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Will The Supreme Court Bring Equality To The Last 14 States?

Gwen Stefani: Her First Gay Interview In 10 Years

How Caspar Decision Impacts Michiganders

U.S. Syphilis Rates Increased By 10 Percent In 2013
“It’s really important more than anything else to not be talked into something, to stand your ground and to be able to be strong about what you feel.”

– Gwen Stefani, pg. 14

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Federal Judge Rules Marriages Of 300 Couples Valid In Michigan

BY AJ TRAGER

DETROIT – A Federal District court judge ruled on Jan. 15 that Michigan must respect the marriages of over 300 same-sex couples that were married in March 2014.

The case, Caspar v Snyder, was filed April 14, 2014 by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan on behalf of eight same-sex couples who received marriage licenses during a window last March, when a federal judge struck down Michigan’s same-sex marriage ban. The decision was stayed a day later but not before more than 300 couples were legally married in the state on March 22. Governor Rick Snyder said that the state would deny respect to the issued licenses even though the federal government said it would respect the rights of the newlywed couples.

Judge Goldsmith heard testimony on Aug. 21 when the state argued that the couples’ marriages would become invalid if higher courts, such as the 6th Circuit which ruled in favor of the state’s ban on Nov. 6, overturned the decision made by Judge Friedman in March.

In his ruling Goldsmith wrote, “The alleged harm of impaired human dignity and denial of at least some tangible benefits have already come about, thereby establishing that the factual record is sufficiently developed, such that there is no need to await future events for adjudication of the issues in this action. And delaying judicial resolution of these issues would serve no useful purpose. To the contrary, such delay would compound the harms these Plaintiffs suffer each day that their marital status remains unrecognized.”

Federal Court Judge Mark Goldsmith’s decision comes one day before the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) will hold a conference to decide whether to take up the issue of same-sex marriage. Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennesse all filed their request to be heard by SCOTUS directly after the 6th Circuit decision which created an appellate court split.

“As even the court decision that required Michigan to allow same-sex couples to marry has now been reversed on appeal,” Goldsmith wrote. “The same-sex couples who married in Michigan during the brief period when such marriages were authorized acquired a status that state officials may not ignore absent some compelling interest – a constitutional hurdle that the defense does not even attempt to surmount. In these circumstances, what the state has joined together, it may not put asunder.”

Coalition Manager for Michigan for Marriage, Gina Calcagno, wrote on her twitter feed, “The ruling in Caspar sends a clear message, there is no good reason to deny #marriage to loving committed couples.”

Goldsmith issued a 21 day stay with his decision, allowing for the state to appeal.

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette issued a statement after the ruling.

“We are reviewing Judge Goldsmith’s decision but as I have said repeatedly, the sooner the United States Supreme Court makes a decision on this issue the better it will be for Michigan and America,” he said.

Same-Sex Marriage Heads To The Supreme Court

BY AJ TRAGER

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has granted review of four petitions from each state from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals requesting the court to decide if same-sex marriage is recognized and protected under the U.S Constitution.

Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio will argue two issues before the Court: Does the 14th Amendment require a state to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and does the 14th Amendment require a state to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-state? The review by SCOTUS is scheduled for April 27, 28 or 29.

The legal teams from the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals will present their cases to SCOTUS in two sections. Michigan and Kentucky will share a 45-minute slot to argue for the constitutionality of same-sex marriage. And Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky will share a 30-minute window arguing for the recognition of same-sex marriages performed out-of-state. States’ attorneys will have the same amount of time to argue in favor of withholding the bans on same-sex marriage.

Kentucky consolidated two cases for arguments, presented by all four states, heard by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in August 2014. In the first case, Bourke v Beshear, plaintiffs who were married in Canada filed a lawsuit against the state in July of 2013, challenging Kentucky’s refusal to recognize their marriage. The second case, Love v Beshear, was filed in February 2012 by a couple who were denied a marriage license in Kentucky. A judge ruled that the state must recognize the marriages from other jurisdictions and shall allow for same-sex couples to marry because withholding access to same-sex marriage violates the U.S Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection under the law. Kentucky is the only case that will argue both questions posed before the court.

The Ohio case, Obergefell v Hodges, was filed in July 2013 as plaintiffs Jim Obergefell and John Arthur sought recognition of their marriage performed in Maryland to be on Arthur’s death certificate before he passed. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio filed on behalf of Obergefell and five other couples, among which were three widowers and a funeral director. If customary practice is followed, the first case listed in the order – the Ohio case – will become the historic title for the final ruling, SCOTUSblog.com reports.

In Tennessee, four couples came together in March 2014, represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights, to argue that the state’s refusal to recognize their out-of-state marriages constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and violates their rights to due process and equal protection.

Currently 160,000 same-sex couples and their 60,000 children live in the 14 states and Puerto Rico where same-sex marriage bans are currently being enforced, the Williams Institute reports.

“After the Justice Department’s decision not to defend the constitutionality of Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, the Supreme Court sent a powerful message that Americans in same-sex marriages are entitled to equal protection and equal treatment under the law. This landmark decision marked a historic step toward equality for all American families,” Attorney General for the United States Eric Holder said in a statement made Jan. 16.

“As these cases proceed, the Department of Justice will remain committed to ensuring that the benefits of marriage are available as broadly as possible. And we will keep striving to secure equal treatment for all members of society – regardless of sexual orientation.”

Preparing to present before SCOTUS will cost upwards of $1 million. The organization National Marriage Challenge, formally known as Michigan Marriage Challenge, is accepting donations that will go directly towards strengthening the provisions of the Michigan legal team. Go to www.michiganmarriagechallenge.com to donate and help the DeBoer-Rouse family argue marriage equality for the entire nation.

Read the decision by Goldsmith at http://freemarry.3cdn.net/4a3500c04c85189d47_50m6b90fz.pdf.
How Caspar Decision Impacts Michiganders

BY JAY KAPLAN

On Jan. 15, Federal District Judge Mark Goldsmith held that the state of Michigan’s refusal to recognize the legal marriages of more than 300 same-sex couples who legally wed on March 22, 2014 (during the window period of the DeBoer decision when Michigan’s prohibition on same-sex couples was struck down) is unconstitutional. He issued a preliminary injunction, ordering the state to recognize those marriages and accord them with state benefits associated with Michigan legal marriages.

The following are some questions and answers about the case and the decision.

How does Caspar v Snyder differ from the DeBoer v Snyder marriage case?
The DeBoer case focuses on the right of same-sex couples to marry. In Caspar, the couples in the case are already legally married. Caspar focuses on the right of same-sex couples who legally married under state law to stay married.

Does the Caspar decision apply to same-sex couples in Michigan who were legally wed in other states?
No – the issue of whether Michigan must recognize out of state marriages between same-sex couples is being addressed in the DeBoer case, which challenges Michigan laws that not only prohibit same-sex couples from marrying, but also deny recognition of out of state marriages.

What’s the practical effect of the Caspar decision?
That the legal marriages of the 300-plus same-sex couples have to be recognized by the state of Michigan and that they have to be provided with state benefits associated with legal marriages. The state cannot undo a marriage that was legal at the time it was solemnized.

The United States Supreme Court may be taking a marriage equality case(s) this term. DeBoer v Snyder could be the case that the Court decides to hear. How does this impact the marriages of the 300-plus couples in Michigan?
We both hope and believe that the Supreme Court will take a marriage case and render a favorable case on marriage equality that will provide finality on the issue of the right of same-sex couples to marry. However, regardless of how the United States Supreme Court decides the right of same-sex couples to marry, this will not impact the legal validity of the Michigan marriages of the 300-plus same-sex couples. They were legally married in Michigan and the law said that they could marry at the time they wed. A change in law or a change in court decision does not invalidate that which was legal. There is a long line of legal decisions that support this principle with regards to marriages.

What should the 300-plus couples do right now with regards to applying for state benefits, filing for stepparent adoptions, state income taxes, etc.?
They should wait until the 21 days are up to see what happens before requesting any state recognition or benefits associated with their marriage. In the meantime they can contact the ACLU of Michigan (313-578-6812) with questions regarding their marriage and the impact of the Caspar decision.

Jay Kaplan is the staff attorney at the ACLU of Michigan’s LGBT Project.
Controversy Over UMS Award To Russian Orchestra
Conductor Criticized As Anti-Gay Putin Supporter Subject Of Protests

BY AJ TRAGER

ANN ARBOR – Internationally known Russian conductor Valery Gergiev returns to Ann Arbor for two performances with the Mariinsky Orchestra and to receive, in collaboration with the Orchestra, the 2015 UMS Distinguished Artist Award. But his visit comes with much controversy.

Gergiev, born in 1953, is most known for his work with the Mariinsky Orchestra and Theatre in Russia and has spent his life in and around music. He was in Ann Arbor when the Mariinsky Orchestra, then the Kirov Orchestra, performed in 1992 and has been involved with 11 University Music Society (UMS) performances since that date.

Max Lepler, a longtime supporter of the arts in southeast Michigan who bought season subscriptions to UMS programming every year and regularly gave donations, has revoked his subscription and will no longer be attending any UMS productions because of the involvement and honor of Gergiev.

Lepler criticizes Gergiev for the crimes committed by Russia against the world and for his support of Russia’s President, Vladimir Putin, whom he has supported since Putin ran as a candidate. “When people are being killed. When there is a genocide against gays and lesbians; when they are being beaten up; when sexual sodomy is committed, in this case more on the men; when there is a bigger influx of gays and lesbians coming to the U.S. because their lives have been torn apart; when the artists are leaving Russia because they fear they are being persecuted in prison; when there is the anti-driving law – it’s like the Jews before World War II,” Lepler said.

LGBT people living in Russia are subject to various forms of harassment and discrimination. In September 2014 a new law to remove children from LGBT families and individuals was drafted; additionally, there is the internationally known anti-LGBT propaganda law which seeks to penalize LGBT propaganda to “protect minors,” but the definition of propaganda is vague.

Lepler sent messages to many people about his concerns that Gergiev would be honored: the LGBT group at Ford Motor Company, U of M regents, administrators and the board of UMS; he received no reply.

“I thought that they (the University) would be on stronger moral grounds,” Lepler said with concern. “Let me just say, the University Music Society is a great institution. If they would just stand up and say ‘due to the controversy of what we have here, we must take the best stance possible, so we are canceling this...’”

Gergiev is no stranger to awards; he has received dozens from around the world, including the Laureate of Foundation of American-Russian Cultural Cooperation in 2006. This year he will be awarded the 2015 UMS Distinguished Artist Award at the Ford Honors Program concert on Jan. 25.

This isn’t the first time the conductor has been criticized for being an anti-LGBT, Putin supporter. In 2013, at a performance in New York with the London Symphony Orchestra, gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell interrupted the beginning of a performance by going on stage. “Gergiev defends the new homophobic law that persecutes gay Russians,” he said before being removed.

“I have said before that I do not support Putin (and that we have to get rid of that law),” Lepler said. “He (Gergiev) hasn’t stood up and said that he regrets his position (to support Putin) and that we have to get rid of that law,” Lepler said. “He isn’t taking a change there. And then he keeps saying that the Russians are different. Even though he has said that, it’s just a copout.”

“Let me just say, the University Music Society is a great institution. If they would just stand up and say ‘due to the controversy of what we have here, we must take the best stance possible, so we are canceling this...’”

~ Season ticket holder Max Lepler

Filmmaker To Speak On LGBT, Black Intersectionality

Award-winning documentary filmmaker and scholar, Yoruba Richen, will be speaking in Ann Arbor as part of an event co-sponsored by the University of Michigan’s College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA). Richen’s speech, “The New Black: The Intersection of Race, LGBT Rights and the Fight for Equality,” will draw elements from her latest project, “The New Black,” a film that tells the story of how the African-American community is grappling with the gay rights issue in light of the recent gay marriage movement and the fight over civil rights. The speech will help the community engage matters of race, sexuality, gender and marginalization, particularly in light of recent tragic events, like those in Ferguson, Missouri and New York, that continue to shape the lives of all people.

The LSA Campus Climate Committee hopes that these events, in conjunction with Richen’s speech, provoke much-needed conversation about the school’s campus climate and how students can work together to make the campus more welcoming for all.

Richen’s speech will be at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 27 at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater, 911 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor.
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BY TODD HEYWOOD

The final numbers for syphilis infections in the U.S. during 2013 were released in December 2014, and they aren’t good news—particularly for men who have sex with men. Just over 17,000 people were diagnosed with primary or secondary syphilis in the U.S. in 2013, the new report shows. This bumped the national incidence rate of syphilis infection to 5.5 per 100,000—a 10 percent increase. “This national rate increase was only among men, particularly gay and bisexual men,” the CDC reports in a fact sheet released by the agency. “Trend data show that men who have sex with men (MSM)* account for three quarters (75 percent) of all primary and secondary syphilis cases,” the CDC reports. “Primary and secondary syphilis are the most infectious stages of the disease, and if not adequately treated, can lead to long-term infection which can cause visual impairment and stroke. Syphilis infection can also place a person at increased risk for acquiring or transmitting HIV infection. Available surveillance data indicate that an average of half of MSM with syphilis are also infected with HIV.”

That assessment is shown in syphilis numbers for Michigan, as well. Jennifer Smith, a spokesperson for the Michigan Department of Community Health, says in 2013 there were 498 cases of primary and secondary syphilis identified in Michigan, and 347 of those cases were in men who have sex with men. Among the men who have sex with men, 178 were co-infected with HIV. Co-infection with HIV and syphilis increases the risk of transmission of the virus by 2.5 times, studies have determined. HIV will shed the virus from the location, infecting their partner.

Despite years of increasing reports of syphilis, diagnosis has required a blood test, often requiring a visit to a doctor and a vial of blood to be drawn. But the day before the CDC released the 2013 report, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the use of a rapid test for syphilis in non-laboratory settings. The test, which is similar to rapid tests for Hepatitis C and HIV, requires a drop of blood drawn from a finger prick. It had been approved in 2011 for use only in certified labs. The Dec. 15 announcement now makes the test available for non-laboratory settings—including community based organizations like AIDS service organizations.

“The recent announcement by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that it has granted the first-ever waiver, under certain laboratory regulations, for a rapid screening test for syphilis is very welcome news,” Smith said in an email statement to Between The Lines. “The Michigan Department of Community Health looks forward to having a rapid screening test for syphilis available and will follow CDC guidance on implementation when that becomes available.”

At least one AIDS service organization thinks the new test availability will be helpful in their work. “Provided it follows the same standards we have for HIV (which I would suspect it does), there wouldn’t really be an obstacle that I can think of to adding this to our CTR (Counseling, Testing, Referral) protocol (we’ve already successfully added HepC),” Kevin Gierman, a prevention manager at Red Project Grand Rapids, says. “We would need to make sure we’re connected to community partners (particularly medical) ready to respond when we identify someone as positive for syphilis and that our test counselors are all trained on syphilis testing and information (the training process could be the biggest challenge as scheduling the entire team would take time). We’re already doing a great job of connecting with the MSM community and I suspect there would be a strong response if the option to test for syphilis was offered.”

Gierman says finding funding for the testing could be an obstacle. Currently, HIV testing, prevention and counseling are funded through HIV specific funding streams, while syphilis funding comes through CDC sexually transmitted disease funding streams.
Attention Michigan LGBT Career Seekers

BY BTL STAFF

DEARBORN – The University of Michigan-Dearborn, in collaboration with various LGBT sponsors, is hosting an upcoming LGBTQ Career Fair to help connect young LGBT professionals with businesses from around the state.

LGBT and allied students from all majors will have a chance to speak with over 30 companies to discuss internships, part-time positions and full-time professional careers and learn what working professionals are looking for in the next generation of employees.

Companies such as Thomas Reuters, the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of State, The Auto Club Group, Comerica, American Cancer Society, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, LEAR Corporation, Emerson ASCO Numatics, DTE Energy, Ford Motor Company, EY, Herman Miller and General Motors are just a few on the list in attendance to speak with up and coming graduates.

The event will be held from 1-4 p.m. on March 5 in the Fairlane Center North building at University of Michigan-Dearborn’s campus, located at 19000 Hubbard Drive, Dearborn. The event is free and open to everyone.

The LGBT Career Fair is supported by more than a dozen Michigan colleges and universities and is sponsored by Affirmations, the Detroit LGBT Regional Chamber of Commerce, Out & Equal Detroit Affiliate and Pride Source Media Group.

SAVE THE DATE

March 5

LGBTQ Career Fair

Helping connect young professionals with companies looking for the next generation of employees. The event is free and open to all. It will be held from 1 - 4 p.m. at UofM Dearborn located at 19000 Hubbard Drive.

>> preregister at http://umdearborn.edu/careerservices

Those interested in attending the LGBT Career Fair are asked to pre-register at http://umdearborn.edu/careerservices.

Services aimed at guiding students towards better interview skills and more succinct resumes will also be available for interested career seekers in February. Each session will cover the same material. The University of Michigan-Dearborn will hold the first two sessions at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Feb. 18 at the University Center. Affirmations will host the third session at 3 p.m. on Feb. 19.

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Art History Gets In Drag

Parting Glances

OPINION BY CHARLES ALEXANDER

O
ne of the most sensational art heists in history took place Aug.
11, 1911. It was spontaneous rather than planned. The theft –
the most famous picture in the world – Leonardo Da Vinci’s “Mona
Lisa,” valued at over $100 million.
The brazen thief was an Italian, Vincenzo Peruggia, who had been
newly hired as a Louvre Museum guard. He found the “Mona Lisa”
gallery empty that infamous day, and, yielding to the temptation of her
enigmatic smile, stole her. He kept her hidden for two years.
It was a secret he couldn’t live with. Foolishly, he tried to sell the Da
Vinci masterpiece for $500,000. He was soon caught and the painting
returned to a very grateful museum and a very relieved Parisian public.

It is perhaps smug LGBT aesthetic consolation to know
that Leonardo Da Vinci’s equally famous painting of Jesus
dining with his disciples, “The Last Supper,” is the work
of a gay artist and inventive Renaissance genius.

The “Mona Lisa” was back in the news a few years later with a new
twist. Marcel Duchamp, a French artist whose 1912 painting, “Nude
Descending a Staircase,” had made him world famous overnight, decided
“Mona Lisa” needed a radical new transgender look. He gave her a
mustache and a goatee.
Duchamp called his portrait, painted on a postcard reproduction
he had come across in a bookshop, “L.H.O.O.Q.” It doesn’t stand for
anything, but when the letters are pronounced it comes across in French
as “elle a chaud au cul.” (“She has a hot ass.”)

Although Duchamp was straight, he enjoyed a visual gender bender.
He also had a drag portrait taken of himself by the famous photographer
Man Ray. His drag name was Rose Selavy. (“C’est la vie.”). One of his
later Dada Period sculptures is actually an inverted men’s v-shaped urinal.

“The curious thing about the mustache and goatee,” explained
Duchamp, “is that when you look at the ‘Mona Lisa’ it becomes a man.
Truth be known, it is a real man, and that is my discovery.”
Was this indeed a discovery? Dr. Lillian Schwartz, a Bell Laboratories
computer analyst and author of “The Computer Artist’s Handbook,” says
yes and offers proof. She juxtaposed an image of the only known self-
portrait of Da Vinci on top of that of the “Mona Lisa.” A perfect match!
The “Mona Lisa” is none other than the artist. (Sly pass.)

Art historians say this is debatable. What is not is that this
Renaissance Italian Painter (1452 - 1519) was a genius and the inventor
of the parachute, the helicopter, the submarine, the machine gun and a
prototype automobile. His 5,000 page notebook – where he wrote script
for equality.

Across time there have been messengers that spoke
of our core belief in equality, but perhaps one of the
most powerful voices was that of Dr. Martin Luther
King, Jr. His words and actions sparked a movement
that continues to inspire today.
There is often speculation as to what Dr. King would
think of today’s world – an African-American president,
the attack on voter rights, economic disparity, Ferguson,
LGBTQ rights and marriage equality
I believe he would look at the loss of Trayvon
Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and the protests
in Ferguson and remind us that, “As a country we have
learned that we are not defined by race, but we still
must learn that race is defined by us.” In his vision and
wisdom I believe he would expand on his original words
to include sexual orientation/gender expression and
demand justice for our transgender sisters and brothers.
He would look at the growing gap between the haves
and have-nots, the economic disparity, and wonder why
today this nation “continues year after year to spend
more money on military defense than on programs
of social uplift.” Would he be part of the “OCCUPY”
movement or march in Detroit against water shut-offs?
Probably.
On Jan. 15, 2015, Dr. King would have been 86. I am
willing to bet his birthday wish would be that dream
– the dream he had for his four children back in 1963.
But just as his vision evolved from those days in Selma
to his days in Chicago, I believe his dream would have
expanded to include not just his children but all people:
black, white, brown, immigrant, transgender, gay or
straight. His wish: His dream that we all would one day
live in a nation where we wouldn’t be judged by the color
of our skin, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, sexual
orientation or gender expression, but by the content
of our character.
As a nation, we celebrated Dr. King’s birthday on Jan.
19, 2015. For many, the actual date of his birth goes by

Charles@pridesource.com.
unnoticed as we wait for that long holiday week-end. But this year, I like to believe that on Jan. 15, somewhere in the cosmos, Dr. King’s spirit once again made that “BIG” wish – the wish for this country to fulfill its destiny as a nation where all are created equal and endowed with the unalienable rights that include life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And as he made that wish, to the list he added the LGBTQ families for whom justice has been denied and/or delayed.

When the sun set on Jan. 15, families across Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee and the rest of the nation were wishing, hoping and praying for a decision by the highest court of the land. In our struggle for equality, the righteousness of King’s words rang true for our community too. Inspired and encouraged by the struggles of movements including the civil rights movement, we pressed on.

On Jan. 16 we moved one step closer to the dream’s fulfilment with the Supreme Court of the United States decision to hear arguments from the four states (including Michigan) arguing against states’ bans on same-sex marriage. Once and for all our families will have their day in court and SCOTUS will determine if all families matter.

On Jan. 16 we moved one step closer to the dream’s fulfilment with the Supreme Court of the United States decision to hear arguments from the four states (including Michigan) arguing against states’ bans on same-sex marriage. Once and for all our families will have their day in court and SCOTUS will determine if all families matter.

I think Dr. King would acknowledge and congratulate this step in ending the second class status of LGBTQ couples and families. He might say that the marching of time, of truth and of men has brought us closer to a world that accepts all of God’s children.

But he would also caution us against complacency, against sitting upon our laurels for this victory and turning a blind eye to the challenges, inequities and disparities affecting our HUMAN family. Knowing the indignities, hatred and discrimination the LGBTQ community has experienced, we must look beyond our community in solidarity with others who are disenfranchised, always remembering what Emma Lazarus said: “Until we are all free, we are none of us free.”

So as we celebrate this important step in our struggle for equality, let’s use this past holiday weekend as an opportunity to pick up King’s mantle, to be the change; through our love, let us be the light in the movement for all human rights.

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

C.B. Embry Jr.

I don’t like public restrooms. There’s just something really, well, icky about sharing a space with strangers where everybody does their grossest business. I don’t want to hear the woman in the next stall evacuate her gaseous bowels or have random children poke their heads under the door while I’m trying to pee. And then there’s that space between the wall and the door where people can totally see in and you can totally see out and every so often you accidentally make eye contact with someone while you’re on the toilet and that moment gets burned into both of your retinas forever.

On the other hand, I am so thankful that public restrooms exist. Granted, I prefer my own private home bathroom with its circa 1960s powder blue toilet and a door I can shut and lock, but that’s only practical if I’m not at home. And because I’m not a shut-in, I do occasionally leave the house. And I have a bladder like an infant, so without public restrooms I would be doomed.

I have, in my time, used a men’s room or two, either because the line to the women’s room was too long, or because the women’s room was closed for cleaning. If it’s a choice between peeing my pants or using the toilet designated for the opposite sex, well, I’m not going to pee my pants, damn it.

And how lucky I am that this has never been a problem for me. The same cannot be said of trans men and women. And somehow, whenever someone mentions “The T Word,” the subject of restrooms is never far behind.

Just ask Kentucky Senator C.B. Embry Jr., who is so incensed by the idea of trans students using the restroom appropriate for their gender identity that he thinks there oughta be a law against it. And dog gonnit, he done proposed one.

Dave Agema

Embattled GOP National Committeeman from Michigan Dave Agema is under fire from his own party – again. This time Agema is in hot water for re-posting a testament from a public defender. In this essay, published in the white nationalist American Renaissance magazine, the author argues that African-Americans are inferior to all “other people.”

“However, my experience has also taught me that blacks are different by almost any measure to all other people. They cannot reason as well. They cannot control their impulses as well. They are a threat to all who cross their paths, black and non-black alike,” the author writes.

“Very interesting article by a public defender,” Agema’s public status said. “We are in a cultural battle. Very enlightening for anyone who is concerned about crime in America...” The post is signed “LARRY,” and was likely a complete repost from someone else’s status. However, Agema says he was simply sharing an article posted by Alan West, a former Republican Congressman from Florida and lieutenant colonel. West is black and called the article “the most racist article you will ever read.”

“To take a sentence out of an article that Col. West calls a racist article and use it to call myself and Col. West a racist is ridiculous and deceptive reporting,” Agema says in his defense. Agema’s defense then is, “I did what he did.” That post came to light in a Jan. 7 column by conservative judge and political commentator Andrew Shirvell, who was fired for cause, thus preventing him from collecting unemployment benefits.

“To summarize, we conclude that Shirvell’s speech was not protected under the First Amendment for purposes of these proceedings. Although Shirvell may have spoken as a private citizen on a matter of public concern, the Department of Justice intervened and showed that its interests in the efficient provision of governmental services outweighed Shirvell’s speech interests,” the three judge panel wrote in a unanimous decision published on Jan. 8. The decision is 33 pages long and details Shirvell’s behavior in stalking former University of Michigan student body president, Chris Armstrong. The court ordered he not receive unemployment benefits, overturning a lower court decision by Judge Joyce Dragunchuk of the Ingham County Circuit Court.

Embry is so incensed by the idea of trans students using the restroom appropriate for their gender identity that he thinks there oughta be a law against it. And dog gonnit, he done proposed one.

Equality Michigan Accepting Applications For Internships

The statewide advocacy and anti-violence organization serving the LGBT community is looking to fill internship positions. Students in any field of study can apply to be an intern for Equality Michigan (EQMI) in either the Detroit or the Lansing office. Current internships available include: communications, development and fundraising; field and advocacy; and public policy.

Each student will gain experience working with an LGBT rights organization, developing a broad set of skills that range from working with the media and lobbying elected officials to victim assistance and advocacy and event and issue organizing. Interns will also participate in staff meetings. EQMI interns may be invited to attend various speaking arrangements and outreach activities in other locations in addition to any responsibilities they will hold in their specific position.

The student’s institution is responsible for setting the number of credits for the position and whether or not they will receive monetary compensation for their work done at Equality Michigan. Each intern is expected to meet the requirements for their educational institution and EQMI.

To apply, submit a cover letter stating approximate dates and times of availability, including information as to why EQMI is an interest, what can be brought to the organization in terms of skills or experiences and what is to be gained by working with EQMI.

Send applications to: Equality Michigan Field Office, 19641 W. Seven Mile Road, Detroit, MI 48219-2721.
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Gwen Stefani On Why She Paints Her Sons’ Nails, Meeting Gays ‘Late In Life’ & Her (Lack Of) Girl Crushes

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

From bed in her Los Angeles home, Gwen Stefani insists she doesn’t mind doing her first gay press interview in a decade on her day off. “I love talking about myself,” the No Doubt frontwoman says, giggling.

Set to release her third solo album this spring, Stefani rang to open up about her “late in life” introduction to the gay community, the lesson she’s teaching her boys when she paints their nails and how hubby Gavin Rossdale has broadened her worldview.

You were raised Roman Catholic in infamously conservative Orange County. Considering this upbringing, what was your introduction to the gay community?

Oh, that’s a really good question. I’m going back in my brain. When did I get introduced? I think my first friend that I had was Mathu Andersen – that was pretty late in life. He’s a makeup artist that I met doing the “Ex-Girlfriend” video (in 2000), and he was with this guy Zaldy, a designer who’d eventually work on L.A.M.B. with me. Then Mathu introduced me to Danilo, who ended up being my hairdresser, who introduced me to Gregory Arlt, my (current) makeup artist.

These guys have become some of my closest friends over the years, and also the team that have helped me creatively on so many levels. It’s interesting how it feels. All the people that I’ve met in the gay community in my particular life have just been very creative people and people that have just
been friends to me in a way that I haven’t had in my life before that. It’s hard to put into words. I don’t know how to describe it, but it’s interesting because we can talk about so many things that we are all interested in and yet it’s different from having a guy friend or a girlfriend. It’s like having a creative partner.

When No Doubt first hit the scene, you were known for your tomboy image. Because of your style, were there times you were mistaken as a lesbian?

I don’t remember there ever being too many rumors about that. I think everybody knew my story, because when “Tragic Kingdom” came out I had broken up with Tony (Kanal), so everybody knew that “Don’t Speak” and all those songs were about that, so I think that’s probably why (there weren’t rumors). I was so young when all that started. I mean, I started the band when I was 17.

The way you’ve personally subverted gender norms seems to have influenced your three boys. You’ve gone with your oldest, Kingston, to get manis; also, he wore a tutu on his birthday. As a parent, how important is it to you to show your kids that there’s no wrong way to express themselves?

It’s one of those things where, it’s not like I don’t think about it, but they’re used to being around me, and I’m always doing my hair, makeup, nails. Their whole life is, like, sitting on my lap while I’m doing that surrounded by three gay men who are on me the entire time. (Laughs)

It’s just normal for them. What I like to say is that being unique and original is what makes me happy, and I think that rubs off on them. My sons did nails just the other day, and the only reason was because their nails were so disgusting! Like, they were in the mud and I was like, “We have got to do your nails! Why don’t we do ‘Nail Salon’?!”

I literally have 400 bottles of nail polish, so they took them all out and put them all over the bathroom. We really played “Salon” and we did tiger stripe nails. I said to Kingston, “Are you sure you wanna do pink, because you’re gonna go to school tomorrow? Are you sure you’re not gonna be embarrassed?” He said, “No, I don’t care; it’s a cool color.”

I just loved that. It’s really important more than anything else to not be talked into something, to stand your ground and to be able to be strong about what you feel. That’s what I like and that’s what I want them to learn – that being individual and being unique is important. Don’t be scared of that. I don’t want them to try to be like everyone else, and at that age, everybody just wants to have the same shoes everybody else has, and I don’t really like that. If they do want to, I’ll support that as well. You just want them to be happy. It’s a short life and it goes by so quick.

In 2012 you designed a marriage equality shirt for Target that said “Love Is Love.” What inspired you to raise awareness for marriage equality?

Overall in my life I’ve been shy to be too politically active in any kind of way. I’m a Libra. I’m all about balance; I’m not about confrontation. I feel like I’m sort of rebellious, but you said it – I grew up in a Catholic family. I was the peacemaker of the family. I just wanted everybody to be happy. So, taking a stand was – I mean, obviously I have my feelings about things, but I’m subtle about it.

That shirt was not meant to be a big statement. It can work for that, but it doesn’t have to be for that. It wasn’t meant to be like, “Oh, I’m making a huge statement here.” What I’m saying is that this shirt can work for anybody. It doesn’t matter who you are, what you do and what you think – love is love. Take it whichever way you want to take it.

In the spirit of the emoji-filled “Spark the Fire” single, what’s your most used emoji?

These days, luckily, they have a little spark and fire and cloud emoji, so I’ve been using those a lot. The thing is, they’re right up my alley. Emojis are the perfect thing. Like, of course we have to have those!

I’m surprised you didn’t invent them, actually. I wish that I did. I feel like they invented them for me. (Laughs)

Pharrell called “Spark the Fire,” which he co-wrote and produced, a feminist anthem, but you say otherwise. What does that song mean to you?

Yeah, for me, it’s not a feminist anthem. Our relationship is so interesting. I say to him, “You are so talented and incredible; how do you come up with this stuff? It’s blowing my mind.” And he’ll say to me, “It’s you. I wouldn’t have come up with this unless I got the energy you gave me that night.” And I didn’t do anything! It’s so weird. His interpretation of me is: He thinks that I need to be the torch for feminism. (But the song) was so perfect for my story – for what I was feeling in my own personal life – that I didn’t even get it as a feminist anthem. I thought it was just about me! I was just feeling me.

What’s so weird is, it works on two levels, but it’s very personal for me. If it’s working for (feminism) as well, that’s awesome. But with “Just a Girl,” too, I wasn’t trying to make a statement at all when I wrote that song. I never even thought that anyone would hear the song. I was just making a personal statement about my life, about me, and I feel like this is the same thing. It’s really about me, my journey and where I’m at in my life. It’s just very personal. I love the fact that it kind of has two faces. But it’s funny, because he’s so fired up about it. Watching my journey, he knows a lot about me personally that maybe not everyone knows, so he sees me in a different way as well. He sees me as being really strong, and I don’t really see that as much. It’s really an incredible relationship.
Gay Through Time

Peppermint Creek Takes On LGBT Rights, Aging In Couple’s Story

A lot can happen in 65 years – both in the life of a couple and in the world at large.

Lansing’s Peppermint Creek Theatre Company launches the U.S. premiere of a play by Neil Bartlett and the Handspring Puppet Company, the latter being the creators of the acclaimed “War Horse.” Like the latter, “Or You Could Kiss Me” features life-sized puppets to tell the more intimate story of a same-sex couple living in South Africa as they remember seeking the courage to fall in love in the oppressive period of 1971 and imagining the future of 2036 when they are facing the death of one of the couple’s members.

Director Scott Crandell found both the story and the way it was told compelling and something he wanted to stage when he was approached by Peppermint Creek’s artistic director Chad Badgero to direct as part of PCTC’s “Launching Pad” initiative, which sponsors recent graduates from college directing programs.

“It spoke to me because there is so much going on at once and it is distilled into a simple and intimate story,” Crandell says. “There is a lot of political undertones of South Africa and gay rights and themes of memory and aging and of death and of love and of love beginning and love enduring. It’s all told through a relatively simple story of a couple facing death. The story is told through, in part, puppets – that is how it is facilitated, and the show gives us an opportunity to look at this through a lens we don’t often see (through).”

Badgero was intrigued by the way the story covers so much time and tells of how things are changing in our world, particularly for same-sex couples.

“We’ve done quite a number of plays that jump in time, showing how ideologies have changed, particularly homosexuality. ‘Pride’ is a recent one,” Badgero says. “We see the difference in these two men from when they were younger to when they were older.”

He said that Michigan is a perfect place to tell this story because of its social and legal status concerning same-sex marriage.

“I still have living grandparents who remember the 50s, when no one talked about it,” Badgero says. “That’s changed. And for audiences, it will resonate how the issues of same-sex marriage and couples is so quickly changing before our eyes.”

Whereas the risk of being in love in 1972 is dangerous in South Africa and could result in death, their life changes in 2036, when same-sex relationships are a non-issue.

“In South Africa in the 70s, they were more militant about same-sex couples,” says Badgero. “In that regard, the two guys have a lot more secrecy and fear and danger in developing a relationship.”

The puppets used in the PCTC show were designed and created by Crandell, something Badgero said was ideal because he got to design them specifically to fit his vision for the play.

“(The playwright) was so articulate in this script about why the puppets were being used and why it has to be a puppet,” says Badgero.

Crandell agreed, saying the puppets become the medium by which the middle-aged couple can remember the past and imagine the future. The puppets embody the concepts of memory and imagination.

“There are scenes in this play that are important to everyone,” Crandell says. “They are important and timely in terms of our rights, and it gives us the chance to reflect on our lives.”
Gwen

Continued from p. 15

that we have and a surprise that I would be hanging out with him so much again (after “Hollaback Girl” in 2004).

There are obviously lots of gays who adore you, but how aware are you of all the gay love for your hubby, Gavin Rossdale?

Girls and guys love him because he’s a beautiful person. The thing about him is, growing up in London – it’s such a cool place to grow up because there is so much freedom there, and there’s so much exposure to so many different people and art. It’s just a different way of growing up compared to (my) growing up in Anaheim. With all the music that we grew up to – and the British invasion and Vivienne Westwood and everything that I love about London in the ’80s – it’s been really amazing to be able to have a friend and lover like Gavin because he is from London. He’s a smart, interesting person, and he’s this connection to something I was a fan of growing up and getting to know London, where I think so much music and fashion has come out of, and which has so much history for me.

Let’s take it back to No Doubt’s “Staring Problem” and all those “cute girls” who made you jealous. These days, who can’t you stop staring at? Who are your girl crushes?

I’m not feeling a girl crush right now. I really am not. I’m sorry! There’s nobody. But I have to say that I like a lot of the new Taylor Swift. There’s a few songs on that record that I like and she’s a good songwriter. Charli XCX is a very good songwriter too – she wrote songs for my record – and who else? I mean, my favorite all-time girl songwriter is Joni Mitchell, but I wouldn’t say I have a girl crush on her. (Laughs)

After 2012’s “Push and Shove,” No Doubt postponed their tour to make new music because you said you were feeling inspired at that time. But then there was no new music and no tour the following year. What’s the story there? What detailed plans for a new No Doubt album and tour?

I got pregnant, so I was blessed by my little Apollo. That was something that I wasn’t planning. We were in the studio, I got pregnant, and I was very sick during the pregnancy so I didn’t do anything. I was designing and doing stuff from home, and then I had the baby, and then four weeks later “The Voice” called.

So, you’re caught up to date to today: I did the (upcoming) record because I couldn’t do a No Doubt record that quick – there was no way – so I was like, “Let’s do some new music with being on (‘The Voice’),” and then Pharrell happened to be there and then we had a song.

Everything that happened since I got pregnant, including getting pregnant, has been a complete surprise, and it’s awesome. I love that I didn’t know any of this was gonna happen, and now I’m plopped into this new chapter. I feel like I’m on a journey and I’m at a totally different point in my life, and it just feels good to be doing something completely different, new and unexpected.

Everyone’s always surprised you’re 45. And it’s true – you look half your age. What’s your secret?

(Laughs) Thank you! I do not have any secrets. I’m doing what everyone else is doing – just trying to make it last as long as possible on all levels.
**OUTINGS**

**Thursday, Jan. 22**

Kathy Griffin 8 p.m. Tickets: 543-63. Olympia Entertainment, 2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit. 800-745-3000. Olympicentertainment.com

**Friday, Jan. 23**

Black HIV Awareness Day Gallery Opening Reception 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-396-7105. Goaffirmations.org

DJ Fudgie Jamming at Esquire 10 p.m. Lansing Lesbians-L2L, 1250 Turner St., Lansing. Meetup.com/Lansing-L2L

**Saturday, Jan. 24**

LGBTQ-Friendly Yoga Class Just B Yoga. 106 Island Ave., Lansing. Justbyoga.com

Michigan Pride Euchre 4 p.m. Pre-registration required. $15 per person. Michigan Pride and L2L, 404 N. Verlinden Ave., Lansing. Meetup.com/Lansing-L2L

TransCend TransCend provides support and resources to the Southwest Michigan transgender community, their significant others, family, friends, and allies. Meetings occur twice per month on the 2nd Wednesday and 4th Sunday. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

**Sunday, Jan. 25**

Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 3636 Lowden, Kalamazoo. Kglrc.org

Talk Tuesdays 6 p.m. Free. KICK, 41 Burroughs St. 109, Detroit. 313-285-9733. e-kick.org

Transgender Life Support 7 p.m. Affirmations, 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. 248-396-7105. Goaffirmations.org

**Monday, Jan. 26**


**Wednesday, Jan. 28**

Free to be Me Group 12:30 p.m. This is a support group for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer and their significant others, family, friends, and allies. Meetings occur twice per month on the 2nd Wednesday and 4th Sunday. Kalamazoo Gay and Lesbian Resource Center, 629 Pioneer St., Kalamazoo. 269-349-4234. Kglrc.org

**Saturday, Jan. 30**

Affirmations and statussexy.com will host the opening reception for an exhibit honoring black experience and HIV/AIDS awareness this Friday. This exhibit will be held in the Pittmann-Puckett Gallery located inside Affirmations. Artists were encouraged to submit entries that explore black experiences of sexuality, pleasure, and sexual health as well as entries related to HIV infection, HIV stigma, living with AIDS and other HIV/AIDS-related topics. For the exhibit, artists have submitted entries in different forms of media.

The opening reception is scheduled to run from 7 to 9 p.m. this Friday, Jan. 30. The Pittmann-Puckett Gallery is at Affirmations, located at 290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale. For more information, contact Lydia Ahlum Hanson, MSE, MPH, at 248-677-7223, visit goaffirmations.org or check out www.statussexy.com.

**Editor’s Pick**

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**The Chamber Music Society of Detroit “Jeremy Denk”**

Tickets: $10-60. Segerstrom Performing Arts Center, 22305 W. 13 Mile Road, Beverly Hills. 3 p.m. Jan. 25. 248-565-6070.

See Happenings, page 20

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**Editor’s Pick**

**Picnic Club Detroit** – an open group of artists, writers, urban planners, musicians and naturalists that use picnics as a platform to explore both place and the collaborative act of making – presents its first-ever exhibition, “Picnics in the Polar Vortex,” in Hamtramck. The exhibit asks, “What better way to explore art, ideas, perception, collaboration and making stuff than through picnics? By bringing it all to Public Pool, of course.”

The show, which opened with a party on Jan. 10, runs through Feb. 21. Featured are photos, artifacts and objects either found or made during the group’s first year of picnics and other related club projects. Past picnic locations have included the wild backlands of a corporate shopping center, the Belle Isle Aquarium and the Detroit People Mover.

“Picnics in the Polar Vortex” is located at Public Pool Art Space, 3309 Caniff Ave., Hamtramck. The gallery is open from 1-6 p.m. every Saturday. The exhibit is free. Check out www.abiblipool.com for more information.

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**Theatricals**

**Chambermusicedetroit.org**

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**Puzzle solution on pg 22**

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**ART ‘N’ AROUND**

**Ann Arbor Art Center - Allegorical Space** Featurng artists who use the landscape as a metaphor. Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 W. Liberty St., Ann Arbor. Jan. 2- Feb. 22. 734-994-8004. Annarborticketcenter.org

**Cranbrook Art Museum** “Warhol On Vinyl: The Record Covers, 1949-1987”* Drawing from the world’s preeminent collection of record covers by Andy Warhol, this exhibition showcases how Warhol used the record cover as a means to popularize his name and directly impact popular culture. Cranbrook Art Museum, 39221 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, June 21- Feb. 28. 877-462-7262. Cranbrookart.edu


**Pewabic Pottery** “Opening Reception for Ware Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing.” Pewabic Pottery, 10125 E. Jefferson Ave., Detroit. 6 p.m. Jan. 23. 313-626-2000. Pewabic.org

**Saugatuck Center for the Arts** “Permeated Surfaces” Original works from three Chicago based artists. Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 800 Olive St. Saugatuck, Dec. 12- Feb. 6. 669-2399. Sauc.org


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**Straights From The Heart**

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**Solution on pg. 20**

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LGBTQ&A Career Fair!

MARCH 5

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It is free to attend the LGBTQ&A Career Fair, but we ask that you pre-register at http://umdearborn.edu/careerservices

Affirmations and the University of Michigan-Dearborn are offering free, pre-career fair workshops for attendees to better prepare for the LGBTQ&A Career Fair, with professional advice on writing a resume, interviewing skills and negotiations. Go to www.GoAffirmations.org to learn more about these workshops.

The LGBT Career Fair is supported by these universities:
Central Michigan University, Eastern Michigan University, Ferris State University, Michigan State University, Michigan Tech University, Northern Michigan University, Oakland University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Michigan-Flint, Wayne State University, Western Michigan University.

For more information, contact: Mai Qazzaz or Julie Kell at 313-593-5020 or email mqazzaz@umich.edu