

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE LinesTM

MICHIGAN'S AUG. 4 PRIMARY

What to know, plus an
interview with Haley Stevens



THE **BLACK PRIDE** ISSUE

Be the author of your own joy – featuring Plant Kween,
Chelcea Stowers, Chris Sutton & Desiree Cooper

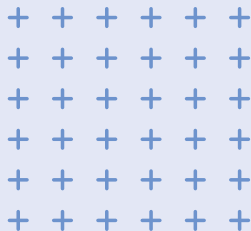
Dr. Paul Benson's



EST. 1980: THE ORIGINAL LGBTQ CLINIC IN MICHIGAN

Quality Health Care, Experience Counts

- Preventative health services & primary care for your whole family
- State-of-the-art facility: lab, x-ray, pharmacy on site
- Most insurances accepted
- Designated a "Patient-Centered Medical Home" by Blue Cross Blue Shield, a high standard of excellence



Since 1980, Be Well Medical Center has delivered compassionate, patient-centered healthcare. Led by Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein, our dedicated team prioritizes your well-being. As credentialed HIV specialists, we offer PrEP and Doxy PEP. Our inclusive approach ensures top-quality care for all backgrounds and lifestyles.

And now with Dr. Andrew Roberts, a dedicated pediatrician specializing in care for individuals from birth to 21 years. Our clinic is now a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ youth seeking primary care.

We maintain an extensive network of specialists to refer to as appropriate. We celebrate and embrace diversity and are non-discriminatory. **ALL GENDERS WELCOME!**

We are committed to provide quality health care and to serve our patients without regard to race, nationality, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, political preference, or sexual orientation. **Our priority is your good health.**

Three Locations



Be Well Medical Center
1964 11 Mile Rd,
Berkley, MI 48072
248-544-9300



Osborn Family Medical Clinic
13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248 544-9300



**Community Health
Awareness Group**
1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118



Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein



- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 Senate Candidate Haley Stevens Shows Us Her Receipts
- 8 'Black Summers' Turns Detroit Summers Into Stories of Black Queer Joy
- 10 Black Pride, Health Equity and the Power of Person-Centered Care (Sponsored)
- 12 Creep of the Week: Transgender Rights Are Not a Purity Test for Democrats
- 13 The Scroll: Palmer Park Picnic Anchors Hotter Than July's 31st Year
- 14 Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Honoring a Lost LGBTQ+ Legacy at Hotter Than July
- 16 Plant Kween Is Here to Remind You to Water Yourself
- 18 Michigan's Aug. 4 Primary: What You Need to Know
- 20 A Very Tori Interview: Provincetown Bears, Microdosing and Subreddits
- 22 How Chelsea Stowers Turned Her Biggest 'Flop' Into a Thriving Lesbian Community Network

Page 16



Christopher Griffin, aka Plant Kween. Photo: Phoebe Cheong

VOL. 3430 • JULY 23, 2026
ISSUE 1306

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP
www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS
Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL
Executive Editor and Brand Director
Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Director of Content and Community Engagement
Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

CREATIVE
Cartoonist
Paul Berg

Graphic Designer
Sarah Wolf

Contributing Photographer
Andrew Potter

ADVERTISING & SALES
sales@pridesource.com

Carolyn Cardenas
734-263-1476
carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers
734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF
Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate
Society of Professional Journalists



Pride Source

@pridesourcemedia

@pridesourcemedia

Pride Source

@pridesource.com

Email your op-eds to
editor@pridesource.com

Sign up online to receive our e-digest

Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2026

Delivered ~~Straight~~ to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get BTL delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

There are weeks for catching up on laundry, and there are weeks for catching up with your community. The next 14 days seem like the second kind. We've got Pride festivals still going strong, including the always-memorable Hotter Than July, a drag artist reclaiming gospel music and a chance to get all dressed up with somewhere to go. If your social media has FOMO on steroids, overrun with celebrities summering on their own private island or your friends getting together for a budget rental up north, here's plenty of local fun to break you out of the vacation-envy scroll habit.



Hotter than July at the 2025 Motor City Pride parade. Photo: Facebook/@igbtdetroit

Turn Up the Heat at Hotter Than July

LGBT Detroit's Hotter Than July is a full week of celebration marking the 31st anniversary of one of the country's longest-running Black LGBTQ+ Pride events, second only to D.C. "Visibility matters, community matters and creating spaces where people can show up as their authentic selves matters," says Joseph "Joe Black" Hunter, chair of the event's Annual Gathering Committee.

The event begins with a candlelight vigil, candidate forum and Avenue of Fashion bar crawl, and continues with an art and film festival and the beloved Palmer Park Picnic on Saturday, where thousands gather for food, music, community resources, family activities and one enormous afternoon of Black queer joy. The weekend includes the Hot Like Fire 2 dance party, a brunch and the annual worship service. Details at link.

July 23-26, various locations. Palmer Park Picnic: July 25, noon, Palmer Park (600 Merrill Plaisance St., Detroit). lgbtdetroit.org/hotterthanjuly.



Ann Arbor Pride, 2025. Photo: Facebook/@AnnArborPride

Make a Day (and Night) of Ann Arbor Pride

How is it that every year Ann Arbor Pride keeps getting bigger (attendance topped out at 20,000 participants last year) and somehow still manages to feel like a down-home hometown event? Whatever magic they've sprinkled over Liberty and Main Streets, you can have an amazing Saturday with three stages of entertainment hosted by long-time Ann Arbor Pride Entertainment Director Jadein Black, more than 200 vendors, a Kids Zone, food trucks and drag headliners Latrice Royale ("RuPaul's Drag Race") and Dominique Jackson ("Pose").

Aug. 1, noon-9 p.m., downtown Ann Arbor. annarborpride.com.



Flamy Grant. Photo: Ash Perlberg

Testify with Flamy Grant

If you've ever wished church had featured more sequins and significantly better eyeliner, Flamy Grant may be just the gift you've been searching for. The Billboard-charting drag artist blends gospel, folk, country and roots music into concerts that feel equal parts revival, healing circle and really good night out. With a joyful wink to Christian music superstar Amy Grant and beloved by queer folks navigating complicated relationships with faith, Flamy creates joyful spaces where authenticity gets the final word. Michigan is lucky enough to get a five-show run of appearances during Grant's Try Drag In A Small Town Tour: Marquette, Traverse City, Sawyer, Kalamazoo, Ann Arbor and Oakland Township.

Aug. 4-9, various Michigan venues. flamygrant.com.



TJ Rogers, Nicole Denson and Emme Zanotti at the 2025 Equality Michigan Wear Your Truth gala. Photo: Facebook

Glam Up For Good

That outfit you've been saving for just the right occasion? We're pretty sure this is it, and now is the time to snag that ticket. Equality Michigan's Wear Your Truth gala promises dancing, DJs, signature cocktails and mocktails, raffle prizes, late-night snacks and plenty of opportunities to celebrate and look amazing. Better yet, every ticket helps fund Equality Michigan's advocacy work protecting LGBTQ+ Michiganders across the state. Looking fantastic while helping

build a better future is a pretty efficient use of a Saturday night.

Sept. 12, 8 p.m., 215 West (215 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). equalitymi.org/events/wearyourtruth.

4



Become Somebody's First Welcome

Think back to the first LGBTQ+ event you ever attended in person. Odds are, you were wondering whether you'd know anyone, where to stand and whether everyone else had secretly been on a WhatsApp chain you somehow missed. The next time you attend a community event, look for someone standing alone and introduce yourself. That's it. One conversation. One "Hi, I'm..."

Communities don't grow because organizations exist. They grow because people decide to make room for one another, even (or perhaps especially) when it's awkward.

The next queer event, anytime.

5



EXPLORE THE DIA



At the Detroit Institute of Arts, creativity and expression come together in powerful ways. Roam the galleries, discover new artists, and experience one of Detroit's most inspiring cultural destinations.

Step inside at DIA.org

Senate Candidate Haley Stevens Shows Us Her Receipts

How she's outmaneuvered a hostile Congress to deliver for Michigan's LGBTQ+ community

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

When many of the country's centrist Democrats found reasons to lower their voices on LGBTQ+ rights after the 2024 election, Haley Stevens went in the other direction. The four-term congresswoman from Birmingham has spent the closing weeks of Michigan's U.S. Senate primary making the case that being a moderate doesn't require silence — and that you can fight discrimination and lower costs at the same time.

According to the most recent poll from the Detroit News and WDIV-TV, Stevens holds a lead of nearly 7 percentage points over rival Abdul El-Sayed, 48% to 41%, though about 10% of voters remain undecided just weeks before the Aug. 4 election.

The race is close enough that Stevens' pitch to LGBTQ+ voters — that she has a record of delivering, not just talking — could help decide who replaces retiring Sen. Gary Peters, who broke his own pledge to stay neutral and endorsed Stevens this month. She's also picked up backing from former Sen. Debbie Stabenow, EMILY's List and the most union endorsements in the race, including the Teamsters and a string of building trades, though the United Auto Workers backed El-Sayed, splitting Michigan's powerful labor bloc.

Stevens built her early reputation far from equality politics, serving as chief of staff to the U.S. Auto Rescue Task Force, the federal initiative that helped save General Motors, Chrysler and more than 200,000 Michigan jobs during the Great Recession, then flipped a long-held Republican seat in 2018 to win her House district.

As a legislator, she voted to pass the Equality Act in both 2019 and 2021. Last year, Advocates for Trans Equality named her a Trans Equality Champion, one of 134 members of Congress on the list. And Affirmations, the LGBTQ+ community center in Ferndale,



Haley Stevens. Courtesy photo

honored her with its Outstanding Ally Award in 2024.

The contrast with El-Sayed is less about their LGBTQ+ positions, which largely align, than about how each frames the work — and how the campaigns are funded. When BTL spoke with El-Sayed last month, the physician and former Detroit and Wayne County health director made intersectionality his central pitch, running a no-corporate-PAC campaign and arguing that real allyship shows up when it's hard and stays when the applause fades. Stevens, who has come under fire for accepting AIPAC funding, is

running in the establishment lane: a four-term legislator with a track record of moving money and passing bills, who leans on the argument that she already knows how to deliver under a hostile Congress.

In conversation with BTL, Stevens was warm and animated, tying equality to economics — recalling how she questioned discrimination as a kid in the '90s and the clever way she quietly steered federal dollars to Affirmations as Republicans stripped "LGBTQ" and "equality" from budget lines, while firmly rejecting the idea that defending trans kids means giving up on the

affordability fight at the heart of her campaign.

When Gov. Gretchen Whitmer spoke with us earlier this year, she raised a question a lot of community leaders keep asking: Where did all the allies go, and why have so many gone quiet? You're known as a centrist Democrat, but you haven't stepped back. Why not, and how do we maintain focus in this anti-LGBTQ+ political era?

It becomes inconvenient to focus on LGBTQ+ rights. And so then people back away. It's a hot potato. But I've noticed similar patterns, and honestly, what I've gotten from allies and advocates is a real sense of exhaustion and frustration. Sometimes it's just: Leave people alone. Let people love who they want to love. Let people be themselves. I was a kid in school with a lot of energy who sometimes was misunderstood — not for my sexual orientation or gender, but just for who I was. Now we see people getting backed into a corner in a similar way on these topics, but that's when we need courage the most.

For example, I know that Pride is a huge celebration, but it's also political activism. It can also be an entry point for every person in every zip code in our state and country — especially the young person who is afraid to come out because of the community they live in or their family. Pride can be that safe space, but it's also part of the activism and political work that I care so much about.

How did you become an ally?

Growing up in the '90s, I had a family member who was gay and a bit older than me. He really struggled with discrimination — going to private school in a Catholic community where he didn't feel safe coming out. That was just something I grew up around. It wasn't a big drama or something my family was ashamed of.

I just remember always rejecting that sentiment and feeling confused about why we couldn't talk about it. I grew up in a very open and loving family where discrimination was rejected and equality was celebrated. My mom and aunt are creatives, and I think that helped too.

Can you describe how you've shown up for the community over the years, going back to

when you first ran?

I was very intentional about it. The thing about the original Michigan 11th district is that it was very gerrymandered, intentionally, so a certain type of Republican would be able to get into office and hold it. There were no Pride events when I first put up my hand to run there. So I gathered my entire campaign staff, all my volunteers and friends and supporters, and we went loud and proud into the Detroit Pride parade. I made sure everybody voting for me knew where my values were and why I was running.

Through that work, I formed really deep relationships with mentors and advocates. Renee Weiss is an advocate in Livonia who started the first Pride event there. She's a guidance counselor, political advocate and activist who's very involved in the equality agenda. She's someone I rely on to guide my work, and I've stayed consistent and connected in advocating for our community — especially now as we see Trump back in a second term being so much more discriminatory and vocal about it.

The attacks his administration made right out of the gate when they got sworn in in January have been harmful, scary and hurtful. Our LGBTQ+ community has really paid a price.

A lot of our readers don't want every conversation to be about identity. They're focused on affordability, healthcare, housing, their kids' schools, too. How do you connect those everyday concerns to LGBTQ+ equality when you're talking with people?

There are a lot of layers to the pain,

frustration and fear going on right now, and it gets exhausting. What I've gotten from allies and advocates is a real sense of exhaustion and frustration.

But here's the thing: When we don't have the Equality Act passed and signed into law, discrimination in society makes everything else more taxing for minority communities and our LGBTQ+ community. I was proud to be there when the Biden administration codified gay marriage in the wake of the Supreme Court's overreach on healthcare and women's reproductive rights. But we got gay marriage — we haven't gotten the Equality Act.

When we have outright discrimination happening in society, it makes the affordability crisis all the more taxing. Think about the layers: housing, groceries, jobs, access. I've been part of efforts in Ferndale for affordable housing, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community. These things are connected.

My former constituent Aimee Stephens [whose firing led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling on trans employment discrimination], she didn't live to see the result of her fight. Fast forward to today, when losing a job, when healthcare and food assistance and other earned benefits are getting cut, these things lead to mental health crises and pain points. That's why I'm really proud that in a Republican Congress, I was able to get resources for Affirmations for mental health and to expand their reach.

Yes, you secured funding for Affirmations in 2024 while Republicans were striking the words "LGBTQ" and "equality" from budget line items. How did you get it through?

We snuck it in. The Republicans were striking anything that said LGBTQ+ or diversity or inclusion or equality from the line item in the budget. So I said, "I've got a community center looking to expand their programming and resources." We applied for funding, and when we got it, it was a huge celebration and a huge "stick-it-to-'em."

I was very proud to be able to do that. We worked on it collectively together and strategized, and that strategy worked. We had a big celebration at Affirmations when we were expanding the programming and infrastructure for their building.

You're running to move from the House to the Senate. How does your ability to advocate for our community change in that role — and why would you be more effective there?

One of the key differences between the House and the Senate is the weight of the role and the ability to force amendment votes on any piece of legislation. We see Republicans doing this grossly on the anti-equality agenda, and I question why we aren't putting it right back in their face. I'm eager to link arms from the local level to the state level to the federal level with advocacy organizations to be the senator this community deserves.

Right now I'm one of 435 members of the House, and even there, a single vote matters. Let me give you an example people don't see: At the end of 2024, in the lame duck of the Biden administration after Trump won the presidency and we'd lost the House and Senate, there was legislation coming down on the floor of the House. It had gone through conference between the House and Senate and was set for passage, but Republicans put an anti-equality poison pill into

that legislation around healthcare. I found it outrageous.

Some of my colleagues came to me asking, "Haley, how are you voting on this? Don't we want to pass this segment of our budget? It helps people. It helps families. It helps with our safety." I looked at my colleagues and looked over at the other side of the aisle and said, "In this new dynamic with Republicans running the House, Senate and White House, all I have is my vote, and I'm going to use it accordingly. I'm going to stand up to hate and anti-equality measures wherever I see it, because they are playing games and the intent is to hurt people."

I voted no. I had other colleagues do it with me. I did it very intentionally to lead for the rest of my caucus. You won't see that on Twitter. You won't even see it in a news article. But that was my lived experience on the House floor that day. I do not regret my vote for a minute. I do not regret any time I'm enabled to be courageous alongside people who need courageous voices and representation in critical moments.

You've been recognized as a Trans Equality Champion by Advocates for Trans Equality in 2025. Why is it important to you to say the word "trans" out loud and advocate explicitly at a time when a lot of politicians won't?

We see the words we use to talk about our communities now being targeted as "targeted language." It almost seems blasphemous to some people to say the word "trans," and I am not in that camp. I'm a proud, vocal and unapologetic advocate, and I'll tell you why.

I'm a daughter of a public school teacher. I've spent four terms on

the House Education and Labor Committee. I've sat in committee hearings where very conservative members of Congress force votes that are anti-LGBTQ+, talking about stripping mental health resources on college campuses for members of our community.

When I say I'm standing for equality, that's not against other economic agendas or items we need to get done in this country and for Michigan. Just look at Gov. Gretchen Whitmer — she's been able to walk and chew gum and make our state shine on the national stage with one of the fastest growing economies out of Covid because of her leadership.

The goal for those of us who are pro-equality is to see safety for students and children. We need our kids to be safe. Discrimination, hate, targeting, bullying and discrimination policies do not keep kids safe. I have strong working relationships with parents of trans children and with the community. If the GOP wants to come after me and mock up this interview and target and harass me for being an ally, they're even going against their own voters — some of those families do vote. It's ridiculous.

My message is: Leave families alone. Leave innocent children alone. Listen to advocates and groups. Listen to the parents. Listen to the students themselves, and provide the resources.

I'm in this field, and I know that everything tries to be a gotcha game, but I don't think that's making us safer. I don't think that's supporting families. I want to end discrimination. I want to have equality.

Find your sample ballot and verify your registration at vote411.org. The Michigan primary election is Aug. 4, followed by the general election on Nov. 3.



Psychotherapist
Sex Therapy
Life Coaching
Educational & Therapeutic Groups

313.689.3076 | www.starwellness.net | www.whatisaslut.com

‘Black Summers’ Turns Detroit Summers Into Stories of Black Queer Joy

Editor Desiree Cooper discusses the new anthology’s LGBTQ+ stories, Detroit roots and why summer remains a powerful site of memory and belonging

BY EMELL DERRA ADOLPHUS

Summer is more than a season in “Black Summers: Growing Up in the Urban Outdoors,” published recently by Wayne State University Press. Among the anthology’s 32 contributions of poems, essays, illustrations, creative nonfiction and even comics: a handful of queer-centered stories explore “glistening” basketball players, the thrill of “hide and seek” in Palmer Park and how a citywide blackout awakened a new journey of gender identity.

“How many times did I trek Palmer Park’s desire paths — and those paths veining the many other Palmer Parks out there — with men who’ve come to touch each other in all the ways this world cannot or won’t do?” ponders Tommye Blount in his story, “Desire Paths.”

Enjoying summer and coming to age in the late ’90s, a trans man named MARS. Marshall yearns to step into his true self as an adolescent watching beautiful men play the sport he loves. “As a kid, I dreamed of being among them, my sweat-drenched body quick on the fast break, effortlessly laying the ball in the hoop,” he writes in “Where the Run At.”

The image is unapologetically queer and unapologetically Black. And as a native Detroiters who grew up hearing of Boblo Island Amusement Park, the long shuttered Belle Isle tunnel, and feeling too gay, too Black or not Black enough for certain spaces, there is an emotional nuance in these varied stories for many LGBTQ+ people — even if some events took place decades ago.

Embedded in the book is also a sense of pride for all things Detroit, and Pulitzer Prize-nominated editor Desiree Cooper masterfully shapes the anthology’s stories into seamless memories that punctuate summer in the city from the ’50s to present day.

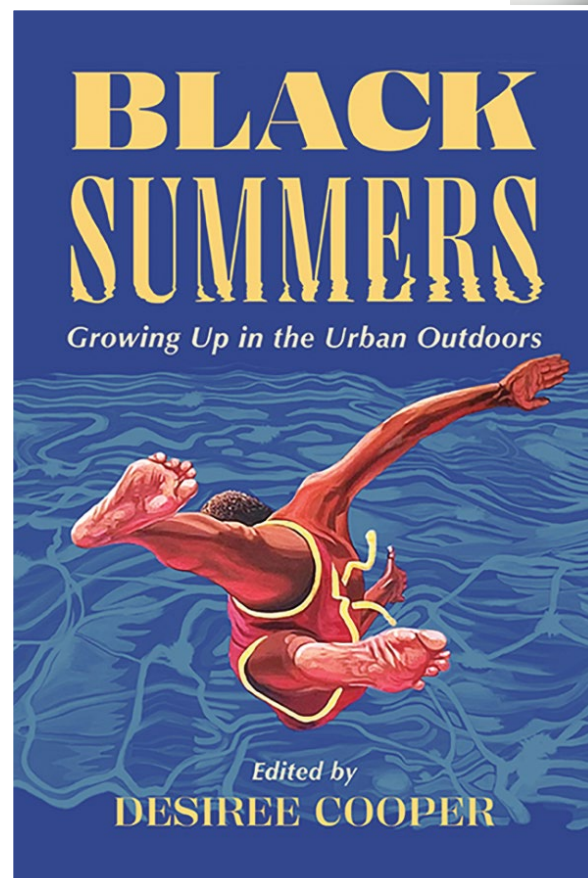
“I’m not really talking so much about documenting, ‘Black people are joyous people,’” says Cooper, who arrived in Detroit in the ’80s and spent 30 years living with a front seat to queer culture in the University District and Palmer Woods before she relocated South. Yet she still remembers the feeling of living in Detroit vividly.

“I’m more interested in documenting what we count as joy, what we feel is joy,” she says.

In Brittany Rogers’ poem, “Black Out, August 2003, Detroit,” there is also peace in the face of citywide darkness during the Northeast blackout of 2003, which lasted anywhere from two hours to four days depending on location.

“What is it about the end of the world, makes you think you are owed an explanation?” asks Rogers with a line as relevant today as it was then.

On a recent sunny day at A.B. Ford Park in Detroit — as kids of all ages stormed the grassy fields outside in celebration of the warm weather — Cooper invited a handful of the book’s contributors to read and reveal the emotions behind their stories. The results were both funny and full-hearted as tears of joy flowed over cherished moments. Here, Cooper shares a few moments of her own about how the book came together, Detroit and why there is something for everybody in the city.



Reading some of the stories was bittersweet because it reminded me of just how isolating life can be without a car to visit popular neighborhoods and third spaces such as Belle Isle and Palmer Woods, especially when it



Desiree Cooper. Courtesy photo

When I first moved to Detroit, I wasn't seeing it the way you're expressing it, but you're right. What were the outlets, you know? I know that there are places that were queer-friendly or queer-only. I understand that. But in the larger sense of the word, where was the place to let loose and just be part of the world? And that was before *Pride*. That was before *Hotter Than July*. I do think we want to be happy in the summer. We just really want to be happy.

There does seem to be a subterranean sense of joy in all the stories. In putting together the book, why do you think we remember summer with such rose-colored nostalgia? Is it because we spend so many months under snow and ice?

I'm going back to how I met summer in Detroit. My first years there, I was like, this is fantastic. I just loved how there was just so much about Detroit that no one ever talks about — and I was the new girl on the block coming in. I'm like, this is not anything like what I had read about this city; just how friendly it felt, and how happy it felt. There was a uniqueness around how people dressed, how they behaved, how they enjoyed the music, all the different food. No one would think chicken shawarma. How is that a Detroit thing? And *pączki*! None of that was on my radar. So I was very, very surprised by the joy in this city, that it felt unburdened.

Then winter comes ...

[Laughs.] Now when the winter came, I understood a little better how people were really kind of beat down by the gray, by the cold, and the things that are shut down, and the spaces look a little bit more foreboding. It's that Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde experience of the city.

I did limit [the book] to summer, and I did think, “Oh, I’m not going to be able to talk about Black folks who ski, or Black folks who ice skate.” But it’s confined to summer because [this] conversation has been affirming what a joyous time that is, or that we hope for in the summer, and how nostalgic we are about what summer means.

But it's not all sunshine and rainbows. The foreword pays tribute to the story of Sarah Elizabeth Ray, who fought discrimination all the way to the Supreme Court and won after being told to vacate the Boblo boat to Canada because she was "colored." In today's political climate, I think it's a moment many marginalized groups can relate to.

There is definitely that double life experience that the larger society doesn't understand, the dangers of summer that come along with

that joy. They don't understand how easily you can feel vulnerable, like a sitting duck, or like you're going to be humiliated out of nowhere when you're minding your business. You could be having the most innocent, wonderful time when that gets interjected. So I wanted to balance that, and I think most of the stories do touch upon this — this inclination to just let loose and have a great time and enjoy versus the trepidation of “how far can I go” or “what will happen if” that the majority culture does not have to think about.

What do you hope queer people take away from this book?

Maybe there's something about seeing how far a city, a group of people, has come. There's one piece I'm thinking about, "Desire Paths," which is talking about Palmer Park, which is a very different place now than it was when it was part of cruising culture. I don't even know if it's a double-edged sword; it might be just a sword for the community that found that was the only place to go to meet. And now it's all family time and picnics, and it's a very different vibe.

Then you take someone like Brittany Rogers, whose poem was about when the grid went down in 2003 and there was a blackout across the Northeast. I wouldn't say it was speaking exclusively from a queer perspective. It's by a queer writer, and therefore, in my opinion, everything that they write is imbued with that. There's a lot of freedom to talk about a lot of things out in public happening when the lights are out, like, I'm safer now to just experience what is happening around me without feeling othered in that moment.

So, I do think that the stories show [how far] Detroit has come, that the community has come forward and provided safe spaces where people don't feel vulnerable and can be themselves. We have a long way to go, but they exist. Part of what I have said about this is: Because joy is having a moment, you got to find your joy. You got to do joy.

Is that the ultimate message for people who pick up this book?

Stake your claim. In this country, in these spaces, stake your claim. It's yours. I struggle with being hopeless, and I will tell you it was interesting because I was full of despair as this book was coming to press. But I was on the track. I was invested in the story. I believe in the stories that are there, and I love the way people came to the page and really dug deep and told their stories. They deserve to be heard. And so if it's going to take us an underground railroad of readers to get the book out, then we're going to build us an underground railroad and get the book out. It's exactly what the book is about. You have to invent your own path. We know that we can do that because we have — hand to hand, word of mouth, building platforms for our voices, our stories, our culture, demanding a spot where we have earned it, and it's ours.

BELLE ISLE ART FAIR

August 1-2, 2026

Don't miss the award winning
Belle Isle Art Fair

August 1-2
Saturday 1-7, Sunday 11-5
Belle Isle Park in Detroit

*Take home
the beauty of
Belle Isle*



140 Juried Artists



Painting by Brant Georgia

Emerging & Heritage Artists



Mixed Media by Meryam Shao

EGLE - Grand Dome



Grand Art Dome by Adrienne Outlaw

Food Trucks



Specialty food and more

Make Art



Sponsored by EGLE

Make Music



Boredom Fighters Music Dome

Explore



Inflatables by Sean Hages

Favorite Artists



Donald Calloway mixed media

New to Detroit



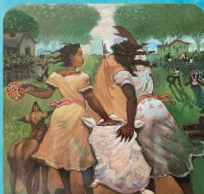
Jewelry by Ann Jalso from Gainesville, FL

Functional Art



Mugs by Marian Short

New to Michigan



Roeckerick Vines from Stone Mountain, Ga

BelleIsleArtFair.com




Black Pride, Health Equity and the Power of Person-Centered Care

How culturally responsive, person-first care can close gaps for Black LGBTQ+ patients

BROUGHT TO YOU BY CORKTOWN HEALTH

Each year, Black Pride celebrations honor the resilience, history, culture and contributions of Black LGBTQ+ communities. They also remind us that true equality is measured not only by acceptance, but by whether every person has a fair opportunity to live a healthy life.

For many Black LGBTQ+ people, healthcare has not always been a place of healing. The combined effects of racism, homophobia, transphobia, economic inequality and historical mistrust of medical institutions have created barriers that continue to contribute to poorer health outcomes. These disparities are well-documented, but statistics alone do not improve health. What

changes lives is care that recognizes each patient as a whole person with a unique story, lived experience and individual health needs. At Corktown Health, we believe health equity begins by listening.

Looking beyond the label

Identity matters. Understanding

a patient's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity is essential because these experiences shape how individuals navigate health care, experience discrimination and access resources. However, identity should never become a substitute for understanding the individual.

Too often, healthcare relies on assumptions instead of conversations. A patient's sexual

orientation or gender identity does not automatically define their health risks, just as race does not determine health outcomes. Two patients who identify as gay, transgender, bisexual or queer may have entirely different medical histories, support systems, behaviors, goals and health priorities. The most effective providers resist making assumptions. Instead, they ask thoughtful questions, build trust and develop care plans based on the person sitting in front of them. This is the essence of person-centered care.

Addressing health disparities through better conversations

Black LGBTQ+ communities experience disproportionately high rates of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, hypertension, diabetes, depression, anxiety, substance use disorders and barriers to preventive care. Persistent systemic discrimination has contributed to significant health disparities. Yet focusing solely on these statistics risks reducing individual patients to diagnoses or stereotypes. Providers must create space for honest conversations and ask questions that uncover the factors truly influencing health.

Does this patient have stable housing? Can they afford their medications? Do they feel safe in their relationships? Have previous experiences with discrimination made them reluctant to seek care? Are they experiencing isolation, depression or chronic stress? What preventive screenings have they missed — not because they were

Healthcare You Can Take PRIDE In



CORKTOWN
HEALTH

1726 Howard Street, Detroit, MI 48216

LGBTQ+ Focused Primary Care
Oral Health/Dental Care
Behavioral Health
Comprehensive HIV Services
HIV Testing & PrEP
Insurance Navigation
STI Testing & Treatment
Gender Affirming Care

Now Open in Hazel Park!

24310 John R Road
Hazel Park, MI 48030

call us at 313-832-3300
and learn more at
corktownhealth.org

See **Corktown Health**, page 23

From answering the call to joining the celebration



20k

veterans hired
since 2015

10k

more to be hired
by 2031

\$2MM

donated in FIFA World
Cup 2026™ tickets

We’ve proudly been serving communities around the country for 240 years.

Here in Detroit, we have an ongoing commitment to the veterans who make us stronger — helping them access careers, transition programs, housing, and now unforgettable experiences like FIFA World Cup 2026™ tickets.

What would you like the power to do?®



Learn more at BofA.com/Celebrating250

Tickets provided through Veteran Tickets Foundation (Vet Tix), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Availability is limited and subject to eligibility, registration, verification and Vet Tix/1st Tix terms. Bank of America is a promotional sponsor of FIFA World Cup 2026™. Ticket figures are based on Bank of America's June 3, 2026 announcement; military hiring figures are based on its September 17, 2025 announcement. Image is illustrative and has been digitally enhanced using artificial intelligence. Equal employment opportunity for persons with disabilities and veterans. ©2026 Bank of America Corporation. All rights reserved.

Transgender Rights Are Not a Purity Test for Democrats



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

I have always voted for Democrats. This means that for much of my voting life, I've been voting for people who did not support my right to marry or adopt a child or to be protected from discrimination.

Granted, I was voting against people who were very vocal about seeing me as a pervert hellbent on destroying the "traditional family."

So the choice wasn't hard. But it sure wasn't gratifying. I believed that Democrats would eventually come around and start supporting my civil rights. Because I had to. There was no chance that the Republicans were going to.

But I also didn't feel like Democrats were really fighting for me. Tolerating me, perhaps. But even Democrats who supported, say, my right to marry did so privately, lest saying it aloud would lose them votes.

Former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm comes to mind. In 2004, there was a ballot measure to amend the state's constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Granholm barely said a word about it. Voters ultimately passed it by a wide margin.

When it comes to the rights of transgender people — not just to marry, but to exist — it feels like 2004 again.

Now, I know that voters didn't vote against me, personally. But that's what it felt like. It hurt a lot to know that millions of people (2,698,077 to be exact) chose hurting people like me over not hurting people like me — and that was the choice. It's not like voting against the amendment would have bestowed upon me any kind of rights or benefits. It would have simply left things as they were.

At that time I was working for Pride Source's Between The Lines and I interviewed a couple for a story about

second-parent adoption. At least I think that's what it was. It was a long time ago.

The women knew Granholm personally. They considered her a friend. They said something about how she had to be politically strategic about the marriage amendment, but they knew where she stood.

I later interviewed Dan Savage. When the subject of the marriage amendments came up (Michigan was not the only state with a ballot measure regarding marriage in 2004), he made a comment about how quiet Granholm was on the issue.

I, an idiot in my 20s, came to Granholm's defense, assuring him that she opposed the measure. She had gay friends, after all.

His response was, basically, "Who gives a shit?" Who gives a shit what an elected official personally believes if she doesn't use the power she has to speak out against something like the marriage amendment?

I realized he was right. I then saw Granholm as a coward. I still do.

And now here we are in 2026. Marriage equality isn't on the ballot (the Supreme Court hasn't overturned Obergefell v. Hodges yet, though they want to) and most Democrats fully and openly support marriage equality.

But when it comes to the rights of transgender people — not just to marry, but to exist — it feels like 2004 again.

The Republicans have been hammering away at trans rights for years and the Trump administration is the most

vocally anti-trans in history. Trump is issuing executive orders with titles like, "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" and telling people that kids are having gender-related surgeries while at school.

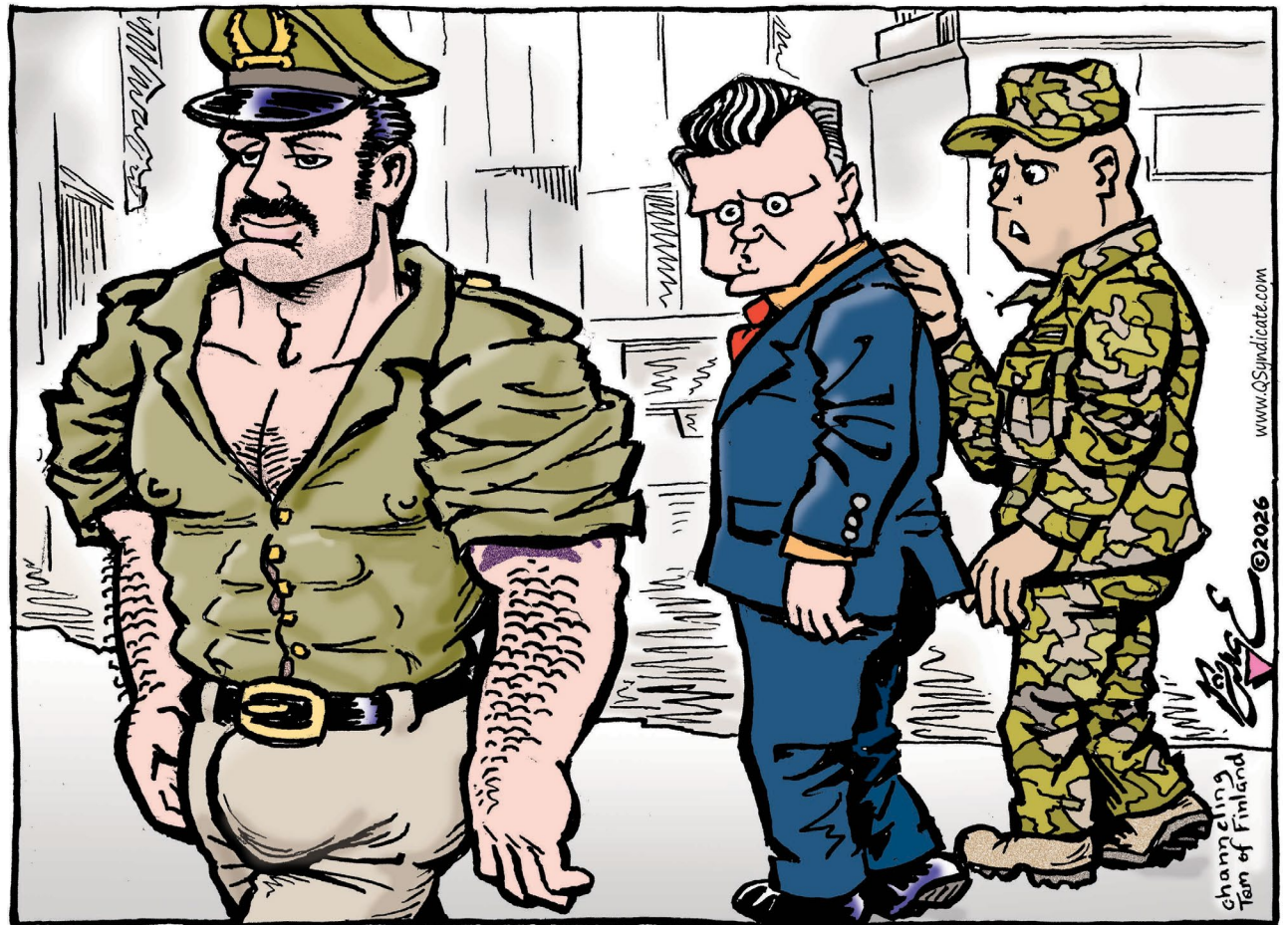
The list of trans rights that have been taken away or threatened include the right to use public restrooms, the right to serve in the military, the right to be around children (often framed as being anti-drag, but the root of the fight against drag is trans people), the right to play school sports, the right to gender-affirming healthcare and the right to read books that include transgender storylines and characters.

In case you haven't noticed, all of these things are incredibly personal. These are the kinds of rights you take away when you don't want a group of people to exist.

And not only are many Democratic candidates and elected officials silent on the issue (aside from a small number who are very vocal in their support of trans people), but they've decided that it isn't wise politically to support trans rights. In fact, they think it's wise politically to be vocal about how they don't support trans rights.

And yet there are still people who will tell transgender people that they must vote for Democratic candidates no matter that candidate's position on trans rights because the alternative is undoubtedly worse. And, yeah, the Republican alternative is worse.

But no Democrat deserves a vote from a single trans person if that candidate sides with Trump and the Republicans on trans issues. Trans people don't owe Democrats anything. Saying, "If you support measures designed to hurt me and help to dehumanize me, I will not vote for you" isn't a "purity test." It's self-respect.



THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Palmer Park Picnic Anchors Hotter Than July's 31st Year

.....

Palmer Park transforms into Detroit's largest Black LGBTQ+ Pride gathering Saturday, July 25, from noon to 6 p.m., as the Palmer Park Picnic caps this year's Hotter Than July festival. Now in its 31st year, Hotter Than July began in 1995 when activists organized in a one-bedroom apartment near what's now Comerica Park. It's grown into the world's second-oldest Black Pride celebration, hosted by LGBT Detroit, drawing around

20,000 people annually. This year's theme, "You Are/We Are Hotter Than July," honors that legacy. "Our committee aims to pay tribute to the numerous trailblazers who helped make Hotter Than July the community beacon it is today," said Chris "Inpaq" Sutton, the event's project manager. The picnic opens with a live entertainment showcase featuring Charlie B. Keyz, followed by the "Hotter Than July Star Search" drag competition, a house music DJ set and the "We Are Mini Ball," alongside community vendors, food and health resources. For the full week's schedule, visit hotterthanjuly.org.



Charlie B. Keyz. Photo: Instagram/@charliebkeyz

Michigan Schools Navigate SCOTUS Sports Ruling Impact

.....

Michigan schools won't be forced to immediately change how they handle transgender student-athletes despite a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding state bans on transgender girls in school sports. The decision centered on laws in Idaho and West Virginia, not a federal mandate, meaning Michigan's own policies remain intact. University of Michigan law professor Margo Schlanger told Watershed Voice the ruling's full implications are still unfolding. While more than two dozen states have adopted similar restrictions since 2020, Michigan lawmakers have not advanced comparable legislation. At the collegiate level, NCAA's existing policy stems from Trump's 2025 executive order barring trans women from women's sports. NCAA President Charlie Baker told CBS the ruling doesn't change anything, adding, "What happens at the state level is a different question."

Mid-Michigan Trans Candidate Running on Intersectional Platform

.....

J. Aaron "Lola" Bailey, a trans, bisexual member of the Democratic Socialists of America, is running for Mount Pleasant City Commission in the Aug.

4 primary. Bailey doesn't own a car, so she walks everywhere in the mid-Michigan city, and that daily view from the sidewalk shapes her platform. Bailey wants to diversify Mount Pleasant's service-heavy economy, building out a dedicated public transportation system, improving sidewalk safety and accessibility, strengthening renters' rights and strategizing on new growth. Bailey told BTL that trans people need more

representation in office, arguing that few cisgender allies are fighting as boldly as the community needs. For our full conversation with Bailey, including why she's encouraging other queer people to step into local politics, head to pridesource.com. And for more on candidates and issues leading up to the Nov. 3 general election, check out our 2026 Election Resource page at pridesource.com/topics/election/2026-election.

Pro Hockey Stars Announce Engagement

.....

Professional Women's Hockey League stars Emily Clark, of PWHL Hamilton, and Jaime Bourbonnais, of the New York Sirens, announced their engagement this month with matching Instagram carousels. "Forever and ever and ever!!!" Bourbonnais wrote. The couple, who kept their relationship low-key while playing on the same team, said they wanted to open up for others navigating similar journeys. "I want someone to be able to relate to us," Bourbonnais said.

BTL Columnist Launches Epstein Survivor Fundraiser

.....

Anni Arbour, who writes the "Trans Lucent" column for Between The Lines, launched a GoFundMe (tinyurl.com/AvaCordero) for Ava Cordero after profiling her in May. Cordero was 16 when Epstein began abusing her under the promise of a modeling career. Media outlets mocked her transgender identity when she sued in 2007. After agreeing to a small settlement, she has experienced homelessness while living with HIV and has been denied access to the broader Epstein victims' fund.

'Heartstopper Forever': A Bittersweet Sendoff

.....

For three seasons, "Heartstopper" gave queer viewers a shame-free coming-of-age story many never got themselves. The series closed July 17 with a feature-length finale, "Heartstopper Forever," now streaming on Netflix, following Nick (Kit Connor) and Charlie (Joe Locke) through a rough patch as college looms. Critics call it a bittersweet, fitting sendoff, with Connor and Locke's chemistry carrying real emotional weight throughout.



Kit Connor and Joe Locke in "Heartstopper Forever." Photo: Netflix

Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Honoring a Lost LGBTQ+ Legacy at Hotter Than July

A new film celebrates Club Heaven and the Black queer joy that danced there

BY DAMON “MAGIC” PERCY

When filmmaker Chris “Inpaq” Sutton walked into LGBT Detroit in 2011, he found what many young queer creatives search for — a space that saw him beyond surface and a community that valued his artistic vision. He has been there ever since, documenting the organization’s most vital moments and the stories of Detroit’s Black queer community. His newest film, “Heaven in Detroit,” represents the fullest expression of that 15-year partnership. The short narrative honors the legacy of Club Heaven, the iconic gay nightclub that anchored Black queer nightlife during the 1990s, with a story that unfolds during the club’s final night. It’s told through the eyes of a young man named Marcus, who is grieving the loss of his mother while dancing through the energy and flavor of that era.

The film arrives as LGBT Detroit prepares to celebrate Hotter Than July, the organization’s annual Black LGBTQ+ Pride gathering. The timing feels particularly resonant because Sutton’s work is fundamentally about protecting spaces and honoring the cultural legacy of those who created them — a mission that runs through everything LGBT Detroit does.

Sutton’s film will premiere exclusively during the Hotter Than July Art & Film Festival, held from 6 to 9 p.m. on Friday, July 24 at LGBT Detroit’s Marvin Lee Building. The evening celebrates Black LGBTQ+ storytelling through film, art and community, with an eclectic lineup of official selections including the coming-of-age drama “To Move in My Mother’s Prayers,” the lyrical documentary “Handwoven” and the Afro-surrealist short “SYZYGY.” The festival will also screen Philip Johnson’s sci-fi series “Jamaal: Love Code” and honor the life and legacy of Detroit artist Duane Belin, whose Liberal Arts Gallery inspired generations of local creatives.

Sutton says that his transformative first meeting with



Still from “Heaven in Detroit.” Courtesy photo

LGBT Detroit executive director A. Nzere Kwabena changed his trajectory as an artist. “Walking into that space was the first time I felt seen as a creative, not just seen for my height or skin color,” he says. That connection led to a 15-year collaboration shaping both his artistic practice and the organization’s visual documentation of Detroit’s queer community.

Growing up as a young Black boy in Detroit, Sutton was frequently steered toward sports, but he gravitated toward the creative tools that fueled his developing imagination. He studied at Wayne State University and completed his education at the Center for Creative Studies. His first major project with LGBT Detroit came after filming a short video highlighting the House of Mizrahi mini-ball at the annual Hotter Than July picnic in

2011, which led to his involvement documenting the organization’s Leadership Academy.

Since then, Sutton has worked on numerous projects including collaborations with Affirmations, Ruth Ellis Center and Trans Sistas of Color Project, as well as the Femme Queen Chronicles and the documentary “What’s the T.” But “Heaven in Detroit” stands as his most ambitious and personal work to date.

Unearthing a lost legacy

When Sutton began researching Club Heaven, he discovered the story largely through oral history. He did not know the history of KICK, now LGBT Detroit, when he began working there — it had started as a magazine, and the first

issue featured the House of Charles being filmed inside Club Heaven by Christopher Cushman. Through conversations with community members like Magic, DeAngela Shaw and Shannon, he heard stories of a place many described reverently. “I would sit and listen to the stories after meeting people in real life who talked about Club Heaven like it was a revolution,” he says.

By the time Sutton was experiencing Detroit’s nightlife, those venues were disappearing. He notes The Woodward as his initial foray into the community; it, too, is gone now, lost to a fire in 2022. “Those stories of dancing all night sounded like a fairy tale,” he says.

Sutton believed Club Heaven’s story was so powerful it demanded to be told, but he knew it would be a challenge. Few photos documented the inside of the space, as owner

Ken Collier rarely allowed cameras. Most existing visual documentation focused on Detroit Sound Conservancy’s restoration of the legendary sound system. But the emotional and cultural significance of the space remained vivid in the memories of those who had been there. “Being blessed to be in spaces with people who have pioneered things in the community and have experienced Heaven and other spaces that do not exist anymore” shaped his approach, Sutton says. “I believe that Club Heaven was a beacon for the community, with pioneers like Ken Collier and Stacey Hotwaxx Hale crafting what we have now.”

Planning for “Heaven in Detroit” began in 2017 with a straightforward mission: honor the legacy of Club Heaven and the people who made it possible. But life intervened. During early development, Sutton’s mother suffered a major stroke, and his focus shifted as he became her caregiver. “It was a life-changing moment for me and taught me how to make the most out of every day,” he says. His vision for the film’s narrative evolved to explore finding chosen family and healing through dance and music — themes that would become central to the story.

Then came 2020 and the pandemic, which paused the project for three years. During that time, Sutton’s beloved mother passed away. Her death deepened the personal stakes of the film even further. The story at its core remained honoring Club Heaven and the people who made it possible, but it transformed into something more intimate — one about finding chosen family and healing in grief, specifically through Marcus, the lead character.

“It’s now a story that honors my mother,” Sutton says. “There is a spiritual component through dance and music. You can reconnect on the dance floor with the people that you lost — a parent, a lover,

See **Heaven in Detroit**, page 19



YOU/WE
ARE
HOTTER
THAN
july

**JULY 23
TO
JULY 26**

CELEBRATE WITH US AT
HOTTERTHANJULY.ORG

POWERED BY
 GILEAD | HIV

OFFICIAL SCHEDULE

**JUL
23**

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

5:30 PM | PALMER PARK | 600 MERRILL PLAISANCE ST | DETROIT, MI 48203

**JUL
23**

ANNUAL GATHERING: CANDIDATE FORUM

7 PM TO 9 PM | MARVIN LEE BUILDING | 20025 GREENFIELD RD. DETROIT, MI 48235

**JUL
23**

AVENUE OF FASHION: BAR CRAWL MIXER

9 PM TO 12 PM | MORE DETAILS COMING SOON ON HOTTERTHANJULY.ORG

**JUL
24**

ART + FILM FESTIVAL (HONORING DUANE BELIN)

6 PM TO 9 PM | MARVIN LEE BUILDING | 20025 GREENFIELD RD. DETROIT, MI. 48235

**JUL
24**

CLOSE FRENZ PRESENTS: INFERNO

9 PM TO 2 AM | TIP TOP SHOW BAR | 440 E LAFAYETTE ST, DETROIT, MI

**JUL
25**

PALMER PARK PICNIC

12 PM TO 6 PM | PALMER PARK | 600 MERRILL PLAISANCE ST | DETROIT, MI 48203

**JUL
25**

HOT LIKE FIRE 2 (HOSTED BY: CLOSE FRENZ)

7 PM | PANDORA'S BOXX | 6221 E DAVISON ST, HAMTRAMCK, MI 48212

**JUL
26**

WORSHIP SERVICE (HOSTED BY: ONE CHURCH DETROIT)

11:00 AM TO 2:00 PM | LGBT DETROIT | 20021 GREENFIELD RD. DETROIT, MI 48235

**JUL
26**

CLOSE FRENZ PRESENTS: SUNDAZE - APPRECIATION PARTY

1 TO 5 PM | CIELO ROOFTOP (CAMBRIA HOTEL) 600 W LAFAYETTE BLVD, DETROIT, MI 48226

**JUL
26**

UPSIDE DOWN: STROLLING BRUNCH (HOSTED BY: IMAGINE THIS PRODUCTIONS)

5 TO 8 PM | THE CHARLEVOIX GALLERY | 14505 CHARLEVOIX ST. DETROIT MI 48215

PRESENTED BY

GILEAD SCIENCES • CNS HEALTHCARE • COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARENESS GROUP • STELLANTIS/PRISM • T-MOBILE • VIIV
HEALTHCARE • FOOD FOR THOUGHT CATERING • ONE CHURCH DETROIT • BLACK BEAR BROTHERHOOD • BOWERS REALTY &
INVESTMENTS • CLOSE FRENZ • THE GENTLEMAN'S NETWORK • PANDORA'S BOXX • VIVENT HEALTH

Plant Kween Is Here to Remind You to Water Yourself

Christopher Griffin on what it means to be the author of your own joy

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

If your social feed has ever stopped you mid-scroll because a monstera looked like it's been better-tended than you have, you've probably already found Christopher Griffin — known to their 800,000-strong plant-loving community as Plant Kween.

Griffin — @plantkween on Instagram and author of “You Grow, Gurl!” — has turned houseplant care into something much bigger than watering schedules and sunlight charts. For the Brooklyn-based creator, tending to greenery is about tending to ourselves: nurturing softness in a world that demands hardness, especially from Black, queer and nonbinary folks. What began as a love passed down from a grandmother Griffin describes as a “goddess” has grown into a platform rooted in care, curiosity and radical community-building — one that now extends from practical plant advice and work with New York institutions like Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden to their newest video series, “Experimenting With...,” in which Griffin turns the camera inward to explore everything from bilateral hearing loss to roller skating to makeup.

BTL caught up with Griffin to talk plants, Black queer joy, the politics of green spaces and why a humble houseplant might just make us better at holding the line for each other.

How did you become Plant Kween?

It started when I was younger. I was obsessed with my grandmother — this Black woman in the church scene. I felt like she was a goddess in my family. She introduced me to plants, and then later in life, I bought my first one and I still have it. It's [at least] 14 years old. So I started testing different ways of showing up online and finding people, community-building and using it as an opportunity to build

bridges. Now it's turned into this amazing multidisciplinary space where I get to explore myself and my interests and float into spaces that I wouldn't have access to if I was still working as an educator.

What does it feel like to do what you're doing now and how did you make that shift from academia?

It feels like a dream. Ten years ago, if I knew this is how I'd be making money, I would have been like, “Girl, shut up. There's no way.” The shift was very gradual. After working at Harvey Milk High School as a college counselor, I went and worked for NYU for nearly a decade in student activities. I was working my nine-to-five and casually posting, and then I got my first brand deal just on my own. It was like, “We want to pay you \$4,000 for a video,” and I was like, “All I gotta do is be on camera? I do this every day at my job at NYU.” The perception of the value of my time changed completely. Then the pandemic hit. I was home, bored as hell. That's when it really skyrocketed.

Do you see plant care as part of nurturing spaces that sustain us when the world doesn't?

It's one method. There's different pathways to caring for ourselves, or nurturing the nurturer within us. Plants can teach us to sit still. With how technology has us wrapped around its finger, I think it's important for us to just sit with something real. It's a very low threshold: a living being that you can practice on in terms of care. Like, what kind of nurturer are you? What are the various different ways that you can care for yourself? Are you drinking water? Are you giving yourself room to grow? Are you pruning those dead, yellowing leaves that you need to let go of so you can refocus your energy on other things? Are you



Christopher Griffin, aka Plant Kween. Photo: Phoebe Cheong

getting yourself in sunlight?

Caring for a plant is basically an empathy-building tool.

It really is. And that's something that we can all be better at practicing because we need more of it.

As a Black queer creator, what does activism look like for you right now?

I think when it comes to activism, as it relates to any marginalized community, we often pay attention to the most visible forms of activism: protesting, literally being on the front lines. But I think of us functioning as a clock. There's multiple pieces that have to happen, there's different jobs that we all have to do in order to make this clock work and to help our community continue to move forward. And some of it is not super visible, some of it is just maybe donating money, maybe it's reallocating resources, maybe it's watering people that can't water themselves.

For Black, queer, trans, nonbinary folks, none of this is new. I grew up with an understanding of how I was perceived in the world, and that was concentrated around my Blackness. My parents really were like, "You are a Black, flamboyant boy in America." That really prepared me with a level of confidence and a foundational love that has allowed me to be strong in these times and to stand on my own two feet, and to understand my self-worth, to know that the hate and the negativity that folks put onto me has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with them.

So holding the line for me lately has been existing unapologetically in my truth. It has been holding space for family and friends who are going through times and just need a listening ear. I have been told that I give good hugs, and that I have rejuvenating energy.

Your joyfulness can be seen as a kind of defiance. Do you see it that way?

For me, I think joy is that fuel that keeps us going. Joy is us saying, "Despite everything you're trying to throw at us, I still know who I am." It's understanding that these systems were really never for us, and that we have to manifest that joy for ourselves. My grandmother would always say, "I'm the author of my own joy."

Growing up in a country where we were marginalized communities, we're never really thought of. When they were creating all this, they didn't have us in mind. So we do have to be the authors of our own joy. We do have to create those systems. We do have to create systems of community care. And so, for me, my community care is a part of the work that I do. I've always been in service of other people, whether I'm

educating them, whether I'm empowering them, whether I'm giving them some food for thought for them to figure out.

Was it intentional to disrupt the idea that plant expertise belongs only to certain groups of people?

Black folks have always been a staple in horticulture. If you want to go back, you can talk about slavery. We were the ones tending the land. Then prior to that, our ancestors on the motherland, they were tending the land, and they were learning from us. And then also, if you think about Indigenous folks, they were tending the land in ways that Europeans had no knowledge of. So we've always been stewards of the land. So it started off, quite selfishly, as just a passion that I was just interested in. Then I was like, well, where are the other Black, queer, nonbinary folks? That's when I was like, let me turn this into an opportunity to invite other people, through my own visibility. I've built relationships with a lot of the community gardens here and it's important for us to take up spaces in these white-ass institutions. We have to take up space. We have to show up. So that has been a lot of my work. But when we talk about houseplants in particular, what I hope is not only when it comes to Black and brown, queer, trans, nonbinary bodies in horticulture, because nature is inherently queer, that if I can get you to care about the plant in your living room, maybe you'll care about the tree on your block. If you care about that tree, maybe you'll care about the park in your neighborhood. Maybe that'll get you curious about community gardens in your area.

You've worked with institutions like Prospect Park and Brooklyn Botanic Garden. What changes would you like to see to make those places feel more inclusive for queer and BIPOC communities?

Brooklyn Botanic Garden has Pride Nights, which is amazing. They offer community tickets — tickets that are free. Central Park and Prospect Park have been providing resources for folks in the area, and providing opportunities for education outreach.

So they're doing the work. It's just, let's do more of it. Unfortunately, when it comes to funding, when it comes to care, when it comes to green spaces, less than 1% of New York City's budget goes toward green spaces.

Your TikTok series, "Experimenting With," touches on everything from roller skating to makeup to hearing

See **Plant Kween**, page 26



COME AS YOU ART.

A summer of queer creativity, community, and expression

FEATURED EXHIBITIONS

HOW WE HOLD

by Quinn Faylor | June 12 - Aug. 26, 2026

A2AC GALLERY

Detroit-based queer, non-binary artist Quinn Faylor creates vibrant sculptures and paintings exploring care, transformation, connection, and joy.



STOP IN DURING ANN ARBOR PRIDE:

PRIDE CARNIVAL Saturday, Aug. 1 12-2:30pm

Block Printed Bandana: \$15
Ceramic Worry Stones: \$15
Both Projects: \$25
Buttons: Free! | Ages: 7+



PRIDE PROGRAMMING ALL SUMMER LONG

August 3-5: Balance & Play: Mobile-Making Workshop w/ Quinn

August 7: Pride: Give It a Whirl! (wheel throwing)

ALL SUMMER LONG: Be Exactly Who You Are!



annarborartcenter.org

117 W. Liberty, Downtown Ann Arbor

A2AC
THE ANN ARBOR ART CENTER

Michigan's Aug. 4 Primary

What You Need to Know

Key Primary Races

Michigan Governor

Democratic Primary: Jocelyn Benson (Michigan Secretary of State), Chris Swanson (Genesee County Sheriff)

Republican Primary: John James (U.S. Rep), Perry Johnson

U.S. Senate

Democratic Primary: Abdul El-Sayed (physician), Haley Stevens (U.S. Rep)

Republican Primary: Mike Rogers (former U.S. Rep)

Still torn between Haley Stevens and Abdul El-Sayed ahead of the Aug. 4 primary? You're not alone — our recent candidate pieces sparked some of the most passionate debate we've seen from readers this cycle. We sat down separately with both Senate hopefuls to talk LGBTQ+ rights, AIPAC funding and the war in Gaza, affordability and healthcare, and what each would actually do with a Senate seat. Head to pridesource.com for the full head-to-head, straight from our interviews.

Michigan LGBTQ+ Primary Candidates

U.S. House District 10: Eric Chung (D), ericchungformichigan.com

U.S. House District 11: Jeremy Moss (D), votejeremymoss.com

Michigan House District 2: Joanna Whaley (D), joannawhaley.com

Michigan House District 5: Kali Scales (D), votekaliscales.com

Michigan House District 8: Chris Gilmer-Hill (D), chrisgilmerhill.com

Michigan House District 9: Tony Mua (D), tonimua.com

Michigan House District 14: Mike McFall (D), votemcfall.com

Michigan House District 17: Laurie Pohutsky (D), lauriepohutskyformichigan.com

Michigan House District 20: Noah Arbit (D), noahformi.com

Michigan House District 23: Jason Morgan (D), votejasonmorgan.com

Michigan House District 77: Emily Dievendorf (D), emilydievendorf.com

Michigan State Senate District 7: Jason Hoskins (D), vote-jason-hoskins.com

Michigan State Senate District 9: Brendan Johnson (D), brendanformichigan.com

Michigan State Senate District 10: Amanda Treppa (D), treppaformichigan.com

Oakland County Probate Court Judge: Elisabeth Dery, deryforprobatejudge.com

Ann Arbor City Council Ward 5: Jennifer Cornell (D), a2jenn.org

Mount Pleasant City Commission: J. Aaron Lola Bailey (DSA), @BaileyForMountPleasant



(Clockwise from top left): Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. Courtesy photos

A primary election lets voters select which candidates from their party should advance to the general election in November. This year's Michigan primary is particularly significant because voters are choosing nominees for governor, U.S. Senate and U.S. House seats — races that will shape policy on healthcare, the economy, reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ protections and more. For a sample ballot and voting information tailored to your address, visit vote411.org.

Visit pridesource.com for more 2026 election coverage.

a friend. And by being vulnerable to that, it provided huge motivation to the story.”

In 2023, as his approach continued evolving, Sutton applied for the Detroit Narrative Agency Film Fellowship and became one of four recipients. Over the next two years, director and writer Steven Winters (who directed and wrote “Chocolate Baby”) served as his mentor, working alongside producer and co-writer Miles N. Reuben to help Sutton find a deeper voice within the story. They pushed him to explore the personal dimensions he was carrying into the work.

As his largest project to date, “Heaven in Detroit” challenged Sutton as an artist in ways his documentary work had not. The shift toward narrative filmmaking required complex character development and multiple script revisions. One of his biggest realizations was learning to trust his team rather than treating the project as a one-person endeavor. “Anything that you are passionate about, there are going to be challenges and you have to believe enough in your vision and the story that you are telling,” he says.

Sutton had to confront how his own presence shaped the production. As director and co-writer, he recognized that his energy and focus directly impacted the entire team. He also learned to accept honest feedback — something he says is necessary, even when it stings. “Be honest with yourself, your team and let them be honest with

you. It may be harsh, but it’s necessary,” he says.

Sutton describes his work as focused on creating emotionally impactful

as a homage to those who create safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people of color, honoring those who existed at a time when being yourself was your armor and



Chris “Inpaq” Sutton. Photo: Andrew Potter

stories that connect on a spiritual level. He emphasizes the importance of protecting safe spaces and honoring cultural heritage. He wants other creatives to understand that even when larger forces fight against your art, you still create it. The key, he says, is believing deeply enough in your vision to research it thoroughly, listen to the people with lived experience and ask yourself what the story means to you personally.

“Put yourself and your work in rooms that would not otherwise have you,” he recommends.

“Heaven in Detroit” ultimately serves

the dance floor was our refuge. It is also a tribute to a mother’s unconditional love and to a community that helps one another find freedom.

“This is what the vision is, and owning what you believe in — that’s power,” Sutton says. “To honor those who have come before you, and if you can tell their stories, by all means do it. And keep telling and owning your own, always.”

“Heaven in Detroit” will premiere at the Hotter Than July Film Festival on July 24. Visit lgbtdetroit.org for details.



Don Chisholm, REALTOR®
(248) 425-4366
DChisholm@RealEstateOne.com
www.DonChisholmRealtor.com



Your Personal Advocate



- Friendly, Professional Service
- Empowering You Through Education
- Serving the Woodward Corridor and Beyond!



Real Estate One
26236 Woodward Ave.
Royal Oak, MI 48067



Michigan's Largest Real Estate Company

D	I	M	A	G		H	O	L	A		P	E	S	O
O	N	E	N	O		E	N	O	L		R	E	E	K
H	I	S	T	O	R	I	C	A	L		O	L	L	A
	T	H	I	S	U	S	E	D	T	O	B	E	M	Y
					E	M	T			O	P	E	R	A
S	E	T	T	E	E		P	A	L	S				
P	L	A	Y	G	R	O	U	N	D		H	E	R	D
I	S	I	N	G		B	R	O		C	A	M	E	O
T	A	L	E		B	O	R	D	E	R	L	I	N	E
					P	I	E	S		B	U	T	L	E
S	E	A	D	O	G				O	E	D			
P	A	P	A	D	O	N	T	P	R	E	A	C	H	
I	G	O	R		T	O	M	A	T	O	S	O	U	P
E	L	L	E		E	L	A	L		I	T	S	M	E
L	E	O	S		D	O	N	S		L	O	T	S	A

Songs of Madonna
Puzzle can be found on page 25

Ruth Ellis Clairmount Health and Wellness

313-484-5888

Primary Care

- All ages welcome
- Sick visits
- Physicals
- Accept most insurances
- Management of chronic conditions



Sexual Health

- Comprehensive STI testing and treatment
- Contraception
- Partner services
- Poly and sex positive



HIV Prevention and Treatment

- Oral and injectable PrEP for HIV prevention
- HIV treatment and monitoring



Gender Affirming Care

- Gender affirming hormones
- Gender inclusive PAP/GYN services
- Surgical referrals



HENRY FORD HEALTH

Ruth Ellis Center

A Very • Tori Interview



Tori Amos.
Courtesy
photo

Provincetown bears, microdosing and subreddits: Tori Amos discusses it all

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

I've talked to Tori Amos enough times now that I no longer blink when the conversation drifts to witches, demons, fairies or the slow-motion collapse of democracy — often within the same sentence. Her 18th album, “In Times of Dragons,” is no exception to how her mind meanders through her own particular cosmology: a record where menopause becomes a dragon, an alternate version of her life becomes a confession and a gay man from Brooklyn exists as a witch.

There's a “lizard demon” on this album — Amos's amalgamation of several real, powerful men, built from information offered to her by political journalists in her orbit. There are bears, from Provincetown, one of whom texted her a photo the night before we spoke. And there's Amos doing what she's always done better than almost anyone: taking in everything — letters given to her by strangers on a book tour, hot flashes, tyranny, queer history, her own near-misses with a different kind of life — and turning it into something only she could have written.

Ahead of a tour that brings her to Detroit's Fox Theatre on Aug. 7, we got into all of it: the imagined version of Tori who might have chosen to be “yacht rock dangerous,” why Provincetown earned its own song, microdosing mushrooms with someone who “has her scales out,” and why she finally felt called to document this moment instead of escaping into it.

For Amos, the answer to the moment's cruelty is surprisingly simple. It's love. “Why would you even put your head above the parapet unless it's for love?” she asks.

The album feels healing, and “23 Peaks” left me feeling very emotional.

This one was a tough one to wrangle. There were times when it was challenging on how to move forward. I knew we needed to get to “23 Peaks,” but how to get there? There were endless possibilities, so it was just drilling down on weaving it very tight.

Are you talking about the process, or are you talking about mentally?

Well, maybe both are involved, because the process was a lot of listening to the team around me. And I'd just come off the book tour, where I'd seen hundreds of people in March of 2025 that had so many concerns at the time and were voicing those concerns. They would leave letters with me, because, you know, you don't have a lot of time in a book signing line, right? But what I was hearing about at the time was [everything from] DOGE, to the fires, to people just dealing with trauma. Their concern of tyranny, which was a valid concern, of course, at the time.

Would you say that you're like a sponge? You just seem to take everything that

people give to you, and it comes out through a musical catharsis of sorts.

Yeah, I think that's fair to say. The strongest thing a songwriter and musician can do is listen. Once you have the skill set, then it comes down to really listening intently to information and perspectives coming in, and I did have people who have their ear to the ground with different subjects. Some are very politically driven, some are more culturally driven and some of those cross certain issues of rights, for women, for the LGBTQ+ community, for immigrants.

Writing something that would document our time now and yet personalize it — to you, me, people who are still having to deal with their lives. How do we live through this? Create through this? And not completely freeze through this? And become debilitated? That was something I was seeing, that people didn't necessarily know how to respond in their art. And, honestly, I believe people are called in different ways. Not everybody is called to address or document a traumatizing time. Sometimes they're being called to give us levity.

You obviously seem to feel a responsibility to address it. Why?

Right now, yeah. Nobody really needed me during the Obama years. I created work that was more personal. I still stand by that work. "Night of Hunters" was, well, answering [music label] Deutsche Grammophon's challenge for a modern song cycle, so that was a narrative as well but not based on documenting our time. Then, in 2014, when "Unrepentant Geraldines" came out, I had just turned 50. So, 50 is sort of a moniker. You're past midlife, if you're lucky to live enough to 100, or unlucky enough to live to 100. [Laughs.] That record was more of a personal record and then "Native Invader" was very much about taking that road trip down South. The gauge that people had in the spring of 2016 wasn't far off from what we were seeing on bumper stickers going through the South. There was a whole other — oh, what do you call it? Perspective. One that those of us in some of the bigger cities were not seeing, and when I saw that, the wake-up call came, and I recognized, "Oh dear. There is a whole political tsunami coming in here."

On this album, you imagine a version of your life where you made different choices. What did that alternate version of yourself allow you to explore that the real Tori Amos couldn't?

Well, look, let's be honest with each other: I did have options in the '90s. I had all kinds of options, for whatever reason, but I did. Not all were rock 'n' roll-based, whether it was roadies or artists. There were others.

Whether I would have been an accessory to them and their Hamptons lifestyle and their yachts and all that, it's possible. There can be a very trophy mentality and I did get a whiff of that in the mid-'90s, that sort of possession of an artist. I kind of considered it. I didn't date; it's not like that. You know, you meet people, they're acquaintances, but there's nothing to talk about because there's nothing I can contribute to finance. [Laughs.] There's nothing that I understand about that world. And very few really understood the creative process and muses and fairies. During a conversation [with me], the eyes would start to go a little bit darty; they're looking around, and it's like, "Oh my god, they need a safe word." [Laughs.]

I can only imagine how many people think that you've actually had an edible, but no.

[Laughs.] I know. And no, no, no. I mean, I like to microdose mushrooms, but only with a mushroom aficionado who's got their scales out and she knows what she's doing. But it's not like in the '90s, where I would dream of dancing elephants and flying pigs, which ended up in "Girl."

But there are witches on "In Times of Dragons," including the "gay witch from Brooklyn," which is HuffPost director Noah Michelson. He shows up on "Provincetown," along with bears. Why did those characters become the people capable of seeing through this illusion when so many others couldn't?

OK, so everything is based on truth. The only suspended question parallel to the Tori world is that I married an amalgamation of real men that I'm writing about. So, the lizard demon is based on an amalgamation of several men that are alive today, mostly all behind the scenes, pretty much, that people that are very informed about that world were making sure that I was getting information about well before this time last year. It was streams of information, and I am not denigrating this. I don't mean a subreddit. I don't mean they're getting their info. Not that there isn't information on a subreddit that isn't valid. OK, I'm very careful, don't worry about me going on Reddit. If you're me, you really shouldn't be going on a subreddit. [Laughs.] I know this, and I want the subreddits to know they're safe. It's like, "Subreddits, you better talk about me when my ass is gone! You better!" Or I'm not doing something right.

And I don't want to digress down that rabbit hole. So, I was getting information from proper political journalists that these people were sending me. Not just notions, right? Not just opinion-spouting stuff. But

See **Tori Amos**, page 26

NEIGHBORHOOD
Roofing

50 Years of Protecting Homes
& The People in Them.

Call or text today!
734-994-6500

Building Safer Spaces Together
Proudly LGBTQ+ owned and operated, we provide high-quality roofing with honesty, respect, and a commitment to creating safe, welcoming homes for everyone.

**FREE ROOF INSPECTION**

+ 10% OFF
up to \$500

We'll also donate \$100 to a local LGBTQ+ organization with every qualifying project.

**SAFE HOMES.**
We use top-quality materials and skilled craftsmanship.

**BUILT ON TRUST.**
Honest pricing, clear communication, and warranties you can count on.

**STRONGER COMMUNITY.**
We proudly support organizations that uplift our LGBTQ+ neighbors.

Locally owned.
Community focused.

**PLATINUM**
PREFERRED CONTRACTOR

NEIGHBORHOODROOFING.COM
1377 Tefft Ct. • Saline, MI 48176

Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.
Trillium Real Estate Helps People Make Good Decisions.



Sandi & Linda
944 N Main St, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
www.trilliumrealtors.com
734-302-3011

**TRILLIUM**
REAL ESTATE

How Chelcea Stowers Turned Her Biggest ‘Flop’ Into a Thriving Lesbian Community Network

The Lesbian Social Detroit founder reflects what she’s learned, the couples who have found love at her events and what’s next for the org

BY KELLI DUNHAM

In 2023, BTL profiled Lesbian Social Detroit founder Chelcea Stowers, a photographer who noticed a lack of quality lesbian nightlife events in the city and decided to do something about it. She was building something many queer women had been missing: a consistent way to find one another outside of dating apps, occasional Pride events and the increasingly rare lesbian bar.

What started as a pop-up party with hopes of creating a safe space downtown has grown into a recognizable force in Detroit’s nightlife scene. At the time, Lesbian Social Detroit was gaining momentum through pop-up events that brought hundreds of women together at venues across Metro Detroit.

Since then, both Detroit’s LGBTQ+ community and the ways LGBTQ+ people connect have continued to evolve. Pop-up events have become more common, new community organizers have emerged and Lesbian Social Detroit has expanded beyond nightlife into other forms of connection. The organization now hosts regular events at some of Detroit’s most visible venues, including a residency at the Godfrey Hotel’s IO Rooftop Lounge in Corktown.

As the organization celebrates bringing together more than 10,000 women through its events and is set to celebrate its ninth anniversary in November, we caught up with Stowers to talk about what she’s learned from building community, the challenges of sustaining a grassroots organization and her hopes for the future.

When we last talked with you, you described your first event in 2017 as a “flop,” and it happened the day your grandma died — that sounds incredibly hard. What helped you develop the resilience to keep trying?

My grandmother was a huge part of my life, and I didn’t want to give up and stop there because I knew she wouldn’t want me to. The location of my first event wasn’t the most desirable location, and it was my very first event. With attendance being super low, I went back to the drawing board and connected with my mentor, John Neely, who

helped me get into venues in downtown Detroit.

What in your background helped you develop the skills to make Lesbian Social Detroit an ongoing success?

I started throwing events in high school, and that’s where my love developed. I have always enjoyed bringing people together. I had a dance group called the MOET Girlz and we would have dance battles against other dance groups, and that’s when I first got the title of

“Wearing many hats, sometimes you may not get it right every time, but you need to be able to acknowledge that, revisit what you could have done better and make a conscious effort to continue creating safe spaces for women to connect.”

being a party promoter.

What was the most urgent reason you created Lesbian Social Detroit?

With Detroit’s resurgence, I wanted the community to be a part of that and take up space to let people know that we’re here — and that the community exists! I wanted to create an experience by hosting pop-up events at different locations to introduce the community to new venues in the city and to keep the experience fresh.

How have Lesbian Social and your reasons for running it evolved as the lesbian community has continued to change?



Chelcea Stowers. Courtesy photo

Lesbian Social has grown into a platform that connects with the community in different ways. Not everyone wants to go to a nightclub or lounge, so I’ve explored different ways of bringing community together, such as a yoga series. I want to continue expanding

on ways to connect. Pop-up events have become extremely popular. Previously, there were weekly club nights; now, there is a

See **Chelcea Stowers**, page 24

unwilling, but because healthcare never felt welcoming?

When providers combine data about health disparities with a person-centered focus, they are better prepared to deliver effective care in partnership with patients. Examples of healthcare failings are pervasive.

A patient who identifies as lesbian may have delayed cervical cancer screening because of misconceptions about risk when their sexual partners are exclusively female.

An HIV-positive patient with an undetectable viral load may have uncontrolled hypertension or diabetes.

A patient excelling in a high-stress career may be struggling with undisclosed mental health or substance use.

A Black pregnant patient's symptoms may be dismissed by a provider as insignificant, leading to a poor birth outcome.

A transgender patient may avoid routine preventive care because they were misgendered and discriminated against in a previous healthcare encounter.

These examples show how systems and providers can fail patients. They also remind us that healthcare works best when it addresses the whole person.

Building trust through culturally responsive care

For many Black LGBTQ+ people, trust must be earned. Providers can build that trust by creating affirming environments where patients know they will be respected, heard and treated with dignity. This means using patients' chosen names and pronouns, asking open-ended questions, avoiding assumptions, communicating in plain language and recognizing that every patient's journey is different.

Cultural humility is equally important. Healthcare providers do not need to know everything about every identity or community. They simply need to approach every encounter with curiosity, compassion and a willingness to learn from the patient. When patients feel safe enough to share their experiences honestly, providers are better equipped to identify risks, recommend appropriate screenings, support mental health and develop preventive health strategies that fit each person's life.

Health equity requires more than equal treatment

Providing everyone with the same care is not the same as providing equitable care. Health equity recognizes that some

communities face additional barriers created by historical discrimination, social inequities and unequal access to resources. Closing these gaps requires healthcare systems to intentionally remove barriers while tailoring care to each individual's circumstances.

For Black LGBTQ+ patients, equitable care may include expanded mental health services, HIV prevention and treatment, gender-affirming care, chronic disease management, preventive screenings, social services and community partnerships that address housing, food insecurity, transportation and insurance access. This comprehensive approach recognizes that health is shaped by far more than what happens inside an exam room.

What patients can do

Patients also play an important role in achieving better health outcomes. Sharing information openly with trusted health care providers — including concerns about mental health, relationships, substance use, sexual health, housing or financial challenges — allows providers to deliver care that reflects real-life circumstances.

Preventive care remains equally important. Staying current on vaccinations, recommended cancer screenings, blood pressure and diabetes checks, HIV and STI testing when appropriate, and routine wellness visits helps identify health concerns

before they become serious.

Finally, caring for emotional well-being is just as important as caring for physical health. Strong social connections, regular physical activity, healthy nutrition, restorative sleep and access to behavioral health services all contribute to longer, healthier lives.

Celebrating Black Pride through health equity

Black Pride is a celebration of authenticity, resilience and community. It is also a call to action. Healthcare providers have both the opportunity and the responsibility to reduce disparities by delivering care that is affirming, culturally responsive and deeply personal. Every patient deserves to be seen not as a stereotype or statistic, but as a unique individual whose experiences, strengths and challenges deserve thoughtful attention.

When healthcare begins with listening, respect and partnership, we move closer to a future where every Black LGBTQ+ person has the opportunity not simply to survive, but to thrive. That is the promise of health equity, and it is a promise worth pursuing every day of the year.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Corktown Health. Visit corktownhealth.org to learn more about this community partner.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARENESS GROUP

40
1986-2026

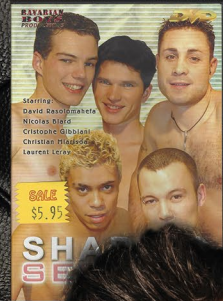
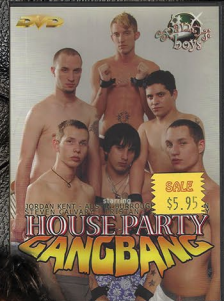
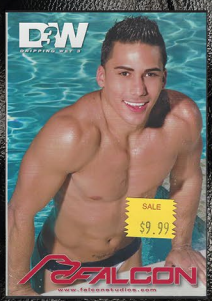
**Cruising into 40 Years:
Sneaker Chic
Ovation Yacht- Detroit
8.22.2026**

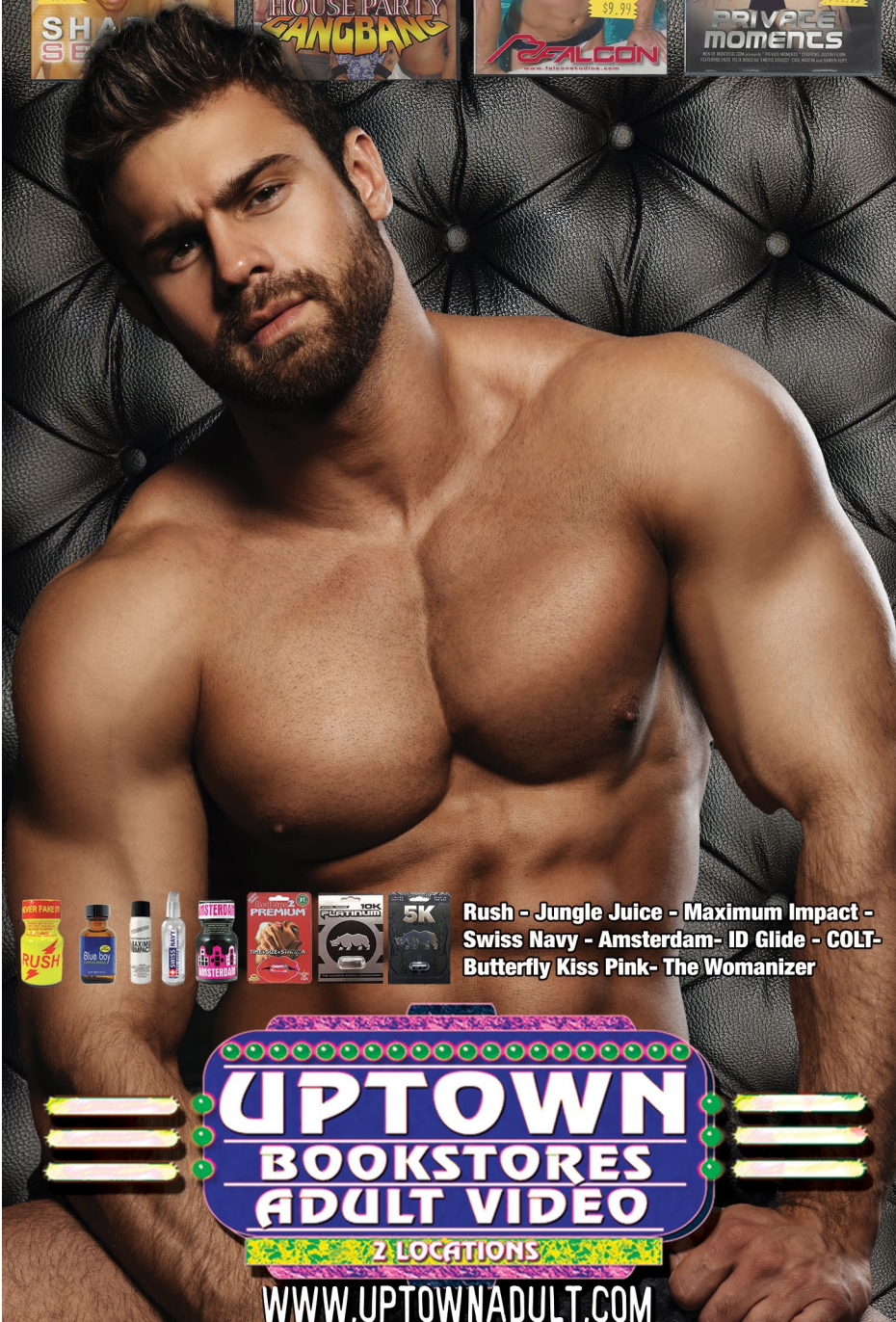
Tickets available
via Eventbrite

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITES AVAILABLE
CHAGEVENTS@CHAGDETROIT.ORG FOR INFO



THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

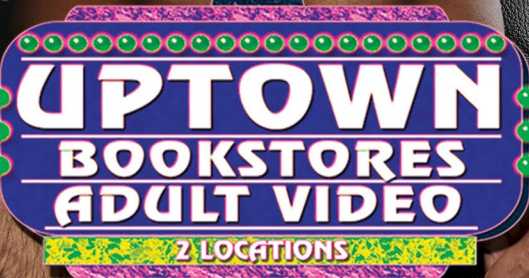








**Rush - Jungle Juice - Maximum Impact -
Swiss Navy - Amsterdam- ID Glide - COLT-
Butterfly Kiss Pink- The Womanizer**



WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

**16541 Woodward Ave.
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"
Highland Park
313.869.9477**

**16401 W. 8 Mile
Between Greenfield & Southfield
Detroit
313.836.0647**

**Hours:
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm
Sun 12 - 6pm**

Chelcea Stowers

Continued from page 22

community of curators who organize events monthly.

What's been the hardest part of sustaining something like this long term?

Having no outside financial backing. Lesbian Social has been self-funded since being created, and there is so much more I want to do for the community. There are so many events that I want to make happen, but limited funding is the issue.

What have you learned about leadership from running these events?

I've learned that you will make mistakes along the way; it's how you recover that makes the difference. Wearing many hats, sometimes you may not get it right every time, but you need to be able to acknowledge that, revisit what you could have done better and make a conscious effort to continue creating safe spaces for women to connect. I feel I have that responsibility. Being an introvert and being in a leadership role has been an adjustment because I'm putting myself out to the masses, and I deal with social anxiety, so being able to find balance has been key.

What's been the most rewarding thing you've witnessed happen at one of your events?

The most rewarding thing is when couples

come up to me and say "Thank you, we met at Lesbian Social." Even friend groups have been formed at The Social. I love love, so it warms my heart to hear testimonials. I never thought I would be able to bring together over 10,000 women through my events.

What would you want people to know about what you've been making happen?



A couple at a Lesbian Social Detroit event. Courtesy photo

I want people to leave a Lesbian Social event and be excited that they made a new friend or met a potential love interest. Lesbian Social is also big on collaboration, so being able to work with other groups and organizations in the LGBTQ+ community is something I want to do more of this year.

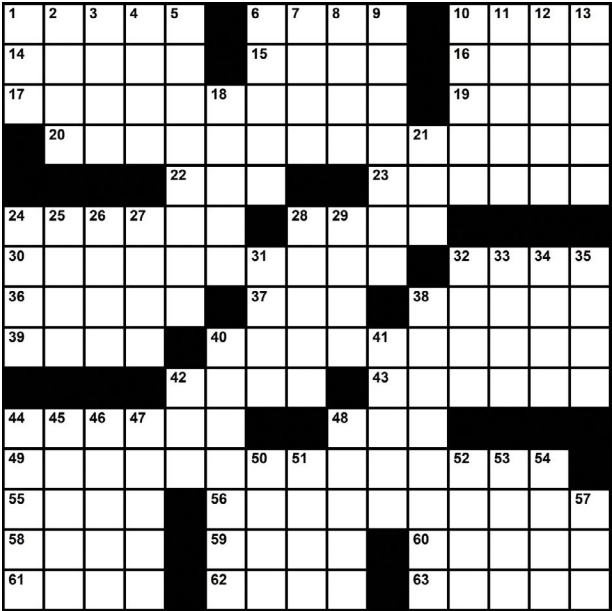
What are your biggest dreams for Lesbian Social Detroit?

My biggest dream is to open a permanent space in the city. I want it to be community-driven — a hangout spot or somewhere that feels safe to go after a long day and you want to unwind.

Keep up with Lesbian Social Detroit's event calendar at @lesbiansocialdetroit on Instagram.

SEEKING PART-TIME PERSONAL ASSISTANT

To assist a successful individual with a number of tasks including appointment setting, personal shopping, assisting with household needs, etc. 5-10 hours per week to start with potential for expansion. Interviews and background check required. Please contact Sam Toney at toneysam8@gmail.com to apply.



Songs of Madonna

Across

- 1 Joe who married Marilyn, slangily
- 6 "Hi" to Lorca
- 10 Cuban coin
- 14 Bridge bid, briefly
- 15 Chemical compound
- 16 Stink up the place

- 17 Like the work of John Boswell
- 19 Large earthenware jar
- 20 With 30-Across, Madonna song written for "A League of Their Own"
- 22 One trained in CPR
- 23 Britten's "Billy Budd" and others
- 24 Soft seat
- 28 Good buds
- 30 See 20-Across
- 32 Cattle collection
- 36 "Of Thee ____"
- 37 Newt, to Candace

- 38 Big Hollywood star in a small part
- 39 Maupin story
- 40 Madonna's first top 10 hit in the US
- 42 Flaky favorites
- 43 Bates' job in "Gosford Park"
- 44 Pirate
- 48 Brit. word bk.
- 49 Madonna song addressing teen pregnancy
- 55 Composer Stravinsky
- 56 Words on many Warhol canvases
- 58 Woods of "Legally Blonde"
- 59 It serves Tel Aviv
- 60 "C'est Moi," in English
- 61 Many August people
- 62 Director Roos and others
- 63 Loads of

Down

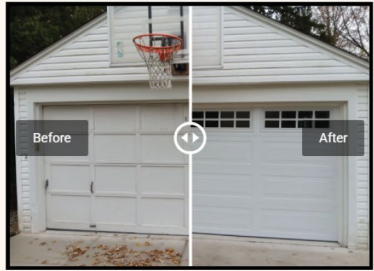
- 1 "Oops!" and then some
- 2 "Put a sock ____!"
- 3 Sheer material for a drag queen
- 4 "No" voter
- 5 Zip
- 6 Bank robber's job
- 7 " ____ Upon a Mattress"
- 8 Special delivery?
- 9 Everything considered
- 10 Really get into somebody
- 11 Specialist in fishing
- 12 Gellar kisser Blair in "Cruel Intentions"
- 13 Gives the thumbs-up to
- 18 Daughter of Bruce Willis

- 21 Photo ____ (media events)
- 24 Swallow alternative
- 25 "Frozen" character
- 26 Some eagle feathers
- 27 Sharon's "Cagney & Lacey" co-star
- 28 Contented cat sounds
- 29 " ____ is as good as..."
- 31 Sweet-toned musical instrument
- 32 "Hold your horses!"
- 33 Jannings of old films
- 34 Artist Capone
- 35 Active one
- 38 Black gold
- 40 Like Fred Phelps
- 41 Film critic Roger
- 42 Sci-fi escape vehicle
- 44 Hard sell, maybe
- 45 Name of many a gay bar
- 46 Ohno of speedskating
- 47 Looks straight in the eye, say
- 48 Lustrous gems
- 50 Publisher of same-sex couples' legal guide
- 51 Counterfeiters' nemesis
- 52 Memo start
- 53 The bottom line
- 54 Runs smoothly
- 57 "Once Upon a Mattress" legume

See p. 19 for answers

70 YEARS OF OPENING DOORS FOR MICHIGAN HOMES

Trusted Since 1956
Family Owned. Community-Rooted



Transform your curb appeal with Michigan's most trusted garage door experts.

Celebrating 70 Years of Quality, Craftsmanship & Service

Why Homeowners Choose Jan Door:



Expert installation, repair & maintenance



Fast, reliable service from trained technicians



Premium styles to elevate curb appeal



Honest pricing & long standing local reputation

\$110 RESIDENTIAL GARAGE DOOR TUNE-UP

Limited-Time 70th Anniversary Offer
Call to schedule. 313.581.7300

NOW HIRING GARAGE DOOR TECHNICIANS

Grow with a company built on 70 years of trust.



We've got MICHIGAN COVERED.



By supporting free and low-cost clinics and offering resources such as our easy-to-use mobile app and 24-Hour Nurse Line, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are ready to help support the health of all Michiganders. Whether it's physical health or mental health, we are always there whenever and wherever you need us.

Learn more at
MIBlueDaily.com/ReadyToHelp

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

◀ **Tori Amos**
Continued from page 21

well-researched and quotes, so the move that became clear for me to make was to base everybody on pretty much real people. It might be a variation on the theme, so the High Priestess is a variation on the theme of a different high priestess that I know.

How about the bears?

The bears are real. Oh, yeah, they're real. I just got a picture from two of them from P-town last night.

“I believe people are called in different ways. Not everybody is called to address or document a traumatizing time. Sometimes they're being called to give us levity.”

Do you vacation there often?

I don't. I would love to go.

If you don't really have a relationship with Provincetown, how did that song come to you?

I know so many people who do have a relationship with it. And John Evans, the bass player I work with, grew up on the Cape and we've worked together for 28 years, and he's talked to me in depth about Provincetown. He has a different perspective as a musician that plays there and is not queer. Identifies, I guess, as whatever you call them... hetero.

Whatever you call them!

[Laughs.] Cavemen. But he has a very deep tie to Provincetown and its long history. So I had been hearing about that, and again, the premise being, I had to stay as close to Tori, my reality, as I possibly could. Not all singer-songwriters that I know would make this kind of luxurious, salacious choice, but there is a side to me that's a little bit... I don't know. Yacht rock dangerous.

You know, a pool boy serving me a really good rum neat with a side of ice, but it's about the ice tong that I'm interested in. Like, what is it encrusted with? And is it a scallop with an emerald? I don't know if this would have been like a study, where I would have lived this life and written two records about it and then broken up and had a divorce and then ended up where I ended up anyway, with a rock 'n' roll somebody. I could have seen myself doing an investigation of this other type of man. Because, look, I adore men. I mean, some I find really terrifying and evil.

Me too, and we should.

Yeah, and we should. I feel a bit like a mad scientist who wants to put them under a microscope.

It could be dark and dangerous underneath.

Yeah, but you know I like dark and dangerous.

How has your understanding of what a song can do for someone changed over time?

Well, this record really pulled me out of some worrying stuff that I was going through — health issues — and that's kind of the dragon metaphor. My truth was coming out of menopause and dealing with that and the physical challenges that come with that. And, look, as I've told the gals, lovingly, if you make it to this age, if you make it this far, you will experience the motherfucking load of menopause, which is a tough teacher. Harsh.

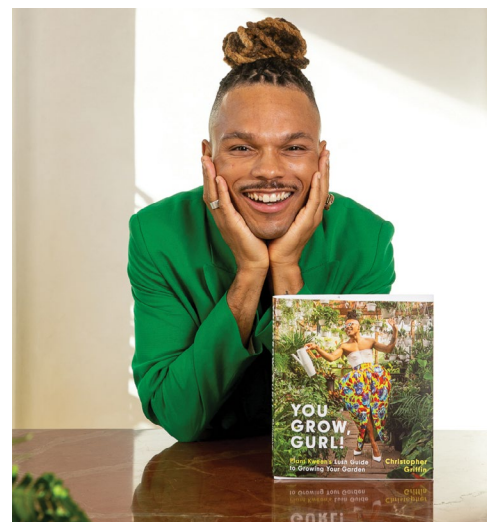
So I guess I was recognizing what the songs were doing for me. How they were giving me, as Lugh [the Celtic god central to the album] says, a sharpened spear to go in there. But he would keep reminding me as well as dealing with documenting the issues of the time, “Why are you fighting if not for the love, the love, the love, the love?” Whoever those are that you love. Or have yet to love. The idea of: Why would you even put your head above the parapet unless it's for love? Recognizing that woke me the fuck up out of my oom, ouch, my C4, L4, whatever we all deal with as we get older, and you twist like an octopus for 35 years at the piano in high heels. I mean, come on! Something's gonna happen back there.

But when you ask about the songs, I experienced myself having to wake up. Them pushing me to see maybe past lives, choices, sides to myself that I needed to face. And then release. Because unless we face them, those shadow parts of self, they can begin to, even unknowingly, become self-destructive.

◀ **Plant Kween**
Continued from page 17

loss. What have those explorations taught you about curiosity and self-discovery?

I just love being curious. I've always been just a nosy person, and that series was born out of some vulnerability. Nowadays, as an educator and working with these institutions, I'll write out my scripts. And this was a challenge for me not to script anything. Everything I'm saying is me kind of just winging it. Just real moments. What I've been enjoying is the dialogue, the community that I'm co-creating with my audience and seeing that there are folks from all different walks of life and ages, like “I'm playing with makeup for the first time



Christopher Griffin, aka Plant Kween. Courtesy photo

at 60,” or “I’m a grown, older man that has been trapped by masculinity’s expectations, and now I actually want to try makeup and see what that looks like for me.” Or my laser hair removal. There were a lot of folks with melanin in their skin being like, “I was terrified,” but that is so helpful to know. I feel like that vulnerability has created this two-way street. That has been the most fulfilling thing about it.

What is the biggest lesson plant care can teach us?

We’re basically houseplants with complex emotions. So everything that we do for plants, we can do for each other. Water each other, feed each other nutrients, check in on each other occasionally, but not too much. You don’t want to be a helicopter plant parent. No overwatering. Every plant needs space to grow and do their own thing. Every plant and person needs to be checked up on.



Crown Pharmacy

- Transfer your prescriptions today
- Specializing in providing world class HIV pharmaceutical care
- Free HIV Testing
- Pickup free at home HIV testing kits
- Free Syphilis testing
- Blister Packaging Available
- Free Delivery!



Toll-Free Available 24 Hours/Day: **1-800-381-7518**
www.crownpharmacy.com



24401 Plymouth Rd, Redford, MI 48239
313-532-DRUG (3784)
CrownPharmacy1@aol.com
Hours: M-F 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Closed Weekends and Holidays

A portrait of Janice M. Winfrey, a Black woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a red long-sleeved top, a gold necklace with a cross pendant, and gold hoop earrings. Her arms are crossed.

VOTE

**ABSENTEE, EARLY
OR ELECTION DAY**

**AUGUST 4TH
PRIMARY ELECTION**

**Janice M.
Winfrey**

DETROIT CITY CLERK

DetroitMI.gov/Elections • 313.876.0190



**SATURDAY,
AUGUST 1
DOWNTOWN
ANN ARBOR
12:00 PM TO 9:00 PM**

**LEGENDARY HEADLINERS
ERIKA NORELL
NATALIE COLE
SHAESHA LAREESE
LATRICE ROYALE
CHRISTOPHER HAMBLIN
TERRI VANESSA COLEMAN**

**SPECIAL GUEST
DOMINIQUE JACKSON**

**FREE TO THE PUBLIC
DRAG STORY HOUR
3 STAGES OF LIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
200 + VENDORS
FOOD TRUCKS
KIDZONE**

