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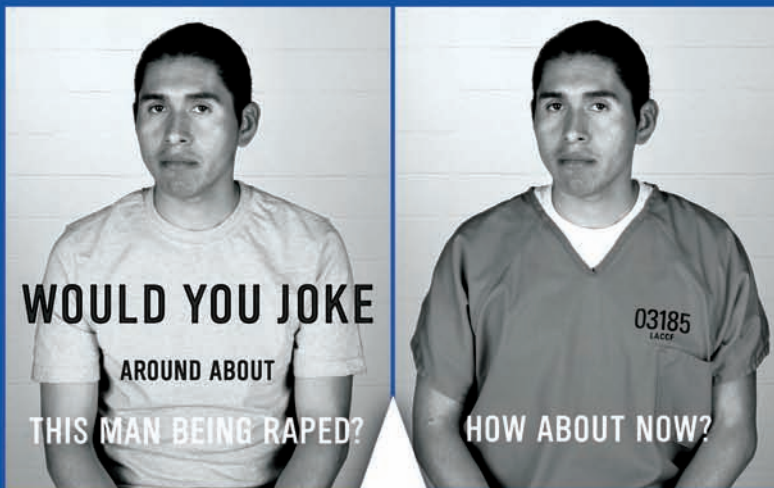
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Lone Star State home to 5 of 10 worst facilities for sexual assault of inmates, and LGBT prisoners are 15 times more likely to be victims



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■ Page 10

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RAID REUNION | The Rev. Carol West and Police Chief Jeffrey Halstead embrace at the premiere of the documentary film 'Raid of the Rainbow Lounge' in Fort Worth on March 15. For more photos from the premiere, visit DallasVoice.com/Category/Photos. (Chuck Dube/Dallas Voice)

SEC says ExxonMobil can't block effort to add LGBT protections

The Securities and Exchange Commission has rejected an attempt by ExxonMobil to block a shareholder resolution to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the company's equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy, the Human Rights Campaign announced Thursday, March 22.

The resolution is proposed this year by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli on behalf of the state's pension funds, which own ExxonMobil stock. Mobil was one of the first companies to offer benefits to its LGBT employees. Mobil was also a pioneer in banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and had that policy in place for more than a decade before the merger with Exxon.

Nondiscrimination and benefits were taken away when Mobil merged with Exxon in 1999. At the annual shareholder meeting at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, attempts have been made to restore those benefits. The number of shareholders voting in favor of the resolution has increased each year. At last year's meeting, votes representing more than 500 million shares supported equality. This year's meeting, during which the current resolution will be considered, is set for May 30.

ExxonMobil received a minus-25 on HRC's Corporate Equality Index last year, the first time a company scored a negative rating. Other oil companies such as Shell, Chevron and BP receive an 85 percent or higher rating. As of 2012, 85 percent of Fortune 500 companies include sexual orientation in their EEO policy and 50 percent include gender identity.

— David Taffet

Ex-councilman won't back Daniel over her support for gay rights

On Monday, March 19 we told you that Theresa Daniel, a Democratic candidate for the newly redrawn District 1 seat on the Dallas County Commissioners Court, had sent out an endorsement letter signed by 17 "LGBT Leaders & Friends." Among other things, the letter mentioned that Daniel is a

longtime member of Stonewall Democrats of Dallas, which is, of course, the party's LGBT caucus. Well, apparently that came as a surprise to former Dallas City Councilman Jesse "J.T." Price, who had endorsed Daniel for Commissioners Court. Daniel reported Tuesday morning that, after learning that she's a member of Stonewall, Price requested that she remove his name from her endorsement list.

"I am disappointed by this development, and had I known Price held this view, I never would have used his name to begin with," Daniel said in an email. "To my mind, being a Democrat means that you are inclusive and accepting of others. It also means that you are committed to fighting discrimination wherever it exists. I am proud of my convictions, proud of my work with the LGBT community and Democratic Party, and proud of my membership in Stonewall Democrats."

FYI, in case you've never heard of Jesse Price, according to Dallas Morning News archives, he served on the council from 1967 to 1972.

— John Wright

BTD kicks off 2012 season, with theme of 'An Affair of the Heart'

FORT WORTH — Black Tie Dinner kicked off the season with a reception at the T&P railroad building in Fort Worth on Thursday night. BTD Co-Chairs Mitzi Lemons and Chris Kouvelis announced the theme for this year's dinner — "An Affair of the Heart."

"'An Affair of the Heart' is exactly what Black Tie Dinner is," Kouvelis said. "Thousands of people coming together solely to make a difference in the lives of so many."

Holding the event in Fort Worth was a first for the dinner committee. The location was the lobby of the restored train station that has been renovated into lofts and is the western terminus for the Trinity Railway Express that originates at Union Station in Dallas.

About 250 people attended. The 31st Black Tie Dinner will be held on Nov. 3 at the Sheraton Dallas.

— David Taffet

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ALL SMILES | Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings poses Thursday, March 22, with LGBT advocates at Resource Center Dallas, where they met to discuss the need for statewide employment nondiscrimination protections. Those who attended the meeting with Rawlings were, from left, LGBT activists Rebecca Solomon and Pam Gerber, Resource Center Executive Director and CEO Cece Cox; Rawlings' chief of staff Paula Blackmon, and Equality Texas Executive Director Dennis Coleman. (Rafael McDonnell/Special to Dallas Voice)

Mayor talks ENDA with LGBT leaders

Closed-door meeting at Resource Center Dallas comes 2 months after Rawlings refused to sign pledge in support of same-sex marriage

JOHN WRIGHT | Senior Editor
wright@dallasvoice.com

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings won't sign a pledge in support of same-sex marriage, but LGBT leaders are hoping he'll help push employment nondiscrimination protections during next year's state legislative session.

Rawlings met behind closed doors for more than an hour Thursday, March 22, with a handful of leaders from the LGBT community at Resource Center Dallas.

Although much smaller than the previous gathering in January, Thursday's meeting was the second between Rawlings and LGBT leaders in the wake of his refusal to join mayors from across the country in signing the pledge from Freedom to Marry.

Participants said afterward that discussion fo-

cused mainly on the need for a Texas version of the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, which would prohibit job bias based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

"The goal was to learn more about ENDA," Rawlings' chief of staff, Paula Blackmon, said after the meeting. "There's a lot of work that needs to be done on this, and a lot of discussion. A broader-based coalition needs to be built around this, so we're going to explore that."

Rawlings wasn't immediately available for comment.

Blackmon said the group plans to meet again in the next few months after individual parties gather more information based on Thursday's discussions.

In addition to Blackmon and Rawlings, the meeting was attended by Cece Cox, executive director and CEO of the Resource Center; LGBT activists Pam Gerber and Rebecca Solomon; and Dennis Coleman, executive director of Equality Texas.

"We hashed out priorities," Coleman said. "The meeting was information sharing. ... We told the mayor that our priority is making sure that people aren't fired because of who they are."

Cox said discussion focused specifically on ways to leverage the business community — including large North Texas-based corporations that already have their own LGBT protections — in support of a Texas ENDA.

Texas is one of about 20 states that lack bans on employment discrimination against LGBT people, which also isn't prohibited under federal law.

Dallas has had a city ordinance banning anti-LGBT discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations since 2002.

Cox said Rawlings toured the Resource Center for about 40 minutes prior to the meeting and asked a lot of questions about services and statistics related to HIV/AIDS.

"While I understand there are people in our community who are really disappointed about his unwillingness, still, to sign the marriage pledge, ENDA and employment protections are an important topic as well," Cox said. "As a community it would be foolish to turn someone away who expressly said, 'I want to learn about this issue and see if I can work on it.' I think he's sincere about learning and sincere about wanting to have an impact where he can have an impact."

■ **MAYOR**, Page 8

Investigation of NE Dallas hate crime stalled

ANNA WAUGH | Staff Writer
waugh@dallasvoice.com

The investigation into a brutal anti-gay hate crime on March 13 in northeast Dallas is stalled because of a lack of witnesses and an inability to get in touch with the two victims, police said.

The news came as Dallas police officers addressed the concern of violence targeted at the black LGBT community during a forum at the United Black Ellument Office in Deep Ellum on Thursday night, March 22.

The forum was in response to a hate crime where two black men, 20 and 27, were beaten until they lost consciousness by a group of five men in the early morning of March 13. The assault occurred near Audelia Road and Forest Lane.

Lt. Don Ham with DPD's Northeast Patrol Division said officers have visited the apartment complex of the two men, left business cards and requested to be contacted. Police have not been able to reach them for further comments about the assault.

"Until they work with us, the investigation is stalled," he said. "We need tips and we need the guys involved, the complainants, to work with us."

Sr. Cpl. Laura Martin, DPD's LGBT liaison officer, stressed the importance of reporting hate crimes to authorities. "We have low participation in people reporting crime," Martin said. "If people see something in the community, they need to call us. ... We can't make people talk."

Martin said police are still looking for possible suspects, described as five black men in their early 20s believed to be driving a dark four-door car with 24-inch rims the night of the assault.

The assault was the first reported anti-gay hate crime in the area. The attackers reportedly called the men "fags and sissy" before the assault. Despite the vague description, Martin said someone saw something the night the two men were assaulted and need to step forward.

Acknowledging that shame and a concern for police bias toward LGBT people who report an assault, Martin assured the audience that Dallas police undergo diversity and sensitivity training to be able to professionally and accurately respond to all calls.

Ham reiterated the need for the black LGBT community to unite together to report and stop crime that targets their community. He stressed building relationships with neighbors and more forums to address issues in the future.

"Get to know your neighborhood," he said. "That's how we fight crime."

Anyone with information about the incident should contact Dallas police Detective Chris Anderson at 214-671-3616. ■

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LUCAS JAMES SPICKARD 1975-2012



Lucas James Spickard was sent from God and welcomed into this world on September 12, 1975 in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. He returned to God March 11, 2012 at the age of 36 in Dallas, Texas. He is deeply mourned by his family and the many friends that loved him. He is survived by his mother Aliceann Donaldson (Michael), Panama City, Florida, father Gene Spickard (Chris), Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, 6 brothers, Paul Spickard (Tara), Alabama, Mark Spickard (Renee), Colorado; Michael Donaldson (Charlotte), Germany; Timothy Donaldson (Darlene), North Dakota; Benjamin Donaldson, Florida; Robert Donaldson, Florida; and one sister Sarah Eckberg (Ron), Minnesota, 13 nieces and nephews, maternal grandmother Jeanette Scheeringa, 8 Uncles, 3 Aunts, numerous cousins, his Partner Donald Dupler and his close and long-time friend Jack Polachek, Dallas, Texas. Lucas spent most of his adult life in Texas and had many close friends in the Dallas area.

A Celebration of his life will be had at 2:00pm on Saturday, March 31st at the Cathedral of Hope Chapel, 5910 Cedar Springs Road in Dallas, Texas.



■ texasnews

■ MAYOR, From Page 6

Gerber, one of Rawlings' prominent supporters during last year's campaign, described the mayor as "very thoughtful, hungry for information and wanting to be strategic in how to accomplish meaningful results."

"We didn't get any specifics about what the city or the mayor would be doing," Gerber said. "It was a much higher, 20,000-foot-level conversation. He is absolutely trying to be strategically tactical with this, so that it will have not just a short-term effect but a longterm systemic impact."

Gerber compared Rawlings' involvement with LGBT issues to his interest in improving education in the Dallas Independent School District.

"He doesn't just want to have dinner with the new superintendent," Gerber said. "He's going to the top of the stream and changing the way people think. I think what he's doing is very profound. Maybe the skeptics will say it's BS, but the reality is the skeptics are probably being too focused on the trees, and not enough on the forest."

Daniel Cates, North Texas regional coordinator for GetEQUAL, said he wasn't invited to Thursday's meeting and wasn't aware of until Dallas Voice contacted him afterward.

Cates launched an online petition calling for Rawlings to sign the marriage pledge, led a protest outside City Hall, and delivered hundreds of cards to the mayor's office on Valentine's Day.

Cates said although he isn't surprised that he wasn't invited to Thursday's gathering, he's con-

“

"I don't understand how this [ENDA] is not outside his official duties, and signing the pledge is. There's no such thing as partial support for equality."

Daniel Cates

North Texas regional coordinator, GetEQUAL

”

cerned that meetings between the LGBT community and Rawlings are becoming "less broad and much more exclusive."

Cates said he trusts the judgment of LGBT leaders who attended the meeting, and applauds Rawlings for being willing to discuss employment nondiscrimination. But Cates noted that Rawlings argued he didn't want to sign the pledge because same-sex marriage isn't within the mayor's duties.

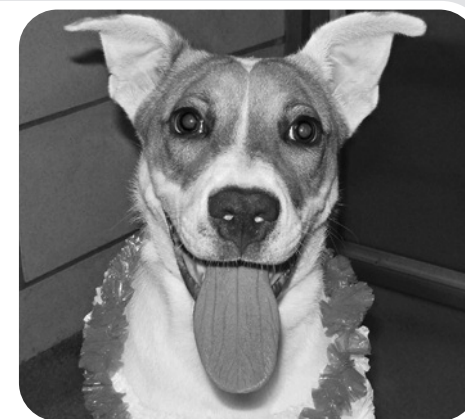
"I don't understand how this [ENDA] is not outside his official duties, and signing the pledge is," Cates said, adding that GetEQUAL plans to continue reminding Rawlings about the pledge. "There's no such thing as partial support for equality."

As of Thursday, 191 mayors from across the country had signed the pledge, including those from all eight cities larger than Dallas. Six mayors from Texas have signed the pledge, including those from Houston, Austin and San Antonio. ■

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The total package

Gay-owned UPS store on Lemmon Avenue branches out into printing while delivering community service to earn Business of the Year honor

ANNA WAUGH | Staff Writer
waugh@dallasvoice.com

Jamie Sloan always wanted to own his own business. Now he co-owns the UPS Store on Lemmon Avenue, selected as Business of the Year by the North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce.

As a financial advisor, Sloan said his job “was truly missing the entrepreneurial side” of his career goals.

In February 2010, he teamed up with friend Rick Adams, an insurance broker, to purchase the store, at 4848 Lemmon Ave. He said he selected the store as his first owned business because of UPS’ branding and reputation.

After taking ownership, the two faced business strategy challenges as the store was in the bottom 10 percent among the regional 80 UPS stores for revenue.

Now, after two years of long days and “getting out and knowing the customers in the area,” the store is one of the top five stores regionally, Sloan said.

The store is also among the top three for printing in the larger region that includes Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, Adams said. Printing will remain a focus in the future, with the possibility of printing for other UPS stores. The pair is also interested in acquiring more stores.

A new 16-foot printer helps the store meet high-volume demands. Adams said it’s the first store in the country to have the printer, which is housed in a nearby commercial print production facility.



FIRST CLASS | Since buying the Lemmon Avenue UPS store two years ago, co-owners Jamie Sloan, left, and Rick Adams have taken it from the bottom 10 percent in revenue to among the top five stores out of 80 in the region. (Anna Waugh/Dallas Voice)

“Everyone knows UPS shipping, but rarely do people know we do printing,” Adams said, adding that the store has taken everything from simple printing needs to printing catalogues and newsletters for commercial companies.

Back in 2010, Sloan said about 80 percent of revenue came from shipping with less than 1 percent from printing. Now about 57 percent is shipping with 30 percent of revenue from printing, tripling the total store revenue within the two years of ownership, Adams said.

The store is also the first UPS store and second printing company in the country that is certified by the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce as an LGBT-owned enterprise, Sloan said.

Sloan said the award highlights the store’s growth and the amount of involvement in the community with the support of several organizations and programs such as Lone Star Ride and AIDS Interfaith Network, including the chamber’s scholarship and leadership development organization, GLBT LEAP.

“As small business owners, we want to make sure that individuals from our community are able to go and pursue further education or technical

training so that they can be the future leaders,” Sloan said. “It’s important for us to be a successful business, but probably the most important thing is that we give back and are good stewards to the community that supports us.”

Tony Vedda, president and CEO of the GLBT Chamber, said a committee of seven former award recipients selected the five category winners from 28 applications.

The selection of the store for Business of the Year was because of its “stunning application,” based in part on the financial and innovative growth by embracing the newer model of UPS store with a focus on printing.

Another major aspect of the award is community service, which Vedda said the store had a strong focus on.

The award represents the “sense of accomplishment” that has made their hard work in expanding the business worth it, Adams said.

Sloan echoed those sentiments, saying that the recognition reflects the teamwork of the seven full-time employees to meet the needs of every customer.

“It’s a team environment, and we play as a team,” he said. ■

GLBT Chamber awards dinner

The UPS store will be among the honorees at the North Texas GLBT Chamber of Commerce Seventh Anniversary and Business Excellence Awards Dinner. The dinner is from 5:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, March 28, at the Adolphus Hotel. To register, visit TinyUrl.com/7myozt5.

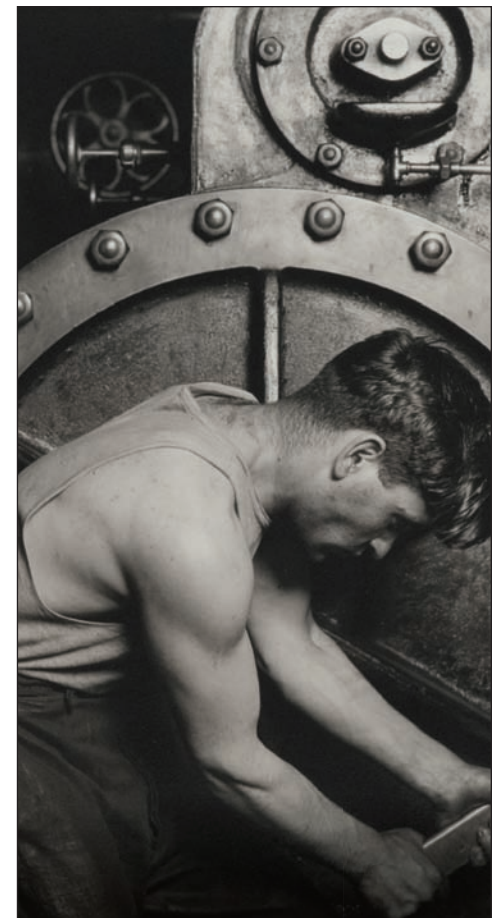
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Images (detail): Lewis Wickes Hine, *Power House Mechanic*, 1920–21, gelatin silver print, Brooklyn Museum, gift of Walter and Naomi Rosenblum, 84.237.7

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Welcome to Texas, prison rape capital of the U.S.

Lone Star State home to 5 of 10 worst facilities for sexual assault of inmates, and LGBTs prisoners are 15 times more likely to be victims

DANIEL VILLARREAL | Contributing Writer
editor@dallasvoice.com

In 2007, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice placed transgender woman Brittney Allen Young into the Powledge men's prison unit in Palestine.

Early in her sentence, Young's cellmate, Charles, began overpowering and raping her, according to a letter Young wrote to Dallas Voice recently.

Young says when she reported the assaults, the guards simply placed her in a different cell on the same wing where Charles and another inmate continued to rape her.

When Young reported the assaults to prison officials again, she says the TDCJ dismissed her claim as insubstantial because she didn't have any witnesses.

TDCJ representatives failed to respond to repeated requests for comment for this story.

Young was eventually transferred to the Hughes Unit in Gatesville, but after she arrived there, an HIV-positive offender began raping her — and threatened to kill her if she reported it to guards, her letter states.

So instead, Young kept quiet and wrote to TDCJ ombudsman Ralph Bales, who's responsible for implementing the 2003 federal Prison Rape Elimination Act in Texas prisons.

With Bales' help, Young got moved to protective custody, where she's housed with inmates who are suicidal, former gang members and ex-police officers.

Today, Young says she stays locked up 23 hours a day, unable to participate in the educational, vocational and religious programs her attackers still enjoy.

Young's story is not unique.

Every year, more than 200,000 adults and children are sexually abused in U.S. prisons, jails and immigration detention facilities.

A 2008 study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 4.5 percent of all inmates in America report sexual assaults.

The same study ranked five Texas prisons among the 10 U.S. prisons with the highest rates of inmate-reported sexual assaults.

In those five prisons, between 9 percent and 16 percent of all inmates report incidents of rape by fellow prisoners and prison staff.

And the statistics are even grimmer for LGBT inmates.

Just Detention International, a Los Angeles-based advocacy group that seeks to reduce prison rapes worldwide, calls LGBT inmates "among the most vulnerable in the prison population," with 67 percent reporting a sexual assault during their sentences — a rate 15 times higher than the inmate population overall.

Juvenile LGBT prisoners report sexual assaults 12 times more often than their straight counterparts, according to a 2009 Department of Justice report.

And transgender adult inmates are sexually abused 13 times more often than other inmates, according to Harper Jean Tobin of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

According to Joanne Mariner of Human Rights Watch, prison rapists tend to target young, physically weak Caucasians — usually first-time, non-violent offenders who seem kind, unaggressive, shy or intellectual.

Jody Marksamer, an attorney with the National Center for Lesbian Rights, says openly gay or lesbian inmates, or those with an "effeminate" appearance, often get targeted for the most brutal harassment and gang rapes, to initiate them as sex slaves.

TDCJ inmate Roderick Johnson, who's openly gay, entered the Allred Unit near Wichita Falls in September 2000 on nonviolent charges of burglary, cocaine possession and cashing a bad check,



Photo illustration by Kevin Thomas/Dallas Voice

according to multiple news reports about his case.

After Johnson's arrival, he quickly came under the ownership of the Gangster Disciples, a prison gang that hadn't had a sex slave for a while.

The Allred inmates gave Johnson a woman's nickname, "Coco," and forced him to make food, clean clothes and tidy up the cells while they pimped him out to other convicts for \$10 payable in prison commissary credit and cigarettes.

Johnson spent the next 18 months being orally

and anally raped in the cells, stairwells and showers of Allred prison every day by men he called "a pit of vipers" and "a pack of wolves," the news reports say. Once they even forced Johnson and a mentally ill man to masturbate each other in the shower while forcing the man to repeatedly insert a finger into Johnson's anus and then lick that finger.

"I was in prison with people serving two life sentences," Johnson told The Daily Texan in a

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David K. Stewart
1939-2012



Better known to all of us in the community as "Uncle Dave" passed away on March 12, 2012 after a long battle with pneumonia and complications. He was a fighter though. Battled with his illness since December 17, 2011. But it was God's will to have him by His side. He is survived by four nieces, a cousin and many friends in our community.

A celebration of life will be held on Saturday, March 24, 2012 at The Drama Room on Cedar Springs between 2 and 4 pm. Hot dogs and "tatters chips" will be served in his honor, as it was his most favorite food by far.

Uncle Dave will be missed but his memory will remain intact forever.

2004 interview. "They don't care about anything. Their lives are over."

Rape survivors like Young and Johnson have to overcome several obstacles before they can even report an incident: They must survive the assault, then deal with the shock and disgust of violation without cleaning the evidence off their bodies by showering, brushing their teeth or drinking.

Often, fear of retaliation and shame will prevent survivors from immediately reporting attacks. And those who do don't always have witnesses to help corroborate their tale.

They might also face a barrage of victim-blaming questions from prison officials such as, "How did you let that happen? Why did you go there in the first place? Why didn't you tell anyone sooner?" — questions that imply they possibly deserved the assault and should feel ashamed, if they don't already.

Johnson reported his rapes through a series of complaints, letters and grievances filed to prison officials.

He also appeared before the unit's classification committee seven times to request placement into protective custody.

But Johnson says the officials didn't do anything because they considered his proof insubstantial; he says they even took pleasure in his trauma and suggested that he either learn to fight or submit, hinting that he probably enjoyed the rapes because he's gay.

Marksamer, of the NCLR, says prison guards can be just as dangerous as inmates, sometimes conspiring with prisoners to beat up or rape gay convicts who complain, placing them in the cells of well-known abusers or leaving LGBT inmates' cells open to sexual predators. They can also encourage the maltreatment of LGBT inmates by referring to them with slurs or by names of the opposite gender.

In women's prisons, guards will sometimes trade sex for goods and privileges, Marksamer says.

They're often allowed to watch women shower, disrobe or use the toilet and can harass, degrade, grope and sexually abuse them during frisks and body searches.

And for undocumented people in American

immigration detention centers, American Civil Liberties Union counsel Joanne Lin said the abuses can get much worse.

"Many immigration detainees do not speak or read English well, and do not know what their legal rights are in the United States," Lin told National Public Radio recently. "Traumatized by the sexual assaults, they are understandably loath to report the abuse to the same government authorities that have the power to rape, detain and deport them."

The American Civil Liberty Union's National Prison Project eventually sued the TDCJ in April 2002 for violating Johnson's constitutional rights protecting against cruel and unusual punishment and guaranteeing equal protection under the law, based on his race and sexual orientation. But in 2005, a jury dismissed the lawsuit.

Johnson now lives on parole in Austin, diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, taking anti-depressants and facing nightmares and suicidal thoughts each day.

But advocates say Johnson is one of the lucky ones.

JDI's McFarlane says it's impossible to know how many prison assaults end in death, how many prisoners pass away due to complications from AIDS, other untreated STDs, and injuries and suicide — the mental and physical toll is enormous.

A 2006 study of sexual violence in Texas prisons from the criminal justice research company, the JFA Institute, attributed Texas' higher rates of reported sexual assaults to the 2003 implementation of the Safe Prisons program.

The Safe Prisons program aims to reduce prison violence by instructing inmates and guards on how to correctly report an assault, separating vulnerable inmates from attackers, and offering survivors psychological care while investigators and medical forensic experts seek out evidence of the alleged assault.

However, soon after the Bureau of Justice Statistics' 2008 study listed Allred and four other Texas prisons among the most sexually abusive in the nation, Just Detention International examined the inmate letters they'd received from Texas — which account for about one-fourth of their inmate letters overall.

JDI found repeated accounts of the myriad abuses described in this article, which the group says indicates that the situation in Texas prisons hasn't improved significantly.

Although President George W. Bush signed the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act into law with a unanimous congressional vote — the PREA even had the support of the anti-gay group Focus on the Family — advocates say there aren't adequate mechanisms to enforce the reforms or evaluate prison compliance.

As advocacy groups continue their work, they say the LGBT community can help by pressuring lawmakers and prison officials to adopt standards developed by the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission in 2009.

Even though about 1 percent of the U.S. population is in prison, JDI's McFarlane thinks that the American public has not pressured the government for prison rape reform because it's easy to ignore an entire population that's locked away.

When asked how she feels about prison rape jokes and pornography, or LGBT online commenters who think gay-bashers deserve rape in prisons, McFarlane responded: "We do want to really encourage people to think twice about the reality of what they're joking about. When American citizens in government-run facilities have no rights, then none of us do." ■

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viewpoints

In New South, same old attitudes

Montgomery's skyline has gotten bigger since the early '90s — and its gay bar appears smaller — but race relations seem largely unchanged

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A recent visit to the Deep South showed me just how much people and places can change — or not — as we grow older.

I first drove into Montgomery in 1992 when I moved there from Dallas to start work for the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights group headed by the legendary lawyer Morris Dees. The native Southerner made an internationally known name for himself by filing and winning lawsuits against Ku Klux Klan groups and other white supremacist organizations. I was thrilled to join his Klanwatch team as a writer and researcher.

When I arrived in Montgomery and started looking for a place to live, I was more than a little surprised to encounter a woman who obviously rejected me as a tenant for a little house she owned because of where I would be working. "Why do you want to go to work there?" she asked.

It was a sign of things to come, and I quickly learned the majority of white people seemed to fear violence evolving from the presence of the law center in their city and to resent the work its staff did. It also didn't take me long to realize that in many people's minds the Old South and New South weren't much different when it comes to racial division on both sides between whites and blacks.

The conversation at the first dinner party I attended, where all of the guests were gay white men, left me stunned.

Although everyone at the table knew where I had just gone to work, they made no effort to hide their derisive opinions of the law center and its work.

As a result of that, it would be at times an uncomfortable two years I spent in Alabama working for the law center, but I loved my work. I also came in time to bond with a small group of gay people I met at Montgomery's Metropolitan Community Church, where I became a member.

One of my favorite memories is of us all piling into a van for a trip to Washington, D.C., for the March on Washington in 1993. I also fondly recall traveling with them to other parts of Alabama for gay-rights marches and associated meetings.

My work at the law center was rewarding in part because I was able to become active assisting gay and lesbian rights activists in the state, in effect lending them the support of one of the most powerful civil-rights groups in the nation. Gay



IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST | The Southern Poverty Law Center in downtown Montgomery, Ala.

rights had always been on the law center's radar, but Dees and the other managing directors of the organization gave me the financial and moral support to take my gay rights activism as far as I wanted.

As it happened, I stayed in Montgomery working at the law center for only about two years. I missed my old friends in Dallas and the more progressive lifestyle the city offered. I also felt overwhelmed by the daily exposure I received to the news of violent hate crimes and the violent rhetoric of white supremacists.

I always regretted leaving because I realized there was so much work that needed to be done in Alabama in terms of LGBT rights and motivating people to action, which the law center has continued and even expanded.

The percentage of people willing to live openly gay in the city was tiny, even though the city had a large LGBT population.

Just last week I drove back to Montgomery to see an old friend with whom I've maintained contact, and I spent an enjoyable few days of sightseeing and visiting with people.

There's been a lot of change in Montgomery in terms of new buildings being built downtown, and the city looked prettier than I remembered. Even the law center has a magnificent new building that dwarfs the old building across the street where I once worked. Klanwatch is now known as the Intelligence Project.

Unfortunately, I was unable to arrange a visit inside the new fortress, even though I once worked for the organization. With its growth in

size and security, the law center has become less accessible, I gather. I did manage to talk with someone I knew on the phone who promised to call me back about getting together, but he never did. That's understandable considering how busy law center officials are and the fact that the anniversary of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March had just taken place.

As far as obvious signs of gay life, there is still just one gay bar in downtown Montgomery. Unfortunately, the one that operates there today appears to be about half the size of the one that I frequented in the early 1990s.

I left Montgomery to return home the day before the Tuesday Republican primary election so I got an earful about the Republican candidates and President Barack Obama before I left.

The remarks of one white gay man, who oddly has a good friend who is a gay black man, seemed to confirm what I suspected was an accurate portrayal of the sympathies among most white LGBT people living in Montgomery. He said, "I don't know who to vote for, but I sure don't want the Democrats to win. I guess I'm going to vote for the one I think will do the least harm rather than the most good. I don't like any of them."

A friend of the gay man, a straight woman with whom he spends most of his time in public, added, "The only white people who will vote for Obama are transplants."

Their comments confirmed to me that only the skyline has changed in Montgomery. The attitudes apparently remain the same. ■

David Webb is a veteran journalist who has covered LGBT issues for the mainstream and alternative media for three decades. Contact him at davidwaynewebb@yahoo.com.



David Webb
The Rare Reporter

Black Transmen Advocacy Conference to make history in Dallas

Organization formed by local activist Carter Brown 3 years ago plans unprecedented national gathering at Marriott Market Center next week

For far too long, black transgender men have dealt with limited visibility within the LGBT community.

Noticing a real need for a space where black transmen could come together, feel empowered and get much-needed services, Carter Brown founded Black Transmen Inc., or BTMI, in 2009.

Brown said that before starting BTMI he was mostly stealth, or intentionally not out and visible as a transman. He said there was a national community of black transmen but not a local community here in Dallas. BTMI set up a Facebook group linking black transmen locally, nationally and internationally, and when it continued to proliferate, it became clear that it was time for everyone to meet in person.

But it couldn't just be any type of meeting. The meeting had to have a message, it needed to be a conference that empowered its audience — a conference complete with mentors and pioneers, medical professionals, artists, religious leaders and much more. At this moment of revelation,

the first Black Transmen Advocacy Conference was born.

The conference will take place March 29 through April 1 at the Dallas Marriott Market Center. The theme is "Stepping up-Stepping Out, Men Uniting and Impacting the World."

Brown said the theme represents the fact that many black transmen go "stealth" and are hidden or living a life of secrecy. Therefore, it's a call for black transmen to step up and come out and say who they are. BTMI wants "transmen to be able to embrace who they are without feeling that they have to conform to societal impressions of what a man is."

BTMI has created an organization where black transmen can come together and support one another through their journeys as transmen. Although there are other organizations specifically for transmen, most are for white transmen who have a very different lived experience than black transmen. Although many transmen are at a socioeconomic disadvantage, black transmen have been shown to have an increased amount of disparities, the least amount of access to resources, and more amounts of sexual violence against them.

BTMI, the first national nonprofit organization of African-American transmen solely focused on



Toi Scott

Contributing Columnist

social advocacy, seeks to acknowledge and empower black transmen by providing resources to aid in healthy female-to-male transitions. The resources have an emphasis on forming a complete identity, including culture, spirituality, heritage, family, health, sexual identity, employment, entrepreneurship and kinship.

BTMI's causes include FTM awareness, anti-bullying, transgender homelessness, transgender hunger relief, AIDS prevention, suicide prevention, domestic violence prevention, FTM surgery funding, and FTM educational scholarships and grants.

Though BTMI specifically focuses on the concerns of the African-American community, its programs provide all female-to-male transmen and SLGBTQIH (straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex and HIV-positive) individuals with the necessary tools to secure identity and equality within our

society regardless of race, creed, color, religion, sexual identity or sexual expression.

BTMI's motto is: "One is not born a man, he becomes one. Become the change you want to see in the world."

The organization partners with local community churches, schools, universities and social groups to aid in their goal of awareness, advocacy and social change.

It also focuses on kinship and bringing members together to connect and establish bonds with people with similar sociocultural experiences.

As excitement builds for the conference, BTMI is ready for this incredible "family reunion" or homecoming. Everyone is looking forward to having the national black transmen community and allies present throughout the four-day event.

Black Transmen Inc. personally extends an invitation to all readers to come out Saturday night to the formal dinner and ball.

As Brown put it: "Come treat yourself and eat with family and casually get to know people and see how they love and come share in this love."

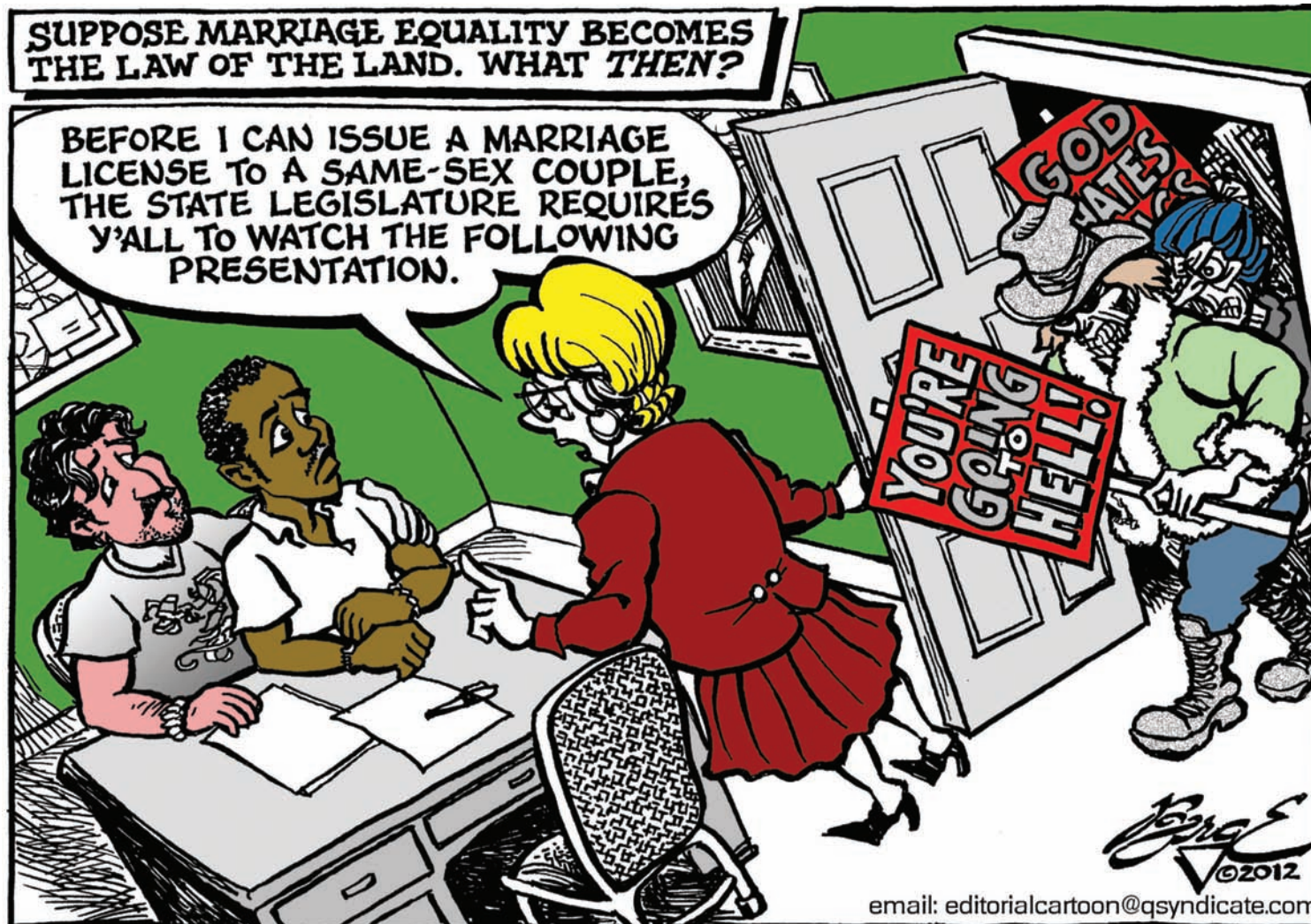
Also, come to the salons and workshops during the day if you are able, whether you are straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or otherwise identified.

It will be a great chance for dialogue and empowerment. Come join in this amazing opportunity to expand your minds uplift your community, and join in the sharing of important information that will change the face of our community as we know it.

There will be resounding impact from this conference for years to come, and this is only the beginning. You definitely should come be a part of black history, and American history, in the making.

For more information on the conference or to RSVP, visit Retreat.BlackTransMen.org.

Toi Scott is a transmasculine and gender non-conforming writer and activist. Toi blogs about the intersections of race and gender and movement building at philosophactivist.blogspot.com and can be reached at gqstreetpoet@gmail.com.



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Do you 'Hear' what they hear?

Stars in their multitudes turn out for the world premiere arena spectacular 'Do You Hear the People Sing?'

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

Ask a handful of theater aficionados what they think of *Les Misérables* and the other musicals from the French team of Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, and you're likely to get only love-it-or-hate-it answers: Either it's glorious, epic Broadway or bombastic quasi-opera.

But ask some Broadway *singers* what they think of it, and you get an unqualified enthusiastic response: It's phenomenal.

"Most people will place *Les Miz* as one of their all time top five musicals of all time — I mean, up there with Rodgers & Hammerstein," says Stephanie J. Block, the Broadway star of Boublil and Schönberg's *The Pirate Queen*. "It's one of the best, most epic, most beautiful, impassioned and moving musicals. As soon as you hear the down-beat [of the overture of *Les Miz*], you know you're in for something special."

Dallas has already proved its passion for *Les Miz*; the recent national tour revival was not only the highest-grossing two-week engagement yet to play the Winspear, it was the most made by the tour anywhere. *Ever*.

So it's little surprise the city was chosen for the world premiere of the arena production of *Do You Hear the People Sing?*, a massive concert performance featuring songs from their two biggest hits (*Les Miz* and *Miss Saigon*), as well as their less-well-known *Pirate Queen* and *Martin Guerre*.

The lineup of talent assembled for the show is enough to send a theater queen into seizures: Tony winners Brian Stokes Mitchell and *Miss Saigon* herself, Lea Salonga; Terrence Mann (who origi-

nated the role of Javert), Peter Lockyer and Block, who just last week took over for Sutton Foster on Broadway in *Anything Goes*. She will be in Dallas, though, for this performance.

"I'd only leave a Broadway show for Alain and Claude-Michel," she says.

Indeed, audience members have Block to thank in part for the production altogether.

She first met Boublil and Schönberg when she was auditioning for the lead in *The Pirate Queen* in 2006. In fact, they'd decided to give her the role ... she just didn't realize it.

"They are very old school European and I did not get a whole lot of emotion coming from them. The next phone call I got was to fly to Ireland to meet with them. I had no idea if I had the role or

not, but they thought I know I was cast! Since then we've had a lovely relationship."

So good, in fact, that the impetus for *Do You Hear* came during an evening with Block, her husband and the composing duo.

"Over lots of wine one night, Claude-Michel asked, 'Do you think my music would work in an orchestral setting?'" Block was sure it would. Last fall, she and the other cast members tried it out in Indianapolis — "a bit of an experiment," she calls it. "It was thrilling." But the show opening at the American Airlines Center is far grander.

"To hear all of their hits in one night with an 80-piece orchestra? Singing this brilliant music with a 100-person choir [including members of the Turtle Creek Chorale]? Add to that Lea Salonga,

Terrence Mann, Brian Stokes Mitchell... It's a once-in-a-lifetime thing."

Coordinating so many pieces for a one-off concert has been daunting — "a mystery," Block calls it. Each performer has rehearsed their songs separately, as have the orchestra and choirs; two full rehearsals this week were all they had time for before the massive opening.

You might expect that wouldn't be such a big deal — after all, most of these singers have already appeared in multiple Boublil-Schönberg shows. Only it's not that simple.

"In *Les Miz* I want to play every part!" says Block. She does get to take on Madame Thenardier opposite Mann. But he's changing roles.

"I'm *not* singing Javert — Stokes is," says Mann, who last revisited Javert in the final three months of the recent *Les Miz* revival on Broadway. Instead, he'll tackle the songs of The Engineer from *Miss Saigon* and other roles.

"Terry is the nicest guy in the world, which is why it's funny he plays villains so well," Lockyer says.

There'll also be some new music to even die-hard fans: The team has composed a new song for Ellen in *Miss Saigon* called "Maybe" which has been performed in a production in Europe, but will get its American debut Friday. That's pretty exciting for a singer — and an audience.

"I don't know how you're gonna do this again," Block says. "If you are a music lover you want to be in the audience. It's why a lot of people like to go to opening nights — to witness something for the first time. Why would you miss it?"

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QUEEN OF THE ARENA | Stephanie J. Block met Boublil and Schönberg when she played the title role on B'way in 'The Pirate Queen.' She revisits that role, and tackles more, Friday. (Photo courtesy Joan Marcus)

On a roll

Theatre 3 scores another success with a superior 'Donuts;' Uptown Players do B'way the right way

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

The set-up for Tracy Letts' play **Superior Donuts** is a trope that has been around for decades: A curmudgeonly shopkeeper meets an abrasive young person and, despite their essential differences, they form a symbiotic bond: The youngster energizes the old man, giving his life a second act, and he in turn provides a role model for someone with promise.

Sometimes the younger character is a child, or a girl, or occasionally even a cat; in the case of *Superior Donuts*, it's Franco (Chris Piper), a fast-talking, entrepreneurial young black man who shows up at the worn out Chicago donut shop of its equally worn out proprietor, Arthur Przybyszewski (Van Quattro), a pot-smoking, draft-dodging, closed-off misanthrope. Franco wrangles himself a job behind the counter, but both men come with as much baggage as promise.

If the premise sounds familiar, even clichéd, well, perhaps; but Letts is a masterful writer of character-specific dialogue, and the cast is sim-

ply exceptional. Piper conveys a hint of desperation and a survivalist's quick-witted charm; he's among the most natural of actors working today. Quattro conjures up images of Terry Kinney: Scruffy, hard-edged but as doughy as one of his own crullers. Brandi Andrade's *Fargo*-like cop, Rick Espaillat's hysterically racist Russian émigré and Carolyn Wickwire's gin-blossomed bag lady are equally evocative, as is David Walsh's exceptional set.

With the recent triumph of *The Farnsworth Invention*, lately Theatre 3 has been on a terrific roll — or in this case, a superior donut. Extra sprinkles.

The folks at Uptown Players have been doing their annual **Broadway Our Way** fundraiser (premise: Guys sing show tunes meant for girls, and vice versa) for 10 years now, long enough that the format could have grown tired, the song catalogue repetitive. But somehow the addition of new director B.J. Cleveland — who launched the troupe by appearing in their first show in late 2001 — has revitalized *BOW*. It's decade anniversary show is hands-down its best yet (and last year's was pretty

ON THE BOARDS

SUPERIOR DONUTS at Theatre Too, 2900 Routh St. Through April 15. Theatre3Dallas.com.

BROADWAY OUR WAY at the Kalita Humphreys Theater, 3636 Turtle Creek Blvd. Through Sunday. UptownPlayers.org.



THEY'RE YOUR DREAMGIRLS, BOYS | Joan Crawford (Coy Covington), Liza Minnelli (B.J. Cleveland) and Mrs. Garrett (Paul J. Williams) make us happy in 'Broadway Our Way.' (Photo courtesy Mike Morgan)

great).

Cleveland has developed a through-line, at least in the first act, where scenes link together like a story: Some lesbians are "Standin' On the Corner Watching All the Girls Go By" down on McKinney Avenue, while two gay men flirt on its streetcar to "The Trolley Song," etc. And the big challenge — how to make the twist in genders seem fresh — is explored with wondrous hilarity in "Big Spender" (set in a gay bar) and "Matchmaker, Matchmaker" which uses the predominance of a certain gay hook-up smartphone app as the new Yenta.

But what really gets the audience on their feet are the numbers from *The Book of Mormon*, the incorporation of hosts Paul J. Williams and Marisa Diotalevi's characters from last fall's hit show *The New Century* and Williams, Cleveland and an Angelina-legged Coy Covington dragging their way through "We're Your Dreamgirls" as Mrs. Garrett, Liza and Joan Crawford. Talk about playing to your strengths. *BOW* does just what it's supposed to: Remind theatergoers just why Uptown Players are an integral part of the North Texas arts community. Keep it gay, keep it gay, keep it gay. ■

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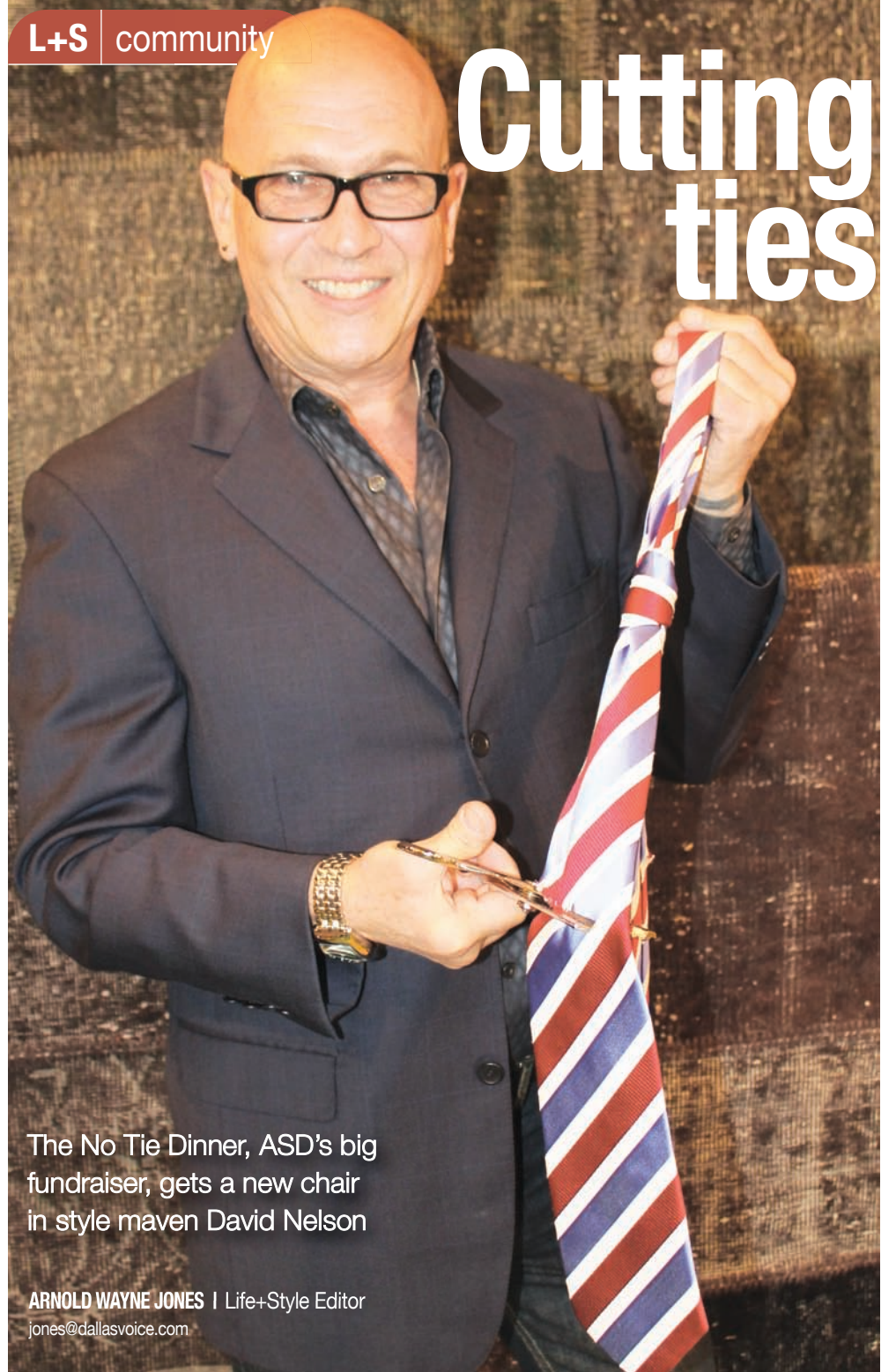
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L+S community

Cutting ties



The No Tie Dinner, ASD's big fundraiser, gets a new chair in style maven David Nelson

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

TIE DIED | David Nelson plans to add some surprises to this year's No Tie event — but keeping it unstuffy will remain a constant. (Arnold Wayne Jones/Dallas Voice)

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Over the years, David Nelson has accumulated a rackful of neckties, plenty of them too dull or too garish to ever wear again. If anyone understands the appeal of a tie-free event, it would be him.

But this year, the No Tie Dinner isn't a time for Nelson to sit back and relax. He's had to replace his necktie with his thinking cap.

For seven years, the No Tie Dinner (its title riffs on the Black Tie Dinner sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign) has been the baby of Dennis Kershner, who has chaired the fundraiser that benefits AIDS Services of Dallas, which provides housing and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. Last year, Kershner stepped down ... and Nelson stepped up.

"Dennis first got me involved as a patron," Nelson says. Now he's leading it.

It's a complicated event to produce. Unlike Black Tie, which takes place at a single venue, the No Tie Dinner is actually a series of dinners held in private residences across the city. Volunteers agree to host meals in their homes, asking guests to make donations to ASD. Then around 8 p.m., they all converge on the Frontiers of Flight Museum at Love Field for the gala dessert party and auction — a reception that caps off an evening of food and fundraising.

Nelson is a stylist and designer who has thrown more than his share of gala events (he chaired the 2006 DIFFA Collection). Still, taking over the reins from its founder was a daunting task — he'd never even hosted one of the dinners before. But he'd felt passionate about support for ASD since he first attended the event several years ago.

"I remember the first time I learned about No Tie," he says over a meal in the Design District. "It was maybe the second year of the event. I was invited to a party at Dennis' house and didn't even know what I was going to."

That's when Nelson first realized what an important role ASD provides to the North Texas community.

"It's like six degrees of separation — if you don't know someone personally, your neighbor's sister-in-law has a brother who has been at ASD," Nelson says. "Housing is so very important [to people living with AIDS]." ASD has 124

units serving 225 men, women and children; 300 are on the waiting list. The No Tie Dinner is the non-profit's No. 1 fundraiser of the year.

The pre-party dinners are something of a mystery to Nelson, even at this point. Every host plans differently: Some cook, some cater; Nelson knows of one volunteer who plans to have a food truck parked outside his house.

It's somewhat nerve-racking to plan, knowing that your guests (about 1,500 are expected to attend) have dinner engagements before they come to you ... and not knowing exactly what the tone of each of those dinners will be. Coordinating it is akin to herding cats.

"People don't want to budge," Nelson jokes about dinner attendees. "It's the host's job to leave and get them all to go [with him]."

It's when they begin to arrive at the museum that Nelson's magic takes place.

"Dennis has been very supportive. He said, 'If you wanna change it up, let's change it!'" he says. "He made no conditions."

Nelson is playing some of the innovations close to his vest, planning to dazzle attendees (and get some buzz going). He does tease a few ideas, however.

"We've never had any entertainment other than a DJ," he says. "There's still a DJ, but also some surprises. It's not about fashion, but about style — anyone can be stylish."

Don't mistake style for stuffiness, though — it's still a casually fashionable event. They take the "no tie" part seriously.

No Tie has always had silent auctions and an announcement and presentation of an award. But Nelson has added a live auction and a video component to keep the festivities moving along. He's added the skills of Dallas Sound and Light to customize the event.

"It'll add a whimsical energy. It's a grand building, too. Once you walk in, you'll get it."

And there will, of course, be the delicious desserts (and creative cocktails).

"We have some [restaurants and caterers] who have been with us since the beginning, but the slate changes. This year, nine dropped out, but we gained 11 more," he says.

That's another reason to leave the tie at home — after all the desserts, you're gonna want to undo a button or two. ■

NO TIE DINNER

Frontiers of Flight Museum,
6911 Lemmon Ave.
(at Love Field). March 24. 8 p.m.
\$50 donation suggested.
NoTie.org.

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L+S screen

Game on!

Bread and circuses feed the overwrought dystopia of 'The Hunger Games'

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Life+Style Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

Strange, how much the post-apocalyptic world portrayed in **The Hunger Games** looks like a mining town outside Pittsburgh. Maybe it's a subtle suggestion that, if Pennsylvania's Rick Santorum becomes president, can a world of privation and iron-fisted dictatorship be far behind? But maybe I'm reading too much into that.

The Hunger Games is an unlikely topic for girl-friendly young adult fiction, in part because it's action-packed, with only tangential hints of romance, and in part because its stylistic forebears aren't the romantic poets and novelists of 19th century England, but the legends of Greek and Roman mythology, filtered through the realities of Herodotus' histories.

The characters' names fall into two categories: Those that sound like they were created by an 8-year-old Victorian girl naming her dolls and pet cats (Katniss and Primrose Everdeen, Peeta Mellark, Haymitch Abernathy) and those that sound like ancient Romans who married into elite Jewish families (Caesar Flickerman, Seneca Crane, Claudius Templesmith). It's all very hit-and-myth.

The Roman poet Juvenal said, "Two things only people want: Bread and circuses." In Suzanne Collins' trilogy, she combines the two, evident in the title itself. In a dystopian future following some implied holocaust that resulted in a failed revolution, residents of The Capitol live in decadent excess, enjoying the spoils of

victory, while the descendants of the losing peons of Panem subsist in one of 12 districts. Folks in the hinterlands live in fear and squalor, hunting for squirrels to feed themselves and stoking cast-iron stoves with driftwood to stay warm while the aristocrats live in a modern, technological metropolis.

Like *Logan's Run* — or maybe *The Handmaid's Tale* — their lives are made worse by the threat of The Hunger Games, an annual televised horror show where one teenaged male and female from

each district become "tributes," competing in a 'til-the-death battle where the sole winner is rewarded with riches. It's like the Lotto, only with a game of Russian roulette thrown in.

Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence)

and Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) are the tributes from District 12, the equivalent of the Sun Belt Conference in Panem's hierarchy — that is, not likely to field a national champion anytime soon. Of course, they do *really* well in the games. Everyone loves an underdog.

It's sometimes difficult to separate what works in *The Hunger Games* from what doesn't. The first appearance of bewigged Woody Harrelson, playing Katniss and Peeta's mentor (the only previous District 12 victor in history), generates titters from the audience; by the end, though, he's delivered a more than serviceable performance. The contrast between current reality TV detritus like *Survivor* and *American Idol* with the gladiatorial brutality of ancient Rome is

★★★★★

THE HUNGER GAMES
Jennifer Lawrence, Stanley Tucci,
Josh Hutcherson, Woody Harrelson.
Rated PG-13. 140 mins.
Now playing in wide release.

ON THE STRAIGHT AND ARROW | Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence) tries her best to win 'The Hunger Games.'

interesting, but the film never attains the tone of satire that would hit it home. If you want to see a movie that gets it right, rent *The Truman Show*.

Most of the faults are attributed to an over-long screenplay that lacks pacing, and mostly slapshod direction by Gary Ross. Ross brings no personality or point of view to the endeavor, just tons

of convoluted visuals. It's edited too frenetically during the action scenes, and fails to orient the viewer. Many of the plot points don't quite come together. (Katniss has obviously watched the Hunger Games before — how can she be so guileless about how to play the game?)

Still, there's no denying the power of some of the images. A training film invokes the uneasiness of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympiad*, with all the Nazi iconography intact; the garish costuming — a cross between Dr. Seuss and *The Wizard of Oz* — is impressive, even if over-the-top. It toggles infuriatingly between being savvy and silly.

But then there's Katniss herself, emotionally played by Lawrence with well-scrubbed conviction. It's exciting seeing a strong young woman hold her own. For most of *The Hunger Games*, it was a relief simply to see a teenaged girl in the woods who could take care of herself, and not be chased by wolves or protected by a wan, sparkly boyfriend. During the climax, though, that rule gets violated when ... well, just see it for yourself. You know you will anyway. ■



YOUR NEXT PANEM IDOL | An unctuous futuristic Ryan Seacrest (Stanley Tucci) fans the flames of faux celebrity in 'Hunger Games,' which is in turns savvy and silly.

Josh Hutcherson: The kid is all right

Playing Peeta, the male lead in *The Hunger Games* may seem like Josh Hutcherson's big break, but he has been on the scene for a while. He was just 10 when he appeared in his first TV pilot, but it was in 2010, when he appeared in the Oscar-nominated *The Kids Are All Right*, that he began to play more sophisticated roles.

But one of his smallest roles — and his most current — is also personally important to him.

In *Kids*, Hutcherson played the son of a lesbian couple (Annette Bening and Julianne Moore); in real life, the straight actor has been an outspoken friend to the gay community. Recently, he made a video for the group StraightButNotNarrow.org, an organization designed to fill what the founders saw as a serious need: A forum in which straight people could show their support for their LGBT friends.

In the short, cheeky video (part of a series on the group's YouTube page), Hutcherson voices his support for gay rights. "Does it really matter if your guy friends like guys over girls? I mean doesn't that just kind of leave more girls for you?" Hutcherson quips. "We're not going to let anyone say anything bad about anyone ever again in the history of the world."

That video may not earn Hutcherson many new film roles, but he's hardly wanting for work. He's "reading a bunch of scripts," he says; *The Hunger Games* franchise



allows him the "freedom to be a little picky." (*Catching Fire*, the second installment in the trilogy, hits screens in late 2013.)

For now, he's just riding the wave of anticipation and buzz. Even before being cast, Hutcherson was a big fan of the books, but he was unprepared for the rabid excitement of the series' die-hard aficionados.

"I've never seen people be so passionate about something. And to know that it has to do with me in some way... it's kind of crazy."

Despite all the hullabaloo, Hutcherson has only encountered what he calls "polite stalkers," including ones who followed him home after a dinner out because, they explained, they didn't want to interrupt his dinner. Being famous for being hungry can have some perks.

— Jenny Block

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L+S travel



Tennessee's genteel Southern nature offers an attractive flair for gay travelers

ANDREW COLLINS | Contributing Travel Writer
outoftown@qsyndicate.com

Tennessee may be a decidedly conservative state, but Memphis has developed into a popular destination for queer travelers in recent years. With a sizable LGBT community, Memphis is steeped in American music lore with a noteworthy restaurant scene that's far more than barbecue and Southern fare. And after dark, the city offers an eclectic array of gay nightlife options for fans of dancing and clubbing.

Visitors will keep busy in this city most famous for the blues, Elvis and civil rights history. Today the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, is home to the National Civil Rights Museum. The surrounding South Main Street neighborhood is a good spot for a stroll, with its shops and cafes. A short drive south, you'll find the National Museum of Ornamental Metal, with exceptional galleries and an outdoor sculpture garden that sits on a hilltop overlooking the scenic Mississippi River.

The name most associated with Memphis, of course, is Elvis Presley, whose palatial (and decidedly kitschy) mansion, Graceland, is a must-see. Allow at least two hours to tour the home to fully take in his custom jets, the car museum and several other exhibits making up the impressive compound.

While Downtown, don't miss Beale Street, the nation's blues capital, which abounds with music venues, lively restaurants and excellent hotels. The vibe is fairly touristy without any gay hangouts, but the city's Mid-South Gay Pride festival happens here each October.

You can tour the Memphis Rock & Soul Museum and the Gibson Guitar Factory, which traces the vibrant Memphis music heritage. Music buffs should also check out Sun Studio (where Elvis launched his career) and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music.

Local Gastropub and Lunch Box Eats serve excellent edibles. The swanky and historic Peabody Hotel houses celebrated restaurants

Chez Philippe and Capriccio Grill.

The Peabody is the classy grande dame of the city, with luxurious rooms, spa and fitness center. In the lobby, ducks famously parade to and from a gurgling fountain each day. A more intimate but still pleasing hotel is the River Inn of Harbor Town, a charming 28-room property on the ironically pretty Mud Island. The gay-friendly Talbot Heirs Guesthouse is smartly furnished, while the centrally located Westin Memphis and affordable Hampton Inn at Beale Street are reliable accommodations.

Memphis extends east toward Midtown, where many area businesses are popular with gay visitors. In Overton Park, you can tour the excellent Memphis Zoo and the acclaimed Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. A short drive south you will find the hip and funky Cooper-Young neighborhood features distinctive restaurants and quirky shops, including Inz & Outz, which carries Pride gifts, underwear and erotica.

Cooper-Young is home to Central BBQ, which turns out fiendishly delicious ribs and pulled pork. Other neighborhood hot spots with a strong gay following include Tsunami for Asian fusion cooking; Alchemy, with its tasty tapas and well-crafted cocktails; and Sweet Grass, known for inventive regional American cuisine. For a java and plenty of room to snuggle in with a book, Otherlands is a great indie coffeehouse.

South of Downtown, the 901 Complex is one of the largest gay clubs catering primarily to African-American patrons — the club hosts Memphis Black Pride in June. The elegant Mollie Fontaine is a trendy, mixed gay-straight lounge in the city's Victorian Village Historic District and the massive Club Spectrum is the place to dance. Most of the city's gay bars are in Midtown, clustered mostly around the 1300 to 1500 blocks of Madison and Poplar avenues. These include the Pumping Station, lesbian-popular Dru's Place and Crossroads Bar.

You might not bump into Marc Cohn, but walking in Memphis will definitely keep you joyously busy. ■

STATE OF GRACE | Elvis' home Graceland is the must-see spot in Memphis, but don't miss the rich culture of Downtown as well as its budding gayborhood in Midtown.

Scent of genius

Mike Hadreas aka Perfume Genius hits the road with the gayest album ever

RICH LOPEZ | Staff Writer
lopez@dallasvoice.com

Mike Hadreas could easily — and incorrectly — be dismissed as a simple depressive. His second album, under the name Perfume Genius, *Put Your Back N2 It*, runs like a morphine drip of dark tones: Drug overdose, suicide and prostitution fill each track with seeming gloom. But listen closer and it could very well be one of the most important albums ever for queer listeners. Hadreas created a sharp album that should be the gay equivalent of *Thriller*.

"Oh my, that's good to hear for sure," Hadreas laughs. "On my first album, *Learning*, I went through a lot of memories and for this, I just wanted to *not* do that, but have actual experiences to share."

Hadreas is as soft-spoken as his music. He admits to feeling awkward during interviews, and it shows as he struggles with the "right" answer. But also like his music, when he finds the words, he gets his point across. He works fragility to his advantage.

"Interviews are way worse for me to read because people say I contradict myself," he says. "And I can't argue that. I'm lucky that my voice cracks, especially when I'm singing. I'm sure some people think I'm so damaged."

Put Your Back N2 It addresses many issues common to gay men, from the new stage of same-sex love and intimacy (the title track) to "All Waters," which compares public displays of affection between straight and gay couples. The poignancy of "17" is bleak in its delivery of a suicide letter, but defies the "It Gets Better" message. As a teen, Hadreas doesn't recall the desire for positive affirmations.

"I've gotten letters and messages from young gay kids and people in and out of the closet," he says. "I thought more this time about who I was writing for and what I wish I heard when I was younger. At that age, I didn't respond to those hopeful messages, and I don't know if [any] kids really do."

That doesn't mean he wants to be bleak. Hadreas understands his sound comes off on a down tone, but his art is taking dark elements and infusing hope. With that writing sensibility, he discovered that there could be a healing facet whether intended or not.

Hadreas takes knocks for his brevity. None of his songs reach past 3:30; one's as short as a minute 49. His talent is saying so much in such a little time.

"It makes me think more about my song structure," he says. "I would get paranoid thinking if I elongated a song, it would lose my origi-



AROMA THERAPY | The delicate sounds of Perfume Genius play out in short tunes, but with a lot of meaningful punch, when his tour comes to Denton on Monday.

nal meaning. Honestly, I just think about mood and intent and not the length. I'm not too science-y about it. But sometimes I listen till I'm sick of some of the filler, so I try to pack the most into the least amount."

His video for "Hood" was minimalist, featuring just him and porn star Arpad Miklos, emotionally disconnected and signified by physical differences. Miklos won the role thanks to his intense acting. (No lie.)

"Originally I wanted a body-builder, someone very huge but they couldn't find any that would hold me for two minutes," he says. "We started looking at alternative casting and came upon Arpad. He was really good! I kept slipping off of him because he was greased up, but each time, he was focused and intense. He was great and I was so pumped about the video. I wanted people to be uncomfortable by the sight, because two little thin homos wouldn't surprise anyone."

Hadreas' Denton set will be his first-ever performance in Texas. With mostly coastal and European shows under his belt, a set in the middle of the nation is both thrilling and unexpected.

"I get very anxious before a show and I have a bunch of throat sprays and teas and I'll pace, but it's all stage fright," he admits. "But despite that I like it. I could be pretty aimless in my daily life, so I find I like knowing what exactly I'll be doing for the day." ■

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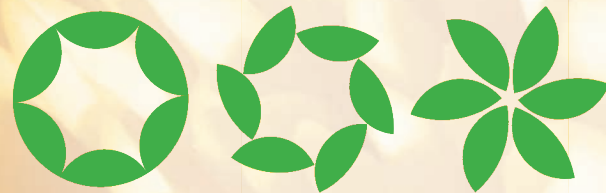
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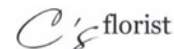


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Tuesday 03.27

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Coming in May: The Patio at



Monday: Netchix
Drag on Demand

Tuesday: Potluck
Casserole show

Wednesday: Team
Trivia 8p - win gas

Thursday: Edna's
Angels show 11p

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calendar

FRIDAY 03.23

COMMUNITY

Dallas Blooms. Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Road. Through April 8. \$15. DallasArboretum.org.

DFW Auto Show boasts more than half a million square feet of new cars, trucks and SUVs under one roof. Dallas Convention Center, 650 S Griffin St. Through Sunday. \$12. DallasAutoShow.com.

Congregation Beth El Binah Shabbat service. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7:30 p.m. BethElBinah.org.

SATURDAY 03.24

COMMUNITY

DFW Federal Club Spring Brunch with Tammy Baldwin. The congresswoman appears to speak at this year's event. Tower Club, 1601 Elm St. 10 a.m. DFWFederalClub.org.

Easter Egg Hunt hosted by Tarrant County Gay Pride Week. Trinity Park Arts Pavillion, 2300 W. Seventh St., Fort Worth. Noon. TCGPWA.org.

DFW Prime Timers Prime Beefer pot luck at member's residence. 7 p.m. 972-504-8866.

SUNDAY 03.25

COMMUNITY

Unemployment Support Group meets weekly. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 2:30 p.m. CareerAssistanceMinistry@gmail.com.

Whosoever Dallas Sunday services. 807 Fletcher St. 10:45 a.m. WhosoeverDallas.org.

MONDAY 03.26

COMMUNITY

United Black Ellument's Hot Topics. A weekly discussion group for black gay and bi men, 18-29. U-BE in Deep Ellum, 3116 Commerce St., Ste. C. 7 p.m. UBEDallas.org.

Log Cabin Republicans. Mattito's, 3011 Routh St. 6:30 p.m. 214-346-2115.

TUESDAY 03.27

COMMUNITY

JEWEL Writing Discussion & Exchange meets on



MS. SPEAKER
Congresswoman
Tammy Baldwin speaks
at DFW Federal Club's
Spring Brunch.

the fourth Tuesday. ilume, 4123 Cedar Springs Road. 6:30 p.m. Visit website for the discussion topic and assignment for the month. RCDallas.org.

DFW Prime Timers Prime Diner at Big Al's Smokehouse, 3125 Inwood Road. 7 p.m. Call 972-504-8866 to attend.

WEDNESDAY 03.28

COMMUNITY

Firedancers Dallas Tribe club night the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Hidden Door, 5025 Bowser St. 7-10 p.m. Free. Facebook.com/TheHiddenDoor.

FUSE Activity Nights. Resource Center Dallas, 2701 Reagan St. 7 p.m. DFWFuse.com.

BROADCAST

Lambda Weekly. LGBT radio for North Texas. This week's guest is Resource Center Dallas' Bret Camp. 89.3 KNON-FM at 7 a.m. LambdaWeekly.com.

THURSDAY 03.29

COMMUNITY

Energizing LGBT Employee Resource Groups. Reps from some of DFW's largest employers like American Airlines, Citi and Texas Instruments discuss creating effective organizations for LGBT employees. All are welcome to attend. Appetizers served. Sue Ellen's, 3014 Throckmorton St. 6:30 p.m. For more information, call 214-793-6217.

F.A.C.E., support group for those impacted by HIV/AIDS in any capacity. Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Road. 7 p.m. CathedralOfHope.com.

this week's solution

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CELEBRITY BIRTHDAY

By Jack Fertig



Dave Koz turns 49 on Tuesday. The out saxophonist received a nomination for this year's Grammy's. His 2011 album *Hello Tomorrow* was nominated for Best Pop Instrumental Album. At the end of March, he'll team up with singer Patti Austin to perform at the the 13th Cape Town International Jazz Festival joining the likes of Jill Scott and James Ingram in South Africa.

ARIES Mar 20-Apr 19

You are now as prone to accidents as ever. Second-guessing yourself won't help. Just slow down. As a bonus you notice details that improve your work, health and reputation as a genius.

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20

Seeing your mother in the mirror is spooky, but there are lessons there. With maturity comes appreciation for what she intended. A part of her will always be with you. Find the good in that.

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20

A reality check makes you recalculate goals. Trust your instincts. Friends offering challenges may not have your best interest at heart. They don't know that, but keep one step ahead of them.

CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22

If you seek the spotlight, you'll regret it. Someone's likely to shove you under it anyway, and you may not like that either. Share credit, shoulder blame and be careful of who you trust.

LEO Jul 23-Aug 22

Trying too hard to promote yourself antagonizes colleagues. Modesty doesn't mean to deny yourself, but try to keep your ego out of it and present your work in a simple, straightforward way.

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Erotic exploration teaches you what you don't like more than what you do. Experimenting is fine if you can joke about it after. Feeling you have to prove something is the sure way to trouble.

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Be very careful of your health. Cold and wet are not your friends. Temptations and invitations to parade around in something skimpy may be irresistible, but if you want to get hot, stay warm.

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Innovative efforts fail, but you can learn something. Don't damage material resources, working relationships or your health. Your dark humor emerges for the wrong audience. Be careful.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 20

Unless you and your mate really are partners in work as well as at home, helping each other with work creates trouble. Polish your résumé over the weekend and get it out next week.

CAPRICORN Dec 21-Jan 19

Setbacks at work get under your skin, triggering arguments with the boss. Take it out on some rough fun. Anything from a game of rugby to a good intellectual stretch will shake off the tension.

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Inspirations have you feeling invincible, but the gift of gab is passing. Wherever being crude and nasty, or brutally to the point can serve you, have at it. Otherwise modest reticence is best.

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 19

The only thing holding you and your mate together is the expense of splitting up. Problems seem unsolvable now. List the positives and negatives; remember the good stuff when you talk.

THIS WEEK

Mars retrograde in Virgo quincunx to Uranus in Aries triggers arguments galore and accidents especially at work. Think and consult before acting. Look before you leap.

Jack Fertig can be reached at 415-864-8302 or Starjack.com

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bitter girl

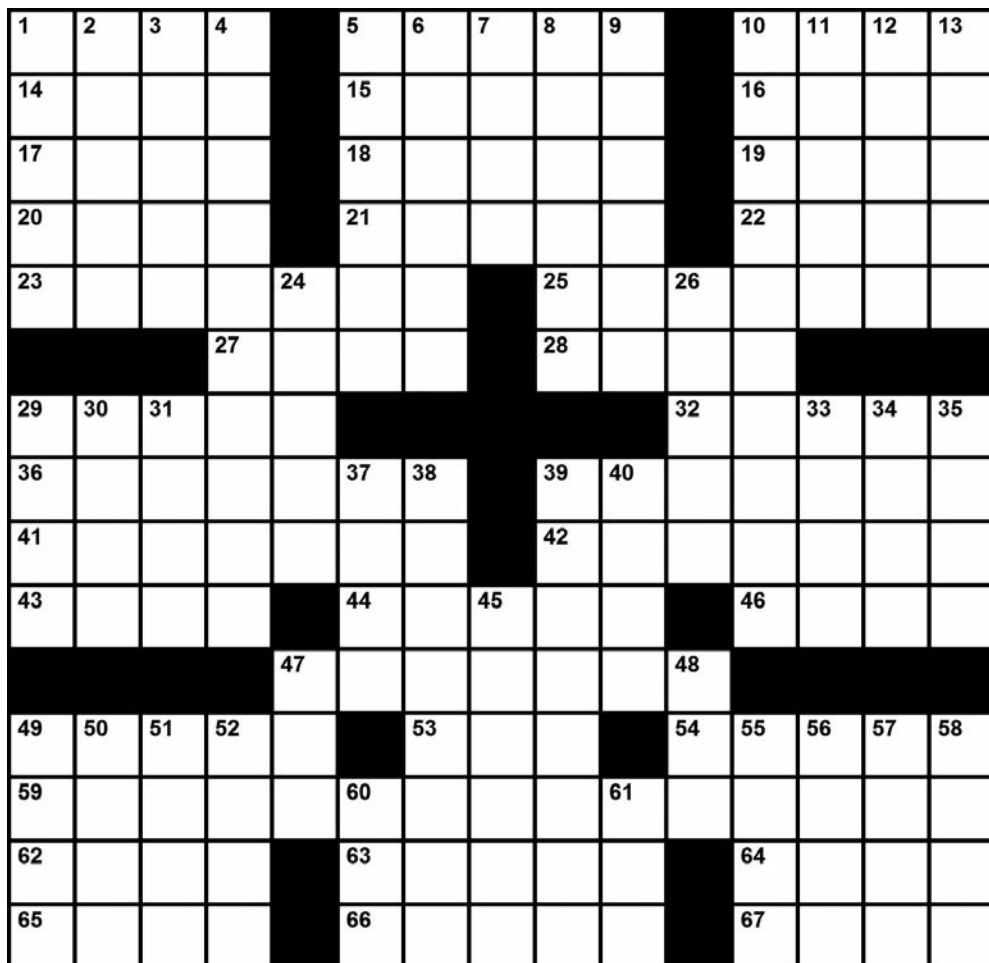
the other woman



email: joan@joanhilty.net

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Not Quite Urbane

Solution on page 25

Across

- 1 Lesbos, e.g.
- 5 Places for tools
- 10 Todd Oldham designs
- 14 Broadway light
- 15 Lily Tomlin, for one
- 16 Sitcom radio station
- 17 Good at evasion
- 18 Shelley Duvall role in "Popeye"
- 19 "Now ___ me down to sleep ..."
- 20 LGBT group at 40-Across
- 23 "His Master's Voice" label
- 24 Adventure without a Trojan?
- 25 Show-off on the stage
- 27 Women who don't sleep with men wear them
- 29 Frida Kahlo's woman
- 31 Give a piece of one's mind
- 32 Kiss of life
- 35 Edna and others
- 36 Tickle pink
- 37 Gay guy, in slang
- 39 Nannies' cries
- 40 Where Urban Meyers coaches football
- 43 Sonny, to Chaz
- 46 Broadway Annie, and others

Down

- 47 Scandalous suffix
- 50 Gertrude Stein, e.g.
- 52 Get closer to
- 54 Punishment used by Meyers which he changed because of LGBT protest
- 58 Dangerous prayers
- 59 Poseidon's place
- 60 Where a cobbler puts the tongue
- 61 Result of getting rear-ended
- 62 1814 treaty site
- 63 San Francisco's Nob ___
- 64 Slight advantage
- 65 Loafer bottoms
- 66 JFK predictions
- 1 Disney's "Monsters, ___"
- 2 Edward Albee Pulitzer Prize work
- 3 Republican erection?
- 4 "Lord of the Rings" singer
- 5 Dresses down
- 6 Like old socks, maybe
- 7 What a guy does nocturnally
- 8 Temperamental types
- 9 Public outbursts
- 10 Tiny stick
- 11 Word sung with a long O?
- 12 Uncertain subject
- 13 Undercover agent
- 21 Dull routine
- 22 Imitated Eminem
- 23 Greek P's
- 26 Worship service, for Malcolm Boyd
- 28 Prefix with China
- 30 Dick, for one
- 32 Jockey's prod
- 33 Door instruction
- 34 First name among lesbian writers
- 37 Dalmatians, often
- 38 Guys at South Beach?
- 41 One to blow on
- 42 Old head
- 43 Trick
- 44 Blown away
- 45 Greg Louganis specialty
- 47 Kind of wonder
- 48 Chicago university
- 49 Photog Adams and namesakes
- 51 Beau chaser
- 53 Question about a cross-dresser, perhaps
- 55 Canyon comeback
- 56 Stagger from a Cukor film?
- 57 Social activist Addams



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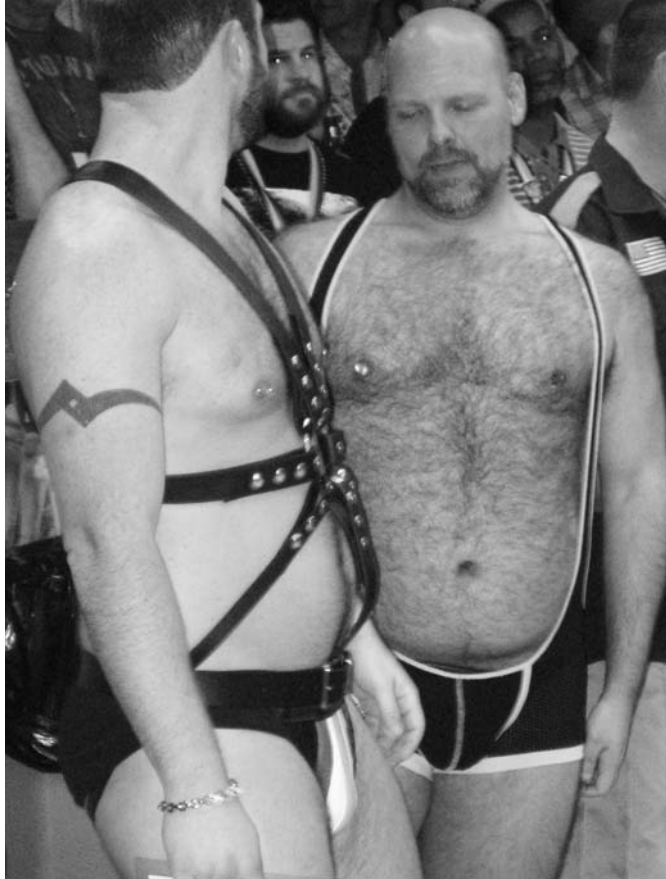


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Gordon and Brian, Mr. TBRU Bear 2012, at Round-Up Saloon.



Robert and Kris at BJ's NXS!

Let's see what we can do to cool down that Spring fever The **Round-Up Saloon** presents the **Gold Rush Casino Night** on Wednesday with proceeds benefiting the **Round-Up Employees Benevolent Association** or better known as **R.E.B.A.** ... Lesbian artist **Immigrant Punk** will host her CD release party for **Declaring Raw** Sunday at **Pizza Lounge** in Exposition Park. Liquor, pizza and music? Yes, please ... Hit up **Sue Ellen's** on Friday night for **Paco Estrada's** performance in the upstairs **Vixen Lounge**. **The Jackie Hall Experience** will likely throw down on Saturday. And sing out loud every Thursday with **Little Chalupa's Karaoke**. ... **Club Reflection** teams with the **Imperial Court de Fort Worth/Arlington** and the **Cowtown Leathermen** for **Turnabout 2012** on Sunday. ... Turn up the heat with the **Nouvelle Burlesque Revue** Friday night at **The Kessler** in Oak Cliff. The night features **Evie Lovelle**, **Levi des Peu-Chapeaux** and music by **Kristi Kruger**. Expect a steamy night. ... Head to the **Rainbow Lounge** on hump day for **Womp and Wobble Wednesdays** with DJ **Carl Katana** spinning the beats. ... **Leah Marr** performs Friday night at **Grotto Live** way up in McKinney. Trust, the nose-bleed will be worth it. ... Head to the **Dallas Eagle** on Sunday for the **Ms. Texas Send-Off Party** to support **Synn** before she heads on to dominate at the **International Ms. Leather 2012**. Get it? Dominate? Heh. ... If you got the talent, **Cherries** has the time. Every Sunday **Kandy Cayne** and **Kourtney Wells** hosts the **Amateur Talent Contest**. You just gotta bring it. ■

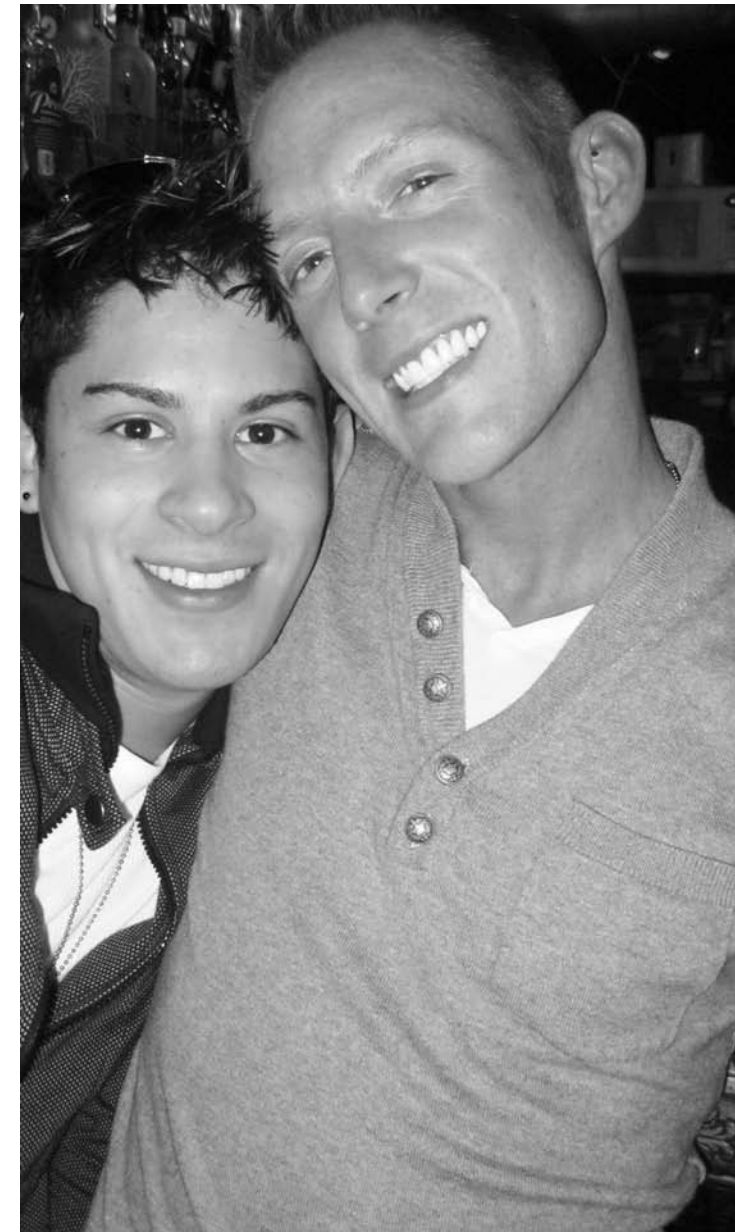
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREGORY HAYES. FOR MORE PHOTOS, VISIT DALLASVOICE.COM.



Girls' night out at Sue Ellen's.



Jesse and Rich at TMC: The Mining Company.



Josh and Chris at the Grapevine Bar.



Jessie and Sam at Rainbow Lounge.



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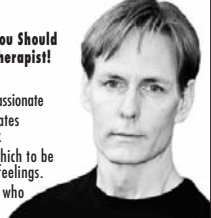
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