

This piece by Aaron Scheerhoorn and Nancy Roberts is the last the two friends worked on together before Scheerhoorn's murder at Club Blur in December. A group of friend's, neighbors, community leaders, and concerned citizens have banded together to create an organization that embodies what is represented here.

An Angel Among Us by Deborah Moncrief Bell

What started out as a group of lovers, friends, and acquaintances brought together in grief over the death of Aaron Scheerhoorn, has morphed into something much more.

In less than a month "Friends of Aaron" is deciding on an official name, has developed goals and a mission and formed a bond that leads itself to mutual support and, ideas, and action. These folks want to bring to light the issues of Aaron being denied help that he sought when he went to Club Blur after being stabbed. They want to say "No Apathy" when fellow beings are in peril. They want to feel safe in the neighborhood, whether they live there, work there, or go there to play. They are even thinking of having citizen patrols much like the old Q-Patrol, maybe with the name "Aaron's Angels".

Douglas Anderson, a dear friend of Scheerhoorn, summarized it in an initial mission statement, "To bring

public awareness to the situation occurring on the streets of Montrose; restore Montrose to the community it once was; A community where you felt safe, a community that you were proud to say you were from, a community were if a person is in distress, or in need of help, of any kind, they are embraced with loving caring open arms, not turned away; to return Montrose to the community of Love, Tolerance, Acceptance, and Open-mindedness that it once was."

Inspired by Aaron's own love of the community and their love for him, what started as a somewhat rag-tag group has met with GLBT community leaders, defined its own leadership, and started steps to form as a 501(c)(30 of (c)(4) organization.

~ *Angels* continued on Page 3



Gay Latino Hero credited with saving Giffords

from Washington Blade

The man credited with saving the life of U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords during Saturday's shooting rampage in Tucson, Ariz., is openly gay, the Dallas Voice, a gay Texas paper, reported Sunday.

"She's been a great ally to the LGBT community," Daniel Hernandez Jr., a 20-year-old college intern who works in Giffords' office, told the Voice.

Hernandez, a member of the City of Tucson Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues, applied pressure to Giffords' entry wound to stop her bleeding after checking the life signs of other victims of the shooting in Tucson, according to media reports.

Hernandez had only been on job five days, but when the intern heard someone yell "gun!" on Saturday in the midst of a deadly shooting spree, he sprang into action and may have helped save his boss's life.

According to witnesses, Giffords was shot point-blank in the head by Jared Loughner, who is in police custody and has been charged with five federal counts, including the attempted assassination of a member of Congress. In total, 20 people were injured and six killed in the spree, but authorities are crediting Hernandez, 20, for possibly saving the congresswoman's life.

Hernandez, who trained as a certified nursing assistant and knows basic life-saving techniques, told CNN he rushed to Giffords' side and used his bare hands to apply pressure to the wounds on her head to stop the bleeding. He also lifted her head to make it easier for the wounded politician to breathe after he realized she had been a victim in the incident.



Photo Courtesy of Daniel Hernandez, pictured here with Congressmember Gabrielle Giffords. Hernandez's first aid after the mass shooting in Arizona on January 8 is credited with helping to save her life.

"She was alert and conscious, but she wasn't able to speak, so the way she was communicating was by grabbing my hand and squeezing," Hernandez told CNN.

As the shots rang out, Hernandez said he was helping to manage the flow of people waiting to speak to the congresswoman at one of her "Congress on Your Corner" events, where she would talk to constituents one-on-one. He was 30 feet away when he heard the first shots and, assuming that Giffords would be a target if there was a gunman, he said he ran toward her in order to help out in case anyone was injured.

When he arrived at her location, he saw several people on the ground and tried to help two or three who still had pulses and were breathing before he noticed that Giffords had been hit and went to her side. Seeing that she was shot in the head, he told CNN, "She then became my first and only priority."

Thanks to the nursing program he completed in high school and training in phlebotomy (blood drawing), Hernandez said he was able to use his basic first-aid skills on Giffords, making sure she was breathing properly and then applying pressure to her wounds.

~ *Hero* continued on Page 6

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HIV Vaccine Trial at BCM; Needs Participants

by Margaret Howell White

Baylor College of Medicine is recruiting volunteers for a nationwide vaccine trial testing the safety and efficacy of a combination of two potential HIV vaccines and to see if they will stimulate an immune response to HIV.

"The HIV epidemic is still out of control. While HIV medications have improved the survival of people infected with HIV, developing methods to prevent or modify disease are badly needed to change the outlook of this epidemic," said Dr. Hana El Sahly, assistant professor of molecular virology and microbiology at BCM and principal investigator of the study.

The study is being conducted by the HIV Vaccine Trials Network and Baylor is one of 15 sites across the country participating in the trials. Neither of the vaccines can cause HIV infection.

Researchers are seeking HIV-uninfected (negative) men between 18 and 50 years of age who have sex with men or transgender women who have sex with men. Volunteers will be compensated for their time. For more information, visit www.standup4love.org or call 713.798.4912.

~ *Angels* continued from front page

There is an action component that includes passing out flyers in the Montrose area where the attack on Scheerhoorn took place. A larger demonstration is a possibility.

"Many people are not aware of what happened that night," says Nancy Roberts, another close friend. "Most are shocked to learn that Aaron was denied help," she states.

Roberts explained, "This is our community of Montrose. We want to keep it safe and to know that all businesses have guidelines in place to act accordingly when faced with the choice of assisting someone in need. This could have been any of us. We will act now for change and act now for justice."

Considered for the future is an effort that would create a "Failure to Assist" statute in Texas. A lot of work will be needed to get this law proposed and passed.

One can be struck at how quickly people did take action in the recent mass shooting in Arizona. Individuals took it upon themselves to act. A group tackled the gunman, including a 61 year old woman. Someone was on hand that quickly administered first aid that may have been key to saving the life of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. While one person did administer CPR on Aaron, he had been wounded too severely by the time she was able to get to him.

But the tragedy in Arizona, is symptomatic of a larger problem in our society. One that is totally out of line with core, decent human values. One where violence is far too common. Where the rhetoric of politics has influenced a mind-set that is not one of compassion or respect for our fellow travellers on this big blue marble.

Aaron Scheerhoorn had the ability to touch others in a profound way during his brief life. It is that spirit and inspiration that guides the group. He was a man who had his issues, who did not always live his life in a way that was without flaws or what some would call sin. So using the term 'angel' in reference to him has more to do with the ideal he inspired.

Anderson says, "... what Aaron was all about, 'God wants us all to be of maximum service to our fellow man. This is God's will for myself and all of you'. He continues, "Aaron believed this with all his heart. That is why he was always there, in anyone's time of need."

"He always reminded me of this, 'we may never know God's will for us, but honesty; open-mindedness; doing the next right thing and being of maximum service to our fellow man, is probably not far off the mark'," Anderson shares.

He urges others by saying, "Lets follow Aaron's lead by helping others even if it is to lend an open ear to someone in distress."

Another friend, Sara Magnero says Aaron "...sparked the flame that is now this growing necessity to bring about change in our community.

Lydell Grant, the man accused of Scheerhoorn's murder will stand for arraignment on Tuesday, January 18th. at 9am in the 351st Criminal Court of Judge Mark Ellis. 1201 Franklin, 14th Floor. Present will be as many of Aaron's friends who possibly can be there along with other supporters.

To get involved with this project contact Douglas Anderson at 713.382.1849 or dougahouston@yahoo.com or Nancy Roberts at 832.338.6291 or via email at Artemisia31@yahoo.com

BEELINES
 by Deborah Moncrief Bell

I am an accidental journalist, learning the craft via on the job training while volunteering within organizations. I took on roles that required that I work with the media. Eventually, I not only was the person sending out press releases, working on the newsletter, and sometimes being the one interviewed, I myself became a member of the press. Volunteering for KPFT radio's then named *Wilde n' Stein* radio program (now called *Queer Voices*) with Jack Valinski. Again learning on the job how to produce a program, including scheduling guests, how to do interviews, along with the timing and techniques involved.

This training led to work as a freelance journalist, becoming an editor of a community newspaper (The Houston Voice) and to my current position with the GEM. I have given dozens of "How to work with the media" workshops over the years.

So here is some free advice for those of you that may serve in a public relations capacity, at least in regards to these pages. Call it Media 101.

Send a press release via Email: Include the who, what, when, where, why, and how much as applies. Make sure to give contact info including phone as well as Email and a Website (if you have one). Plain text is the best format, rather than as a word document.

Better yet, write it as an article and I'll use your name as the byline. Sprinkle in a few quotes and attach a picture if applicable. Your monthly meeting is not a news item, but a special speaker or the election of officers, that's news

Don't, and I repeat, **do not** depend on an email blast, a Facebook posting or your website to supply the information to the media. That means we have to do extra work to find and to utilize it. A beautiful graphic online "newsletter" is not easy to capture so it can be shared in a print format. So we may not bother to do so. Keep it to one page as we may have to edit for length.

Invite us to your events as a guest. We are more likely to cover something where we have personal contact. There is no budget to pay for tickets or meals. We are willing to give you pre-event coverage, thus promoting what you are doing and to report on it afterwards also.

We serve as an advocate for the community. We strive for quality content you may notice. I believe we are an essential part of the community as well. We have to have advertising dollars, because paper, ink, etc. costs money, so we must have that support to survive. We are dedicated to serving the Montrose community wherever it is, so please support the paper that supports you.

~ *That's the buzz from me for now!*



This picture appeared in the last issue of the Montrose GEM with the incorrect quote. It reads, "Do not fear evil men, fear the indifference of good men".,

The banner was posted at a vigil in memory of Aaron Scheerhoorn.

We invite you to become our Friend on Facebook

Follow the happenings of the Houston GLBT Community Online!



Follow us on Twitter

COMMUNITY NEWS & RESOURCES

Community Online

www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org/

www.montrosecounselingcenter.org

www.legacycommunityhealth.org

Houston GLBT Political Caucus
www.thecaucus.org

Fort Bend LGBT Political Caucus:
FBLGBT_Political_caucus@yahoo.com

Out In Houston
www.outinhouston.com

www.PFLAGHouston.org
HelpLine Telephone
713-46PFLAG 713-467-3524
HelpLine@pflaghouston.org

AssistHers: www.assisthers.org

The Lesbian Health Initiative (LHI)
www.lhihouston.org/

Houston Political Organizing Network
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LoneStarActivists/> (LSA)

FEMINIST ONLINE NETWORK
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FEM-NET>

Northwest Corner
www.nwcorner.org

www.socialnotesHouston.com

AIDS Foundation Houston
www.AFHouston.org

Imperial Court of Houston
www.spacecityempire.org

Empire of the Royal Sovereign Imperial Court of the Single Star www.ersicss.org

TG Center: www.tgctr.org

UH LGBT Resource Center
www.uh.edu/lgbtrc

www.Do713.com
(Community Calendar)

My Gay Houston
www.visithoustontexas.com/mygay-houston/

Houston:Area Rainbow Collective History
<http://houstonarch.pbworks.com/>

www.queermusicheritage.com

Gulf Coast Archive & Museum of GLBT History, Inc. GCAM
www.gcam.org

social club for HIV+ men
www.pozlife.net/Houston

www.equalitytexas.org

If you know of another group that should be added, please let us know at:
montrosegem@yahoo.com

Queer Music Heritage for January 2011...11th Anniversary Show

<http://www.queermusicheritage.com/jan2011.html>

This month I'm bringing you "Cris Williamson: The Early Years." Cris is of course iconic for her 1975 release "The Changer and the Changed," which helped Olivia Records really get the Women's Music Movement off the ground. But many of her fans may know that there is a music history to be told that pre-dates Olivia Records, by about ten years. This goes back to her high school years in Wyoming, where she released three albums on the Avanti label. As only around 500 copies of each were pressed these albums are very rare, so this is the music of Cris Williamson you may not be able to hear anywhere else.

Part 1 – 58:10

Cris Williamson – Yesterday (1966)
Cris Williamson – All My Trials (1964)
Cris Williamson – 500 Miles (1964)
Cris Williamson – The House of the Rising Sun (1964)
Cris Williamson – What Have They Done to the Rain? (1964)
Cris Williamson – Hangman (1964)
Cris Williamson – White Dove (1964)
Cris Williamson – West Wind (1964)
Cris Williamson – It Ain't Me Babe (1965)
Cris Williamson – I'm Not Sayin' (1965)
Cris Williamson – Today (1965)
Cris Williamson – More (1965)
Cris Williamson – Daddy You've Been On My Mind (1966)
Cris Williamson – Mr Tambourine Man (1966)
Cris Williamson – Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out (1966)
Cris Williamson - The Very Last Day (1966)
Cris Williamson – The Last Thing On My Mind (1966)
Cris Williamson – Changes (1966)
Cris Williamson – Hurry Sundown (1966)

You can stream or download the show anytime, at
<http://www.queermusicheritage.com/outjan11.html>

Thanks for listening,
JD Doyle

<http://www.OutRadio.com/>
<http://www.QueerMusicHeritage.com/>
All segments of both shows are archived.

JD Doyle maintains the Queer Music Heritage site and is a contributor to *Queer Voices* and to *This Way Out*.



Pride Houston Committee chooses "Live. Love. Be." as theme. Logo to be unveiled Jan. 20th

Location 2016 Mainstage (corner of Main & Gray in Midtown) 2016 Main St, Houston, TX

The theme for the 2011 Houston LGBT Pride Celebration is "Live. Love. Be." The logo ... well, we'll soon announce it.

On Thursday, January 20, Mainstage will host the Logo Unveiling Party. Be the first to see the logo that will represent Houston's LGBT community for 2011 in its push for equality and celebration of self identity.

In addition, we will release the list of finalist for Grand Marshals. These finalists are chosen by former Grand Marshals from submissions by the community.

The evening will include performances by former Pride Idol contestants and music from DJ Holden Allen! At the event Pride will also give away tickets to the new Cirque du Soleil show OVO.

Free parking is available across the street and there is always valet. Pride hopes to see you and all your friends for the exciting reveal!

Email: info@pridehouston.org

www.pridehouston.org

PO Box 66071

Houston TX 77266-6071

Office Location: 401 Branard Street, Suite 100 Houston, TX, 77006 (inside MCC)

Center News

NEW PROGRAM! Center Seniors Game Time debuts this month

The success of the monthly Center Seniors & Friends Potluck has inspired the Center to offer additional social opportunities for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender seniors and their friends. The first of these programs, Center Seniors Game Time, debuts this month on Tuesday, January 25, at 5:30 p.m. At this early-evening gathering, participants can play board or card games or just socialize. Light snacks will be provided. The Center is seeking donations of new board games (such as Monopoly and Scrabble) and playing card and domino sets for Game Time. Individuals interested in contributing should contact the Center.

NEW PROGRAM! Lesbian Discussion Hour debuts this month Following a preview in November, the Lesbian Discussion Hour debuts as a monthly program at the Center on Friday, January 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m. The mission of this new program is to create a safe and positive environment in which lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women can meet and discuss issues of relationships, health, aging, family roles, and more. The group will work on creating a positive sisterhood that is open to all women from every walk of life. Lesbian Discussion Hour will be held on the fourth Friday of the month.

~ Center News continued on Page 7

ON THE RADIO

MONDAYS, 9 - 11pm
"QUEER VOICES"

SUNDAY MORNINGS

12 - 4am
"AFTER HOURS"

ON KPFT 90.1FM
Pacifica - community radio
HOUSTON, TX
www.kpft.org

Tune in!



www.gayswitchboardhouston.org
Community Resource Directory



Nose in a Book

Review by Jone Devlin

The Christmas Throwaway

by RJ Scott

When Zach Weston was 14 years old, his strict, military father found out that he was gay. Zach was promptly pulled out of school (to be away from gay influences), isolated from his friends, and regularly beaten during a “home school” regimen specifically designed to “de-gay” him.

During vacations and summers, Zach is sent to ex-gay camps, where he is forced to participate in manly man activities in order to further de program him and make him the kind of straight man his father can be proud of.

Things finally come to a head on the Christmas Eve when Zach is 17 years old. His father, tired of dealing with his rebellious (and still gay) son, demands Zach join the army.

Zach stands up to his father for the first time in his life and refuses to become a soldier. The result is yet another severe beating that ends with Zach being thrown out of his home into subzero, snowy weather with nothing but the clothes on his back.

Unsure what to do, and very afraid that he might freeze to death Zach steals a blanket from the local Goodwill and sneaks off to the graveyard of a small town church. Convinced this is the last place anyone would find him, he doses off on a bench and dreams of a happier life.

Suddenly he is shaken awake by a local policeman, Ben Hamilton. The rookie cop is not much older than Zach and at first he takes the teen for a vagrant. As soon as Ben realizes the real story however, he takes Zach not to jail but to his own home.

Once he is with the Hamiltons Zach finds love, acceptance, and caring and soon becomes like one of the family. As time wears on however, Zach’s feelings for Ben begin to change from gratitude to something much deeper.

This book is actually a novella, short and to the point, which makes the fact that RJ Scott was so beautifully able to capture the voices of her characters even more admirable. Zach is an abused, fragile young man and the realities of his life up until the time Ben rescues him are very hard to read. These realities are also hard for Zach to get past, as he struggles to learn to trust and accept people even as he longs to be accepted.

Ben, meanwhile, has to work through his own issues and feelings for Zach. As the young man grows up and begins to be attracted to his knight in shining armor, Ben, who also loves Zach, must tread very carefully so as not to add to the overwhelming list of hurts and disappointments that Zach has experienced in his life thus far.

Then there is the issue of Zach’s younger sister. She and Zach were always close, and he worries constantly about what she is enduring in his father’s house. Can Zach persuade Ben and the Hamiltons to help him rescue his sister or is that too much to ask from a family that has already done so much for him?

Tightly drawn, well written, and heart wrenching, *The Christmas Throwaway* is a book that readers will not be able to put down. While not everything in the story is realistic (i.e. Ben bringing a perfect stranger home with him and everyone being pretty much OK with it), it is a romance novel after all. Besides, the depth of the characters and gritty, no holds barred storytelling more than make up for a little suspension of reality.

A wonderful, warm, and gripping holiday story, *The Christmas Throwaway* by RJ Scott is published by Silver Publishing and is available wherever books are sold.

Reviewer’s Grade 5 out of 5 stars.

The Mayor of Montrose*

by Henry McClurg



Happy Birthday to Us

With this issue of the Montrose GEM, we turn six years old. And, as usual, every year I write about the birthday and how the magazine/newspaper came to be.

Here’s how it happened, I was bored and also kind of broke. I had been thinking about starting another publication. I had previously published many newspapers and magazines, most of them in Houston.

Craig Rutherford and I were sitting on barstools at Brick’s (which is today the George bar) and I told him I wanted to begin a small entertainment magazine. The long-running This Week in Texas had gone under and I sensed a void. (“TWT” later came back to life and then went under again. And again. And, I think then again.) It used TWiT in it’s later incarnation.

Anyway, I told Craig that my idea for a name was Metropolitan Gay Magazine. That’s M.G.M. Kind of original, don’t you think?

Well, Craig thought that wasn’t sexy enough and we started scribbling names on napkins. I think I suggested simply Gay Magazine, or G.M. He said how about Gay Entertainment Magazine, and when he wrote that down, the initials that is, it was a revelation. Wow. That spelled GEM.

He then scratched out a rough diamond on a napkin. And that actual sketch became our symbol for most of the past six years. I later colored it. But now we have a more refined gemstone.

So how did we evolve into a newspaper? Simple. The magazine format had two problems. We had limited space to put all the stuff I wanted and it was expensive to produce.

So we experimented by making it what we in the industry call a pony tab. We got to add color. Then, to speed things up and knock off a day of printing time by eliminating the need to send it to a bindery for stapling, we switched to the current format which is call tabloid.

The Houston Chronicle’s format size is called a broadsheet.

Craig, the man who named us, is today manager of the Brazos River Bottom (BRB). I, today, have various titles, a few of which we cannot print.

The Montrose GEM still covers a lot of “Gay Entertainment” but is now a bona fide community newspaper.

Speaking of Birthdays

OK, I just had my birthday in December but it turns out that there are several associates a the GEM with January birthdays. They include publisher, the editor, and the theater reviewer. Our sister media outlet, KPFT radio has the January birthdays of Jack Valinski and Jimmy Carper. Kind of makes you wonder doesn’t it?

Quickies

Things are a changing in the community, yet much stays the same..

The GLBT Center has moved to the Historic Dow School, 1900 Kane, in the Old Sixth Ward Historic District. The First Saturday Queer Bingo has relocated there. The next game will be February 5th.

... The F Bar is opening soon in Montrose for your “boutique clubbing.” The F Bar? Suppose to modeled after a fancy bar in Singapore I hear. And they’re taking applications at fbarhouston.com.

And our friends over a Guava Lamp are creating buzz about Vue, a new dance club. Join them on Facebook to find out more.

The Ripcord now has \$1 vodka cocktails on Sundays 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. They join George, 611. and Crocker. As we know, it’s a bargain to play in Montrose ...

That’s it this time and time again

...to remind you about advertising in the GEM. Call me at 713-529-5700 or email gem2henry@yahoo.com and your “mayor” will put your name in lights. We’ll make you shine and get noticed like the GEM that you are.

* He’s not really the Mayor.

Two gay heroes thwart assassinations -- what a difference 35 years make

Opinion L.A. Times

January 10, 2011

A 20-year-old congressional college intern with only five days on the job saved Gabrielle Giffords' life.

Daniel Hernandez ran toward the sound of gunshots. He pressed Safeway workers' aprons against the congresswoman's head wound to stanch the bleeding, and lifted her and held her upright so she wouldn't drown in her own blood. Photos show him evidently covering her hands with his as he walked alongside her as she was carried off on a stretcher.

Daniel Hernandez is gay, a member of Tucson's city commission on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues. bring this up not only because gay websites are talking it up, but because it reminds me of another gay man who thwarted an assassination attempt -- but in a very different time and cultural climate.

Oliver Sipple was in a crowd outside the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco more than 35 years ago, on Sept. 22, 1975, as President Gerald Ford was leaving the hotel.

Seventeen days earlier, onetime Manson family member Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme had pointed a gun at Ford in Sacramento, but a Secret Service agent had grabbed her.

Outside the San Francisco hotel, a woman named Sara Jane Moore was standing next to Sipple. She raised a .38-caliber pistol and aimed it at the president.

She evidently got off one shot at Ford, and missed, before Sipple, a former Marine, grabbed her arm and took her down.

The news coverage that ensued changed Sipple's life, not for the better, and ultimately had a hand in making Americans confront their stereotypes about being "gay."

Sipple was known to San Francisco's gay community, where he had taken part in some events, but he was not "out" to his family or to the larger world.

News reports, including some in this paper, discussed his sexuality -- perhaps disclosed, some speculated, with a nudge from gay activist and future San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk (who would himself be assassinated in 1978).

Milk also opined that Sipple's sexuality got him only a letter of thanks from Ford, rather than an invitation to the White House. The Times quoted Milk in 1989 about Sipple's actions: "For once, we can show that gays do heroic things, not just all that ca-ca about molesting children and hanging out in bathrooms."

Sipple sued the San Francisco Chronicle's Herb Caen and several newspapers for invasion of privacy, but his case was dismissed. By taking the action he did, the courts found, Sipple, and thus his sexual orientation, had become news.

Sipple's mother never spoke to him again, and Sipple died in 1989.

Daniel Hernandez wasn't even born when Oliver Sipple died. His heroism, too, is incontestable -- and this time, his sexuality is apparently uncontroversial, which may be one of the few hopeful things to come out of these murders and attempted murders. At least we won't add character assassination to the actual ones.

~ Hero

from Page 1

"I don't know if the gunshots were still going on when I was running toward the congresswoman," Hernandez told CNN when asked if he was ever concerned that he might also be injured if the gunman was still actively shooting. "My only concern was trying to help those that needed the help. After I got there and I saw that the congresswoman had been injured, I saw that she was injured pretty badly and I wanted to make her my first and only priority."

Coming in the next issue

A story with a historical look at being Gay and in the Military.

A powerful personal story of the aftermath of being assaulted by bullies.

Plus the latest in community news.

Equality Project Coming to Houston January 22nd

by Daniel Williams

Training Aims to Equip LGBT Community and Allies to Communicate With Elected Officials

The Equality Project is coming to Houston, Saturday, January 22. Created by Equality Texas Foundation, the Equality Project is designed to teach members of the LGBT community and their allies to effectively communicate with elected officials. The January 22 training will be held at the Transgender Community Center at 604 Pacific from 10 am to 3 pm.

The training will focus on influencing members of the State Legislature during the upcoming legislative session, but will also give general information vital to communicating with any elected official. The Texas Legislature will convene on January 11, starting its biennial whirlwind of lawmaking. Several bills important to the LGBT community have already been filed, including legislation to end insurance discrimination and several anti-bullying measures.

"Talking to elected officials is easier than most people think" according to Daniel Williams a former legislative aide who will lead the training. "Most officials genuinely want to hear from their constituents, even the ones they disagree with. What's shocking is how many State Representatives and Senators have said that they 'don't have any gay people in their district'. We can't blame lawmakers for their ignorance if we, as constituents, aren't willing to speak to them."

Participants will learn about bills that have been filed and will review the process by which a bill becomes a law (the training is non-partisan and will not advocate for any particular legislation). Role-playing plays a major role in the training as participants practice speaking directly to lawmakers and staffers. Lunch will be provided.

The training is free but pre-registration is required to reserve space and so information can be gathered about each registrant's elected officials. To register, visit: <http://bit.ly/g0px8j>

Equality Project Training is presented by Equality Texas Foundation, with support from The Transgender Foundation of America, Houston Stonewall Young Democrats and the Houston GLBT Community Center.

The Equality Texas Foundation educates and engages the public about policies and their effect on Texans of all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.

James Franco – "maybe I'm gay"

James Franco is certainly one actor who doesn't care at all about keeping people guessing. He's something of a creative overachiever having starred in many films (including *Spi-derman*, *Milk*, *Pineapple Express* and now 127 hours), getting a PHD in English from Yale, being a painter, a writer, an avid-reader and according to Time magazine 'the coolest person of 2010'.

Despite all this activity lots of people are more interested in what happens in James' bedroom – his sexuality has been debated online simply because he's played the role of a gay man three times now – something he gets a laugh of of-

"It's funny because the way that kind of stuff is talked about on blogs is so black-and-white. It's all cut-and-dry identity politics. 'Is he straight or is he gay?' Or, 'This is your third gay movie — come out already!' And all based on, gay or straight, based on the idea that your object of affection decides your sexuality.

There are lots of other reasons to be interested in gay characters than wanting myself to go out and have sex with guys. And there are also lots of other aspects about these characters that I'm interested in, in addition to their sexuality. So, in some ways it's coincidental, in other ways it's not. I mean, I've played a gay man who's living in the '60s and '70s, a gay man who we depicted in the '50s, and one being in the '20s. And those were all periods when to be gay, at least being gay in public, was much more difficult. Part of what I'm interested in is how these people who were living anti-normative lifestyles contended with opposition. Or, you know what, maybe I'm just gay."

He's acted in the roles of gay men in the movies *Milk*, *Howl* and the upcoming *The Broken Tower*.

I never knew he was in: Skater Johnny Weir Comes Out!

by Deborah Moncrief Bell

Figure skater Johnny Weir has come out as being a gay man in his new book, *Welcome to My World*.

An excerpt that will be in the Jan. 17 issue of *People* magazine quotes Weir as stating that being gay “is the smallest part of what makes me me.”

“I’m not ashamed to be me,” Weir wrote. “More than anyone else I know, I love my life and accept myself. What’s wrong with being unique? I am proud of everything that I am and will become.”

The autobiography was released January 11th . Weir started a book tour in New York the same day.

The three-time U.S. champion is one of skating’s most colorful, oversized and popular personalities, and he enjoys challenging convention.

Weir has repeatedly avoided questions about his sexual orientation over the years, saying he didn’t want to be defined by labels. His ‘coming out’ is much one of those cases of, “A surprise to no one”. He once posed for a photo shoot in a skirt and stilettos, and was targeted by animal-rights activists after adding white fox fur to one of costumes at last year’s U.S. championships.

Weir stated that he wanted people to see him “for who I am, not what I am,” when asked about his sexuality at during last year’s Vancouver Olympics. Broadcasters on French-language RDS has made derogatory comments about Weir’s masculinity.

Weir told *People* he never felt he was in the closet. Gay publications and website reacted as though he was a jerk for not talking about his sexual orientation. Weir wrote. “But pressure is the last thing that would make me want to ‘join’ a community. ... The massive backlash against me in the gay media and community only made me dig my ‘closeted’ heels in further.”

His parents have always supported him, and his sexual orientation is “not an issue” with his family. But Weir knows that isn’t the case for everyone, particularly teenagers.

The suicides and epidemic of bullying of gay teens in part lead to his decision to tell the truth about his life

“With people killing themselves and being scared into the closet, I hope that even just one person can gain strength from my story,” Weir told *People*.

Weir writes about being picked on by students in middle school after he started skating, and finding a haven at the ice rink.

Weir said he realized “there was something different about me” when he found himself attracted to Richard Gere when he was six years old and watched *Pretty Woman*.

By puberty, he knew that he was gay, he says in the book, but did not worry about it much as he was way too busy as a serious skater.“

Weir is taking the year off from competition but he hasn’t ruled out making a run at the Sochi Olympics in 2014.



Center News from Page 4

The Center turns 15!

In 2011, the Center marks the fifteenth anniversary of its founding. Stay tuned for announcements of new programs and special events. Check our new and improved website for updates.

Houston, we have a website!

The Center has launched its enhanced website at www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org. Thanks to Team Awesome and the AIR-Houston organization, Center webmaster Ron Bagby-Grose, and Rob Alfieri of Alfieri Consulting Services.

The Houston GLBT Community Center is home base for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and their allies in the metropolitan area and southeast Texas. Founded by a group of dedicated activists in 1996, the Center is an all-volunteer non-profit organization.

The center is a member of Center Link, the national organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community centers.

Houston GLBT Community Center
713.524.3818
Check us out on Facebook

HISTORY AT A GLANCE by Craig Farrell

The Place: The Montrose The Time: 2011

Hello friends and family,

The beginning of a new year has arrived. Let us take a few moments and look back on the events of 2010. Our individual lives will soon become a part of another year in history.

The Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender History, Inc. made history in March by being the first GLBT Museum to provide a two hour presentation at the Texas Association of Museums annual meeting in Bryan College Station! The program consisted of a digital presentation of artifacts, an not a] historical timeline reading, [add comma] and a live female impersonator. We were well received.

Our participation in the “Save the Date” event hosted by the Montrose Counseling Center was a tremendous success! Contributors at the GCAM table made a total commitment of \$27,000.00 over the next 5 years.

Our outreach programs this year included an ongoing relationship with HATCH and a new one with San Jacinto College. Sharing the history of our community with others, especially our youth, is extremely important. Part of our mission at GCAM is to encourage education about the GLBT community. To help fulfill this we now have an ongoing column here in the Montrose Gem. Topics have included the march in the Montrose by the Klu Klux Klan to the [delete, add as well as a to make sense] history of how [lower case] The Montrose began. Be sure to check out the online archives of the Montrose Gem for past issues. It is another step to keep the history of our community alive.

GCAM is thankful to have been chosen as this year’s charity by the Houston Area Bears. We appreciate the support. Our work to catalog all of our items in storage has begun. This is a very large and tedious task. Funding from individuals, groups, and potential grants help keep the dream alive of one day having a building of our own where the public can see our rich GLBT history.

As GCAM continues to preserve the history of the GLBT community, 2011 looks to be a very exciting year! Please join us. With your support, either monetarily or by volunteering, as the Texas Gay Rodeo Association is doing this year, we can accomplish great things! All of us together can do more than one of us alone.

General membership is renewed every January. \$25.00 for individuals and \$50.00 for organizations. All contributions are tax deductible, as GCAM is a 501(c)3 organization.

We look forward to another “Historical” year and your participation in it!

Want to drink CHEAPER? You got it!
Galveston's ONLY BYOB Gay Bar
The Pink Dolphin Tavern

1706 23rd Street, Galveston Island, 77550, 409-621-1808



HAPPY NEW YEAR! FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT THE PINK DOLPHIN! YEA!

1 Block from a liquor store. Buy cheap beer and wine next door to us. Open 9:00 am - 2:00 am, 7 days a week. Beautiful bar with great patio

You pay us Only (day & night): Well & Call drinks - \$2 per set up
Beer - \$3 per ice bucket

GREAT FOOD: Cajun Chips, Hot Dogs & Corn Dogs, Breakfast Burger, Cheese Burger, Giant Pretzels, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwich, Cajun Sausage, and Green Husbands!

January 2011

New Year's Resolutions

- ① Quit smoking
- ② Quit drinking
- ③ Lose weight
- ④ Join gym
- ⑤ Go back to school
- ⑥ Pay off debts
- ⑦ Find new job

Do you need to add *Get HIV test* to your list?

Happy New Year!

United Way
United Way of Greater Houston

HIV TESTING Monday-Thursday 11am-6:30pm
Friday 11am-4:30pm

Legacy
Community Health Services

215 Westheimer
Houston, Texas 77006
(713) 830-3000
(713) 830-3070 Testing Info Line
legacycommunityhealth.org

*Alvie asks,
"What good is sitting all alone in your room?"
Come hear the music play!*



Friends gather here!



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1419 Richmond Ave.
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Where the drinks are cold & the Music is hot!

Piano music by Mr. Neal Massey on Wednesday nights.

**Open 11am daily
Sundays at 12 Noon**

VALENTINE'S DAY WEEKEND
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH

LIVE APPEARANCE
BRENT EVERETT
 AND
CHI CHI LARUE

ChiChiLaRue's RASCAL
BRENT EVERETT .COM

meteor

BRENT APPEARS LIVE IN THE METEOR SHOWERS WITH TWO BIG SHOWS AT 11:30PM & 12:30AM. TWO SHOWS EACH NIGHT WITH AN AUTOGRAPH PARTY AND PHOTO SHOOT IN BETWEEN AND UNTIL 2:00AM. CHI CHI LARUE WILL BE IN THE DJ BOOTH AND PERFORMING LIVE ON STAGE BOTH NIGHTS. ENTER TO WIN BRENT EVERETT FLESHJACK TOYS COURTESY OF FLESHJACK BOTH NIGHTS **fleshjack**

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Montrose Tattoo Shop Fundraiser Festival
Tattooed For Good

Portion of proceeds go to ASSISTHERS
 Get a lifelong token for yourself, AND sponsor a little comfort for a woman who no longer has to face her illness alone. www.assisthers.org

\$40 Tattoos & \$20 Piercings
 (tattoos limited to small-approx. half-dollar size designs to choose from-cash preferred)

JANUARY 22nd & 23rd
Noon 'til Midnight

live music/food/raffle/giveaways/art auction

Music By:
 Mantis
 The Manichean (special acoustic)
 Skeleton Dick
 Outer Heaven
 Nikoo
 Cadre
 Mike Perkins
 Another Run
 The American Heist

Tattoos By:
 Gaslight Gallery Tattoo
 Monster Tattoo Company
 Bombshell Tattoo
 Scorpion Studios Tattoo

Featuring DJs from BeatFreaqs:
 DJ Darrell Ripley
 DJ Mace
 Big Deli
 DJ MIG

Bellydancing: The Hourglass Girls

Located on Westheimer Road between Stanford & Yupon

NOTE: If you can help out in anyway, let me know-bands, DJs, art for the art show/auction, sponsors, media/press coverage, donations & volunteers!!!! Contact Kat Adlerz via tattooedforgood@gmail.com, Facebook or text at 832-594-6907

LHI
 Houston

Celebration of
LOVE GALA
 benefiting LHI

Feb 12, 2011
 DOUBLETREE HOTEL HOUSTON DOWNTOWN

Sit down dinner & dancing
 Comedienne-Dana Goldberg
 DJ-Joy De La O

TO ORDER TICKETS,
 learn about tables sales and sponsorship opportunities,
 order vegetarian or restricted diet meals, go to
<http://galalhihouston.org>

Healthy Living Column

From Healthy Living News

It's been several years since the news broke on the miraculous Tim Brown, aka, the "Berlin Patient" who was then believed to be cured of HIV. A recent update on his condition was just published in the journal *Blood*. Some scientists had thought, as is usually the case in HIV infection, that Brown's long-lived, virus-infected cell-reservoirs might eventually begin reproducing HIV again. That has not been the case according to the report. After several years of recovering from procedures that included a transplant of unique HIV resistant stem cells, his immune system appears to have reconstituted on "the systemic level as well as in the gut-mucosal immune system..." with no sign of HIV. The report concludes, "...our results strongly suggest that cure of HIV has been achieved in this patient."

Tim Brown's case has now spawned a demand for more HIV cure-related research. A recent report by the AIDS Policy Project noted that only 3% of the U.S. AIDS budget goes to such research. UCSF is now enrolling patients for one such study. Call it "Berlin Patient Lite" involving a less invasive procedure using a person's own immune cells. The cells will be extracted, then re-programmed, then re-infused with the hope they will continuously fight off HIV and perhaps even provide a cure. Considering a working vaccine is a distant possibility and that HIV drugs costs tens of billions a year, cause life-threatening side effects, and are available worldwide to only about a third who need them, it seems reasonable to attempt efforts towards a cure. It's likely Tim Brown would be the first to agree. For more on the new study go to questclinical.com.

With the new year here perhaps you have had enough of top ten lists. If not, Boston's Start Strong program just released its 2nd annual list of the top 10 songs that portray, and glamorize, healthy and unhealthy relationships. The list uses fun, support, respect, and trust as criteria to measure positive songs, and drama, disrespect, obsession, partner manipulation as criteria for negative relationship songs.

This year's top healthy and unhealthy relationship songs (and the artist) are rated below.

Healthy Relationship Songs

1. If It's Love, Train
2. Teenage Dream, Katy Perry
3. Everything To Me, Monica
4. Smile, Uncle Kracker,
5. If We Ever Meet Again, Timbaland (with Katy Perry)
6. Naturally, Selena Gomez
7. When I Look At You, Miley Cyrus
8. Nothin On You, BoB
9. Mine, Taylor Swift
10. Just The Way You Are, Bruno Mars

Unhealthy Relationship Songs

1. Lil Freak, Usher
2. Hot Tottie, Usher
3. Love The Way You Lie, Eminem (with Rihanna)
4. Misery, Maroon 5
5. Only Girl, Rihanna
6. You Love Is My Drug, Kesha
7. F**k You Cee Lo Green
8. Deuces Chris Brown (with Tyga)
9. Eenie Meenie, Justin Bieber (with Sean Kingston)
10. Give It Up To Me, Shakira (with Lil Wayne)

Whether pop music influences human behavior is a debate for another time. According to a new study, however, dating violence among teens is a real problem, and not just violence committed by boys. Published in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, it asked 1400 Boston high school students if, during the past month, they had been violent with a date or someone they had sex with, a fellow student or peer, or a sibling. Violent behavior was defined as pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, or choking one or more times. One-fifth of the students (18%) admitted committing an act of violence against a date or sex partner with a significantly larger amount (26%) being girls than boys (9%). Another important finding was that those who committed a violent act against a peer or a sibling were more likely to commit an act of violence against a date or sex partner. This was especially so for boys. So one lesson from the study might be that one act of physical violence is a warning sign of other violence and victims to come.



Carlos Rivera (Papi Carlos, Dr. Papi)

Carlos Rivera, loving son, brother and community leader, passed away unexpectedly on December 31, 2010 at the age of 33. Carlos was born May 2, 1977 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Affectionately known as "Gordo", he grew up in Carolina, Puerto Rico. Carlos attended Berwind Superior High School in San Juan. After earning a B.S. in industrial biotechnology from the University of Puerto Rico in 2000, Carlos went on to earn a Ph.D. from Baylor College of Medicine in the field of molecular virology and biotechnology in 2008. He loved his coworkers and his job at Glycos Biotechnologies, often working seven days a week.

Carlos dedicated his free time to volunteering and helping others raising money for many organizations and causes, including Holiday Charities, ERSICSS, GCAM, H.A.T.C.H. and the Resurrection Food Pantry. Carlos was in his fourth term as an officer of the Houston Area Bears, was Daddy of Montrose 2008 and loved preparing Communion for the members of Resurrection MCC.

Carlos (Carlos Ivan Rivera Pulliza) is survived by his parents, Ricardo Rivera Colon and Maria Pulliza Diaz, siblings, Ricardo Rivera Pulliza, Aleida Mabel Rivera Pulliza and Sol Rivera Pulliza. Carlos also had countless friends who would consider him a part of their extended family.

The family asks that donations be made in memory of Carlos to the Resurrection MCC Food Pantry, 2025 West 11th Street, Houston, TX 77008-6320. A fundraiser in Carlos' memory to benefit the Resurrection MCC Food Pantry will be held February 6 at Tony's Corner Pocket, 517 West Dallas, Houston, TX 77019-4737.

Tell me more:

This is a 3-day training retreat for future GLSEN Houston volunteer workshop facilitators.

Workshop facilitated by nationally certified GLSEN trainers from both the national office & GLSEN Houston.

You'll find tools, resources, activities, & skills for becoming an effective K-12 trainer.

After this 3-day workshop, you will be ready to deliver workshops for educators in K-12 settings to make schools safer for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Become a volunteer workshop facilitator with GLSEN Houston. Together we can make a difference!!

ANNOUNCING:

Training of Trainers

March 4-6, 2011

at Rice University



**LIMITED SPACE -
APPLY NOW!!**

**Now accepting applications!
Deadline = January 15, 2011**

Texas Legislature Convenes
from Equality Texas

The 82nd Session of the Texas Legislature begins today. For the next 140 days, lawmakers in Austin will set policy affecting 25 million people who make Texas their home. A budget shortfall estimated at \$27 billion, coupled with congressional redistricting, are expected to consume most of the lawmakers' time.

Notwithstanding legislators' focus on budgeting and redistricting, Equality Texas' will be focused on making Texas a state where all are treated equally with dignity and respect. Equality Texas is the only statewide advocacy organization whose sole mission is lobbying the Texas Legislature to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

Constituent demand drives legislative action. For the next 140 days of the Session we need your help!

We need your help, and the help of thousands of Texans, to advance our legislative agenda, which currently includes the following pre-filed bills:

Senate bills are listed with SB prefix and House Bills are HB.

SBI 245 - Anti-Bullying
Author: Senator Wendy Davis
Description: Amends the Education Code to develop policies, programs, and training for the prevention and reporting of bullying. This bill adds cyberbullying to the Education Code.

HB 172- Hate Crimes Study
Author: Rep. Marc Veasey
Description: Amends the Code of Criminal Procedure to require a study of the effectiveness of the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act.

HB208- Insurance Non-Discrimination
Author: Rep. Roberto Alonzo
Description: Amends the Insurance Code to prohibit discrimination in providing insurance based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

HB 415-Accurate Birth Certificates
Author: Rep. Raphael Anchia
Description: Amends the Health & Safety Code to allow adopted children with two mothers or two fathers to have both parent's names on their birth certificate.

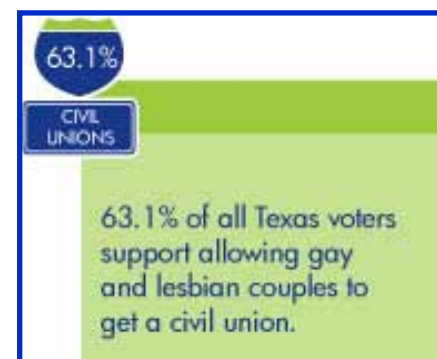
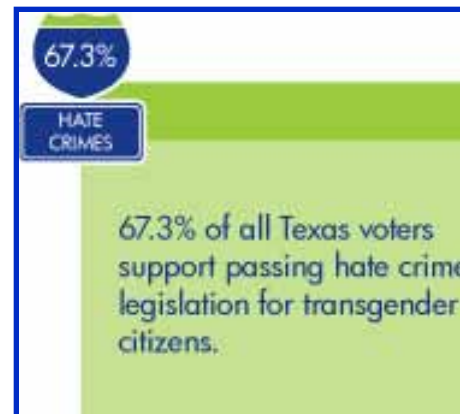
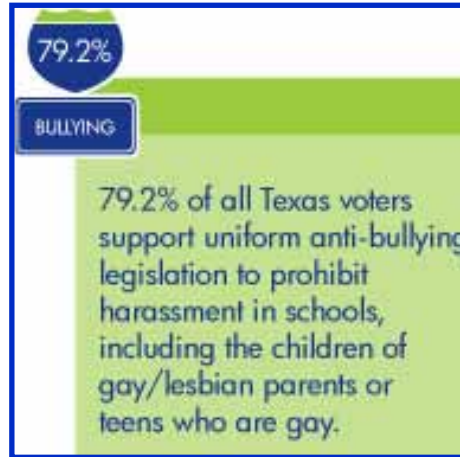
Additional bills will be filed as part of our legislative agenda. You can monitor all of our legislative activity in the Equality Texas Legislative Information Center.

Public opinion is on our side. The Equality Poll, commissioned by Equality Texas, found majority support among registered Texas voters for the following equal rights issues:

The road to equality runs through the Capitol in Austin. We need your help to corroborate the results of The Equality Poll with elected officials. Come to Austin on Monday, March 7 to meet legislators and have face-to-face conversations about equality for all Texans. Equality Texas' Lobby Day at the Capitol is your opportunity to be heard. Please make plans now to be in Austin on March 7th for Lobby Day. Participation in Lobby Day is free (includes breakfast and lunch). Advance registration is necessary for legislative district matching and lobby team assignments. Online registration is available here.

Lobbying and advocacy require financial resources. As you are able, please support our work with a contribution.

Equality Texas advocates and lobbies for the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. We envision a state where all Texans are treated equally, with dignity & respect..



Graphics Design
From Single Logos to
Complicated Productions

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Two on the Aisle

Theater Review by Bill O'Roarke

The Bride's Gay Uncle

A Catered Affair (at the Main Street Theater's Montrose location) is a very nice little musical that keeps everything on a human level, letting us really feel what is going on with each character. It's all about a family and what happens to them when the Mama decides her daughter is going to have a big marriage. One of the immediate family is the gay uncle who has been sleeping on the sofa for years.

The book (all of the nonmusical words) was written by Harvey Fierstein and he originated the role of the uncle. He must have had a hand in the lyrics, too, even though the lyrics and music are only credited to John Bucchino. Most of the songs feel like an extension of the book making the whole thing feel, at times, like a modern chamber opera.

It has been considered a positive thing for several decades for the songs to fit seamlessly into the plot. I have seen several shows recently where that was taken too far, including this one. It's a matter of personal taste, but I feel that at least some of the songs in any show ought to be able to stand alone. I don't think that any of these could. Maybe Broadway composers could come up with a new or a combined goal?

Remember Harvey's unique voice? Here the uncle is played by Terry Jones who has a handsome, lyrical tone. I think it's a change for the better, really, even though the Broadway production attracted a couple of Tony nods. The whole feel of the show, a long one act, is gentle and lyrical and I think that Terry's voice, which stays smooth even when he is singing in a drunken rage, fits in better.

Uncle Winston at first encourages his sister, the Mama – very well done by Luisa Amaral-Smith – to close her eyes and have a vision (one of the most beautiful songs in the score) of just what her daughter's wedding could be. Then, at the end, he encourages her to open her eyes and have a happy, loving life, even with all of life's ups and downs, like

a scary but fun rollercoaster. Obviously he's as flitty as I am, able to follow more than one dream at a time. His life seems to circle in and out and hover around the hetero family. There is one hint that he has a life of his own as well, but - spoiler alert - it comes to live with a man who, evidently, ought to have been his lover several years ago.

The bride and groom (Christina Stroup and Jamie Geiger) really want a quick courthouse wedding so that they can take advantage of a chance at a free honeymoon. The father (Jeff Galligan) can't afford to both have this huge wedding and could only buy out one of his two partners partners in his cab. Yet, he loves his wife so much he can't bring himself to tell her that. (So, - another spoiler alert – once the big marriage is called off, just where does he find the money to buy out both of his partners? Or did I hear that line wrong?)

The four person chorus includes two of my favorites (Shondra Marie and Bethany Daniels Shapiro). Another cast member (David Wald) is a really good actor and there is a very promising newcomer (Erin Roche).

The set was very, very handsome. Credit Meghan C. Hakes. The costumes, designed by Macy Perrone, ably created the era all by themselves. And Andrew Ruthven, the director, didn't have a single misstep.

This show has sweet for the traditional and is up to date for those people, too. Though I wasn't overly fond of the score, I definitely think it's a keeper!

Main Street Theater, 4617 Montrose Blvd., in Chelsea Market, 713-524-3622, MainStreetTheatre.com

Openings

Guilty Conscience (Company On-stage, January 14 – February 13).

New Voices (Dionysus, January 15th – February 27th).

Birthdays

January 15th – My 60th! Yay!

January 16th – Deborah's 61st



A Catered Affair with Luisa Amaral-Smith, Jeff Galligan, Christina Stroup and Jamie Geiger at Main Street Thea (photo by www.RicOrnelProductions.com)

MONTROSE SOFTBALL LEAGUE

RECRUITMENT DAY

Join the largest gay sports league in Houston.

Sunday, January 23, 2011

Registration / 9 to 10 AM

Clinic / 10 AM to 2 PM

Memorial Park / Fields 4 & 5

Bring your glove. Lunch will be served.

For more information, visit our web site at

www.montrosesoftballleague.com



Night at the Movies

Reviews by Kristian Salinas

Let me first begin by saying that director Darren Aronofsky's *Black Swan* may be his best movie to date. An undeniably engaging psychosexual thriller set within the New York City Ballet, Aronofsky's film features Natalie Portman in a fully invested performance as Nina, a paranoid ballerina who triggers her own emotional downward spiral as she strives for perfection after winning the dual role of Odette and Odile in an upcoming production of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. A precise and meticulous dancer, Nina is a perfect choice for Odette, the Swan Princess. However, it's clear from the start she lacks the passion and fiery sexuality to convince as Odette. Enter Lily (Mila Kunis), a newly transplanted ballerina from San Francisco (an all-too-obvious Sapphic reference—What? New York has no lesbians?) who is everything Nina is not: confident, playful, seductive, and sexual. Cruelly compared to Lily by the ballet's director, Thomas Leroy (Vincent Cassel), Nina becomes more obsessed with tackling the dance of Odile, ultimately straining her relationship to her mother, Erica (Barbara Hershey). During an especially tense exchange with Erica, Nina seizes an opportunity to spend the evening with Lily, leading to a drunken evening (that may or may not have led to sex with Lily), and ultimately resulting in Lily becoming Nina's understudy. Believing Lily is out to get her and her starring role, Nina's paranoia turns psychotic as she pulls out all the stops to deliver the "dance" of a lifetime.



Natalie Portman portrays a ballet dancer who wins the lead in "Swan Lake" and is perfect for the role of the delicate White Swan, but slowly loses her mind as she becomes more and more like the evil twin sister of the White Swan, the Black Swan.

While there may be something noble in wanting to broaden the appeal of an institution like *Swan Lake*, is it really necessary to dumb down the material to such an extent so as to appeal to the fanboy crowd? *Black Swan* feels like a bizarre attempt at making *Swan Lake* 2.0. With its unseemly reliance on CG special effects (most gratuitously—spoiler alert—during the above "maybe-we-did-maybe-we-didn't" sex scene between Lily and Nina, in which Nina develops very obvious goose (or is that swan) bumps AND another time when Nina locks herself away in her bedroom after a particularly fierce battle with Erica, she begins a peculiar "transformation"), it becomes hard to take *Black Swan* seriously, and at a point, I thought that perhaps one future prospect for this film was to eventually turn it into a video game.

This isn't the first time Aronofsky's relied on special effects, but the choice to do so in *Black Swan* feels especially foolish and misguided in light of Portman's magnificent performance (and she is quite magnificent, her coming undone at the seams feeling utterly palpable!). On the other hand, the very capable Kunis delivers a performance better suited to an episode of *Jersey Shore*. As a contrast to Portman's sexually insecure, manic perfectionist, we get neither a femme fatale nor even a vixen. Instead, we get just a slut! That the sexually charged character of Lily is devoid of true complexity further illustrates the prevalent fanboy mentality: all women are unapproachable and ultimately unfathomable because they're psycho, your mom, or wouldn't sleep with you anyway because you're a gamer dork.

But there's a light at the end of the tunnel... I recently had the pleasure of seeing Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's narrative feature debut, *Howl*, starring the incomparable James Franco as famed beat poet Allen Ginsberg in a performance that could easily rival that of his more ballyhooed (though no less impressive) turn as Aron Ralston in *127 Hours*. Epstein and Friedman, best known for their award winning documentaries (*Celluloid Closet*, *Paragraph 175*), have dramatically adapted both the transcripts of the obscenity trial against Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the publisher of Ginsberg's seminal poem, and an interview Ginsberg gave at the time of the trial. Also adapted were the illustrated texts of *Howl* based on the work of artist Eric Drooker in *Illuminated Poems*, a collaboration between the artist and Mr. Ginsberg. I must admit, I was a bit skeptical of the animation, but in the end, found it utterly absorbing and an absolutely fitting tribute to Ginsberg's timeless words.

Featuring a roster of stars of all shapes and sizes in supporting roles, including Mary-Louise Parker, Jon Hamm, and Alessandro Nivola, *Howl* touches upon several topics that never seem to go away, namely that of censorship, which of late, has once again reared its ugly head. You may be thinking specifically of today's political

discourse but the film should remind us all of a particularly troubling time in the early 90's when Republican Senator Jesse Helms waged his nasty morality war against the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the reverberations of which are still felt to this day.

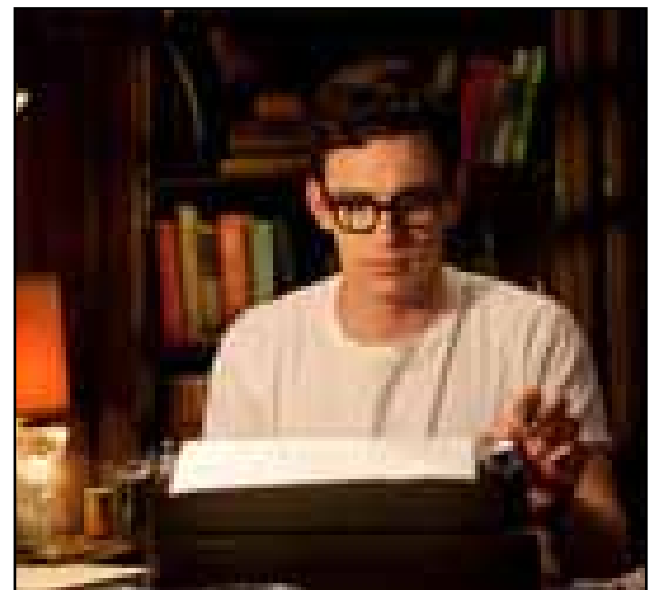
Howl was an unfortunate victim of the Angelika Film Center's demise, but recently had a limited five day run at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston over the Christmas holiday, playing to an enthusiastic and rather sizeable audience. If you missed its theatrical run, I encourage you to visit Netflix or see the film via VOD.

Black Swan

<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/blackswan/>
Directed by Darren Aronofsky
Written by Mark Heyman, Andres Heinz, and John J. McLaughlin, based on a story by Andres Heinz
Starring Natalie Portman, Mila Kunis, Vincent Cassel, Barbara Hershey, and Winona Ryder

Rated R; 2010; 108 mins; USA; Color; Fox Searchlight Pictures

Now playing everywhere



James Franco stars as the young Allen Ginsberg—poet, counter-culture adventurer, and chronicler of the Beat Generation. In his famously confessional, leave-nothing-out style, Ginsberg recounts the road trips, love affairs, and search for personal liberation that led to the most timeless and electrifying work of his career: the poem *HOWL*. Meanwhile, in a San Francisco courtroom, *HOWL* is on trial.

Howl

<http://howlthemovie.com/>
Written/Directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman

Featuring James Franco, with Jon Hamm, David Strathairn, Mary Louise Parker, Jeff Daniels, Treat Williams, Alessandro Nivola, and Bob Balaban

Rated R; 2010, 84 mins, USA; Color/BW; Oscilloscope Pictures

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Kristian Salinas is the Executive Director of Q-Fest, Houston GLBT film festival.

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