and bad.”

**“NOW I HAVE A HUSBAND
AND A CHILD, LIVING
MY LIFE AS A
NORMAL PERSON.”**

—Rufus Wainwright

“Sadly, we are entering a more conservative period in the world, especially in the United States, and it seems the battle is not over yet. But, boy, we’ve been through a lot.”

As Wainwright savors the ending of this chapter in his life, it does beg the question of what comes next. The answer might lie in his recent dabbles in other forms of music. Wainwright fans will know that the singer tackled opera during his sabbatical from pop music, so it will come as no shocker that he is looking at musical theater after his entr’acte. Though he remains tight-lipped on the details, he does say that audiences can expect to hear something soon.

“I’m starting to shift my viewfinder to the world of Broadway and the West End. Now that some time has passed, with some shoes to fill there—and I’m not saying I’ll be the one to do it—I think there is a kind of calling to the stage that I’m feeling,” he says.

“I want to write a classic piece that will be performed for many years to come. A beautiful melody line in the musical theater world is very luxurious and romantic. I’m definitely into bringing the grand melody back to Broadway.”

What: Rufus Wainwright performs
Unfollow the Rules

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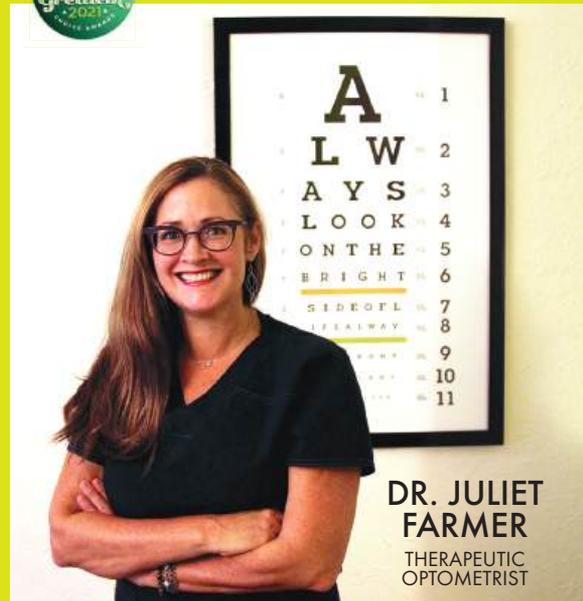
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Do Do Some of That Voodoo

A taste of New Orleans,
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By MARENE GUSTIN



Kandice Hunter



Chargrill oysters

Five years ago, after yet another massive New Orleans storm flooded Kandice Hunter's car, she decided she'd had enough.

Born and raised in New Orleans, the 35-year-old trans woman headed to Houston.

"I love that Houston has a lot of opportunities," Hunter says. "It has a lot to offer. I love New Orleans, but this is my new home. I got a job as a general manager of a hotel my first day here. Where else could that happen?"

Hunter has a background in hospitality and comes from a family of great cooks. She loves cooking the Cajun food of her home, but when she went out to Houston restaurants she could never find those exact flavors. "I ate out at a lot of places here," she says. "They tried, but the gumbo just wasn't authentic. It wasn't like home."

So what's a displaced New Orleans chef to do? Open her own restaurant, of course.

"I love to cook, and my dream was always to have my own restaurant, so I opened Voodoo Seafood & Lounge in June of this year because I wanted Houston to experience real authentic seafood and dishes from my home town. I have a food-and-beverage background; I'd never owned a restaurant, but I knew how to run one."

Hunter chose the restaurant's name as a nod to her hometown, where voodoo and ghosts

are as prominent as gumbo and crawdads.

"Voodoo is magic, and our slogan is 'Magic in every bite,'" Hunter explains.

Voodoo Seafood & Lounge sits at the end of a three-restaurant strip center in West Houston. It features patio dining and free Wi-Fi, with a definite New Orleans vibe indoors with neon signs and the smell of Cajun boils with succulent crawfish and snow-crab legs.

"We're still adding to the menu," Hunter says. "Crawfish is seasonal, so we're expanding and adding different things. We have gumbos and daily specials, and a lot of appetizers.

"My favorite dish is the house special I created called Swamp Deviled Eggs." Topped with fried shrimp, her creation sold out in an hour on the first day she offered them. The restaurant also has lobster tails and fried chicken on the menu.

"It's been great," says Hunter. "Besides the staffing shortage that everyone is facing, things have been going really great. The fun part about it has been the customers' feedback. People drive here from all over, and we have some people who come to eat here two or three times a week. It's amazing!"

Voodoo Seafood & Lounge is open late on Fridays and Saturdays with a live DJ and often live music, with drink specials. And, of course, there are watch parties for New Orleans Saints games.

"We have people of all ages come here,"

Hunter says. "And we're definitely LGBTQ friendly. We've had some bloggers here that have given us great reviews, so our reputation is growing."

Hunter's girlfriend and some family members came from Louisiana for the grand opening in June, and they gave the restaurant a big thumbs up.

"We got busy, and my aunt even came into the kitchen to help out," Hunter recalls. "It was a great time."

Between running Voodoo Seafood & Lounge and a medical spa she owns, Hunter has little time for much else. She relaxes at her Galleria-area penthouse with her two pups—English and French bulldogs named Bailey and Lola. Because of them, she's considering buying a home in Houston with a backyard.

She's also setting her sights on expanding her nascent food empire, possibly franchising Voodoo Seafood & Lounge in New Orleans. "I'd love to open one there!" she says. And she might even start a food-distribution company for Cajun food items.

"I just want to thank Houston for accepting me here," Hunter says. "Houston has been great to me!"



Voodoo Seafood & Lounge
2712 Eldridge Parkway, #101,
346-318-3820

WEDDING GUIDE



Juan Querol (l) and Mike Holloman

A LOVE STORY FOR THE AGES

Mike Holloman and Juan Querol had a slow start, but a spectacular wedding.

By **JENNY BLOCK** | Photos by **CARLES MASCARÓ**



It took Mike Holloman, 50, and Juan Querol, 43, ten months after connecting on Scruff to go on a first date. But when they did finally connect over what Juan

calls “an innocent ice-cream date,” love was definitely on the menu.

Mike, Houston born and raised, holds a bachelor’s degree in finance from Texas A&M University and is a business broker and managing director at Murphy Business Sales.

Juan, a design consultant with a background in architecture and a master’s in bioclimatic architecture and environmental design, graduated from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona, and the Polytechnic University of Madrid. He was born in Castellón de la Plana, Spain, and has also lived in a small village by the Mediterranean called Bencàssim.

When they first connected on Scruff in January 2018, Juan had just moved to Houston. But their first date, at Amorino in River Oaks, wasn’t until November—and it only lasted an hour.

“We had been chatting off and on for almost eight months, but we each had a lot going on so it took a while to make the in-person connection,” Juan recalls.

Their second date was later that week. “I was smitten by then,” Mike adds. “It took me a few more dates to get him onboard.”

By early 2019 they were exclusive, and a year later they were looking to buy a house together in the Heights.

“By the time we decided to live together and buy a house together, I knew he was the one. It took me another year to get the ring—and the nerves to do the proposal,” Mike admits.

“Juan can be totally silly and goofy, and is so much fun. He has impeccable taste and appreciates all the finer things in life, with a keen eye for detail in everything. And he’s a great cook.”

It was when Juan badly injured his left foot while at Mike’s lake house that he became convinced Mike was the one for him. “Mike took great care of me at the ER, holding my hand while I was going through a very painful process. That’s when I knew,” Juan says.

Mike proposed to Juan on their first trip to Spain after the pandemic travel restrictions were lifted.

“He had been missing home badly, and I had wanted to propose for about six months but kept waiting for the opportunity to do it in Spain,” Mike explains.

Juan had a packed schedule planned for them, but one evening they decided to stay



home. They were watching the sunset when Mike excused himself and came back with the ring.

“I suggested we take a selfie to catch the sunset, then set up the camera. Unbeknownst to Juan, I had the video camera on instead, and recorded myself dropping to my knee to propose,” Mike recalls. “We had never discussed marriage, so he was totally shocked.”

“He started in Spanish, which was very sweet of him,” Juan adds. “And he started it with a goofy sentence that is very much ours: Te quiero mucho, como la trucha al trucho, which basically means ‘I love you so much, like trout to trout.’”

By the end of the proposal, Mike had actually forgotten how to say “Will you marry me?” in Spanish, so Juan prompted him: ¿Te casarías con migo?

“It was very cute, because we ended up proposing one to the other,” Juan says. “Mike makes me feel more comfortable with myself than I had ever felt at any time before meeting him.”

The two traveled to Spain to be wed in a bilingual ceremony on July 9 on the island of Menorca in a 19th-century Spanish fortress called La Mola.

“It was important to have important parts of our relationship also revolve around Juan’s heritage in Spain. We chose the island because one of my favorite dates with Juan, my first time with him in Spain, was there at the caves where we watched the sun set over the Mediterranean,” Mike explains.

The night before the wedding, guests gathered at that very place, Cova d’en Xoroi, for a pre-wedding celebration.

The ceremony had an elliptical layout with the couple meeting in the center after entering from opposite ends. “The purpose was to feel surrounded by the people we love, and to arrive as independent individuals and then leave together as a married couple,” Juan notes.

After the ceremony, guests gathered for a sunset cocktail hour with fairytale views atop the La Mola fortress. They were then treated to a sit-down dinner beneath strings of lights, followed by dancing into the early morning hours.

“As we entered the dinner area, the music was blasting and people were cheering and waving their napkins in the air,” Mike recalls. “It was all very festive, and the energy of the room was full of love and support that we could definitely feel.”

It was a magical, cinema-worthy night. The couple was giddy, and the guests were elated.

In the midst of the celebration, the couple shared a very private moment with their guests by describing how they were standing at opposite ends of the building waiting to head into the ceremony. “Before starting to walk, we looked at each other across the empty building and smiled. That moment was like, This is it!”

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817 Fairview, Houston TX 77006

Blur Bar

This multi-level dance club features an upstairs lounge and balconies, with weekly events including Travesura Thursdays and Latin Saturdays.
710 Pacific St, Houston TX 77006

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This comfortably remodeled Montrose nightspot offers karaoke on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and extended Happy Hour prices throughout the week.
2312 Crocker, Houston TX 77006

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the man's man. Leather, bear, or jock, you'll find them all here. This neighborhood bar has multiple levels and outdoor decks, and regularly features DJs and male dancers.
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George Country Sports Bar

Regulars rule at this comfortable neighborhood sports bar with dart boards and pool tables. Sports fans can watch games on televisions (inside as well as outside on the newly renovated patio), and Steak Night with chef Michele Free is on Thursday nights.
617 Fairview St, Houston TX 77006

Hamburger Mary's Houston

This drag-queen themed downtown restaurant serves up the best in entertainment, delicious food, and gloriously yummy drinks.
1008 Prarie St., Houston TX 77006

JR's Bar & Grill

Proudly serving Montrose for 40 years, JR's Bar & Grill offers drag Sunday through Thursday, karaoke Wednesday through Sunday, and daily Happy Hour specials on a spacious New Orleans-style courtyard patio.
808 Pacific St, Houston TX 77006

KIKI

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La Granja Disco y Cantina

One of Houston's favorite Latin LGBTQ bars, La Granja Disco y Cantina is open Wednesday through Sunday and features daily Happy Hour prices, DJs, drag shows, and karaoke nights.
5505 Pinemont Dr, Houston TX 77092

Michael's Outpost

The only piano bar in Montrose offers great drinks, award-winning drag shows, and a roundup of talented musicians taking turns on the keys seven nights a week.
1419 Richmond Ave, Houston TX 77006

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Pearl Bar

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This full-service venue offers distinctive food with Southern flair, a popular patio, multiple bars, VIP bottle-service areas, a large dance floor, and some of Houston's most acclaimed resident DJs.
202 Tuam St, Houston TX 77006

South Beach

Montrose's favorite dance club has re-opened to rave reviews. South Beach's state-of-the-art sound, laser light show, and world-class DJs make the club a must-visit destination.
810 Pacific Street, Houston TX 77006

RIPCORD

Since 1982, this leather bar has been a fixture in Houston's LGBTQ community. It's where the wild, the weird, and the kinky gather on a nightly basis and everyone is embraced for who they are—no pretense, no gatekeeping, just pure camaraderie and debauchery.
715 Fairview, Houston TX 77006

Tony's Corner Pocket

If you love a friendly bar staff, sexy male dancers, and entertaining showgirls, Tony's Corner Pocket is the perfect spot. The bar is open seven days a week and hosts shows like Tornado Tuesdays, Wepa Wednesdays, and Sassy Saturdays.
817 W. Dallas, Houston TX 77019

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This weekend-only LGBTQ Latin dance club is home to a variety of

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Located at the historic Seawall Boulevard on 31st Street, this Galveston spot offers dancing, food, drinks, drag, and a wide variety of themed nights.
3102 Seawall Blvd, Galveston TX 77550

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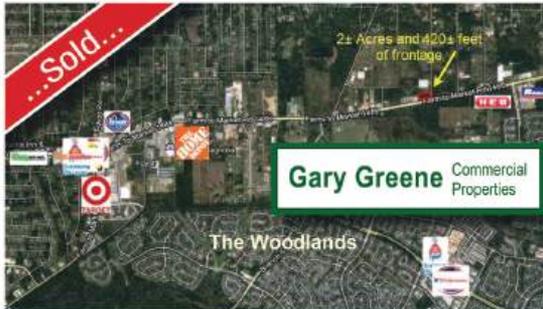
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Obituary Notice

Randall Whitmore

Randall Whitmore passed away on August 7, 2022, from complications of ALS.



Randall was born on March 5, 1951, to Raymond and Dorothy Whitmore. He received his education at St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Platte Community College, and earned an associate's degree in Radiologic Technology with distinction from the University of Nebraska, and an MBA from the University of Houston. He served as a professor at San Jacinto College from 1977 to 2017.

Randall never missed a production at The Music Box Theater, attending with a group of friends who also enjoyed ActOUT events at the Alley Theatre and OUT@TUTS parties following performances at the Hobby Center.

Randall will be dearly missed by all his family and friends.

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By LILLY RODDY

Time to Be a Leader

Virgo season sees Mercury in retrograde.



September begins a long period of retrogrades that will last through mid-February of 2023. First, Mercury is already retrograde as the month begins. Mercury will

be direct by October 9, and Mars goes retrograde October 13–February 18. Mercury will be retrograde December 24–January 27. Fall and winter will be the time to review, take care of unfinished tasks, and assess previous choices.

With Mercury retrograde in Libra and Virgo, we are reviewing our relationships and routines, or lack of them. Mars, our planet of protection and anger, has entered Gemini. Normally, Mars spends about 40



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days in any sign, but it will stay in Gemini for the next seven months! The mutable signs of Gemini, Sagittarius, Virgo, and Pisces will be the most impacted. Not having much patience and putting yourself first are all part of Mars traveling through Gemini. The Mars retrograde may also bring back some

of the nation's old enemies and cause public unrest. We will all need to be more aware of our surroundings.

Good days this month are September 1, 2, 11, 18, 20, 26, 27, and 28.

Difficult days are September 8, 9, 10, 16, and 24.

ARIES (Mar. 21–Apr. 19)

You are working to create more order in your life. You continue to be busy—and maybe too busy! This month is a super time to get back on a healthier eating and exercise program. You remain open to new opportunities and ways to make your life more fun. You will hear from old partners and friends this month. Relationships take on a stronger role by midmonth. If you are having problems, this is the time to work them out. If your partnership is good, this is a great time to strengthen that bond. The desire to broaden your perspective through education remains strong through October.

TAURUS (Apr. 20–May 20)

The intensity level of life has been turned down a bit this month. However, you are still feeling pressure to create more freedom and turn your passion into something more marketable. You are in a creative time where changes are easier to make. You will be reviewing the way you use your resources and talents to make your life better! You may have more impulsive spending this month as you focus on what's best for you. If you have children, this should be a better time to interact with them. By the end of the month, you are back to making your daily routines more effective and fruitful.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21)

With Mars in your sign now through March 25, you are going to be more restless, defensive, and ready to jump at opportunities. This may affect your sleep. Mars' vigor does

best if you have a physical way to utilize that energy. This would be a super time to improve your eating and exercise routines. You will be more direct with others, and they will also be more direct with you. Difficult relationships could be very volatile, but good partnerships can benefit from this time, as there is a need to recapture those "old feelings" from a time when you weren't overloaded with responsibilities. With your ruler, Mercury, being retrograde, you will be more comfortable with the past. You are feeling a bit lighter by the end of the month.

CANCER (June 22–July 22)

Despite the retrogrades, you continue to be busy. Your career arena remains very positive as opportunities come your way. It's an excellent time for you to teach, go to school, and connect to a larger audience of people. This is a great month to reconnect with the past—maybe even a lost family member—and revive your personal story. You continue to work on reducing debt and making the most of your talents. By the end of the month, you are working on making your home a more comfortable and safe place. This would be a great time to take care of projects you have been avoiding. Rushing won't help things, so slow down and be in the moment.

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22)

Some of the tensions of last month have subsided, but you are still feeling pressured. You have been determining whether to maintain or leave some current relationships. You are looking for more freedom of expression, so others'

expectations can feel very restrictive. This month you are paying more attention to marketing your skills to a larger audience. Budgets, investments, and improving your skills are all a part of this energy. By the end of the month, you are working on improving your daily routines. Finally, home and family are still a big part of your focus. Set boundaries and determine what's best for you!

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22)

Happy Birthday to the Virgoans! This is your personal yearly cycle where you review the past year and make determinations about where you are going this year. With your ruler, Mercury, retrograde through October 9, you are taking longer than usual to reassess the past. There may be projects that you have been avoiding that need to be finished. You will be paying more attention to your health and personal routines later in the month. Your career area is going to be very active for the next six months. You may be fed up with your old position and ready to do something on your own. You may want to take on a leadership position where you can improve the processes. Get your exercise routine going to help this energy find a positive outlet in your life.

LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 23)

As the month begins, you are in a time of rest and retreat. You are more sensitive to your environment, and may need more time to yourself. Mercury is

retrograde in your sign as the month begins—a time to review the past and take care of unfinished tasks. Old friends and lovers may also show up as well. Nevertheless, this continues to be a great time for partnerships, both business and personal. You may feel alone and unappreciated in your current situation as you sacrifice to make ends meet. Don't give too much of yourself away!

SCORPIO (Oct. 24–Nov. 21)

The intensity of the last month is calming down some. You have been feeling the need to set some boundaries with family, friends, and clients. Some of you are continuing to reassess your long-term plans. This could be a time to pull back, retire, or just move off the grid. Your family is aging, and you may need to step in and take a bigger role there. Friends can be very helpful in these times, but you will need to ask! You may be projecting a sense of inner confidence even when you don't feel it. Demanding and restrictive relationships need repair or they may come to an end in October or November. For healthier relationships, this is an excellent time to remember the good times when you first got together. By the end of the month, you are ready for rest and retreat, maybe at a lake or on the beach.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov.22–Dec.21)

Past and present relationships are the most active area in your chart through the end of March 2023. Those of you in good relationships will need some time to bond and reconnect. Difficult relationships will need resolution, one way or the other. You will have more energy and will not be very patient, as your survival impulses are very strong. You may want to increase physical activities as well. Career energy remains strong, and you may hear from past clients, co-workers, and even lovers. The latter part of the month is better for connecting with friends and community associations. Pay attention to your boundaries and what's best for you. Be reasonable about your expectations!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

You are reviewing your career path this month as you take a deeper look at where you are and where you want to be. You are also evaluating work habits, so your impatience with co-workers may show through your normally controlled exterior. Home and family takes on a deeper meaning for you, and that impacts your career goals. You are rethinking your long-term plans, and may be choosing to opt out early! Financial issues remain strong, but they are not as concerning as they were last month. You continue to redefine who you are, and that makes career and relationship decisions more difficult.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

The pressure you have been feeling for the last six weeks

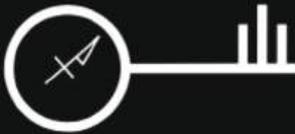
is easing. You are looking at your personal goals, and of course rethinking career and family goals as well. This is a better month to address that, as you are more willing to look at your own darker motives. This can be a good time for therapy, or just working on things yourself. You are speaking up more, and not just hoping that being a good example will make others cooperate. You are looking at your finances and getting rid of debt. Your energies are lighter at the end of the month—a good time to get out of town and expand your horizons.

PISCES (Feb. 19–Mar. 20)

The universe focuses you on home and family for the next few months. You will want to make your home a more comfortable and safe place by remodeling or even downsizing to something more manageable. With family, old issues will come to the surface. You may be expected to show up and rescue them from themselves. If you do, you will come in with your own solutions that might not make everyone happy! You are not willing to be passive in these situations. This activity may continue through the end of March 2023. You will be more direct with everyone in your life, and personal and romantic relationships are very important this month. You want to enjoy a greater level of intimacy, and this is a great time to be doing that.

 For more astro-insight, lillyroddyshow.com.




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By SAM BYRD

The Bearded Broadway Babe

The neon lights shine brightly for Regina Thorne-DuBois.



Regina Thorne-DuBois is just a Broadway babe. Whether in front of an audience during The Broad's Way or behind the curtain as a stage manager, this theater

whiz lives for the performing arts. Move over, Patti and Sutton—it's Regina's turn to be in the spotlight. Read on to find out more about this performing phenom.

Pronouns? She/Her as Regina, He/Him when not as Regina.

Drag birthdate? April 13, 2014

Inner avatar?

A 65-year-old acting professor, chain-smoking in a violet pashmina.

Hometown? Plano, Texas

Describe your drag persona.

Regina is your sarcastic, dry, quick-witted aunt. She'll always have a quip ready to fire, or a seemingly random story to tell that goes on *far* too long. She's dramatic, she's theatrical, and she's unabashedly herself.

How are you involved in the local performing-arts scene?

Over five years ago I founded The Broad's Way, Houston's only musical-theater revue that combines both drag and live singing. We've been performing weekly since then, including almost nine months of digital shows during the height of the COVID pandemic.

Outside of that, for three seasons now I've been the host of Out@TUTS, an event that happens at Theatre Under the Stars during the run of each of their shows. I'm also a proud patron of many theaters around the city, and have even had the opportunity to work on- and off-stage with some of them.

You recently rocked a beard. Did you notice any differences pre- and post-beard during your performances?

When I host and perform, the beard is some-



how another part of the armor that helps me entertain to my maximum ability. And it helps that the response has been overwhelmingly positive. [The beard has caused] a shift in how people interact with me; some people love it, and some people think it ruined my look. However, for me, it has been a massive boost to my drag style and my confidence, both in and out of drag.

What have you learned from drag that you use in your everyday life?

Confidence is something you can't get from others. You can rent it from them temporarily, but *true* confidence is something that comes from *you*. Ryan became infinitely more confident after Regina started succeeding.

Favorite drag performer in the media?

It has to be Coco Peru; she's a legend. Growing up closeted and not really knowing what it meant to be gay, or what a drag queen was, I used to sneakily watch movies on LOGO when my parents weren't home. One of those movies was *Trick*, in which Coco Peru stars as herself with a rather raunchy monologue about a rendezvous with a man.

When you're not in drag, what do you do?

I'm a professional freelance stage manager. I've been lucky enough to work at places like the Houston Grand Opera, The Alley, and even with companies out of state. In fact, I've got a full year of contracts lined up working here in Houston, and I'm ecstatic to be doing so. Theater is my life, both in and out of drag.

What is Houston's best-kept drag secret?

There's this store that sells size 12 and 13 women's shoes. It's an incredibly well-kept secret—so well-kept that after eight years, I still don't know where it is. If you're in the scene and reading this, can you *please* help?

Where can fans see you perform?

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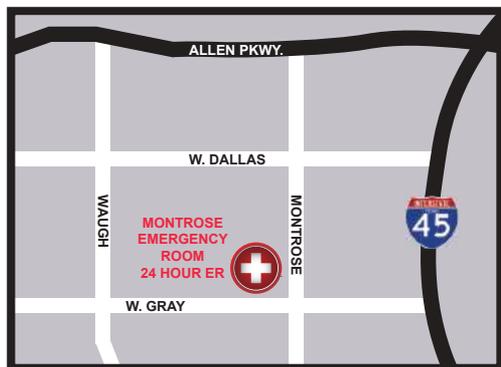
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