



LORNA
LUFT
INTERVIEW
PAGE 24

WINDY CITY TIMES

THE VOICE OF CHICAGO'S GAY, LESBIAN,
BI AND TRANS COMMUNITY SINCE 1985

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TALKING WITH
MEGAN HULTY
OF NBC'S
'SMASH'
PAGE 26



STEVENSON
HIGH SCHOOL'S
GAY-STRAIGHT
ALLIANCE
PAGE 11



SINGER
MATT ZARLEY
PAGE 30

Gerber/Hart refuses to reveal group info

BY KATE SOSIN

Amid growing concern about the future of the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, Chicago's LGBT library, the organization remains steadfast in its silence about its plans for relocation and basic operations.

In late January, Windy City Times first reported that the library's current home at 1127 W. Granville Ave. was for rent. Karen Sendziak, president of the library's board, later confirmed that the library would move. She has provided little information since, stating that media inquiries would be handled by the library's attorney, who Sendziak said is out of the country and cannot be named.

To date, WCT has not been able to obtain the names of any other board members, nor has the paper been

provided a copy of the organization's current bylaws. WCT submitted multiple inquiries to Sendziak but received no response.

On Feb. 5, two WCT reporters arrived at the library and asked Sendziak for a copy of the organization's bylaws and a list of its board of directors, both of which she declined to disclose, stating that the library's attorney was working hard on getting that information to the newspaper. Sendziak would not provide the name of that attorney when questioned further. Asked when such information would be made available, Sendziak replied, "When we are ready."

Sendziak did note that the Windy City Times newspaper remains at the front of the library. The Feb. 1 issue featured a front-page investigation on the library. On Feb. 6, Gerber/Hart released an update on the

move. "The new location will be a place where we can ensure the safety and protection of the books and historical archives we have been entrusted to hold," the statement read.

The language of the statement suggests that the library has not yet found a new home.

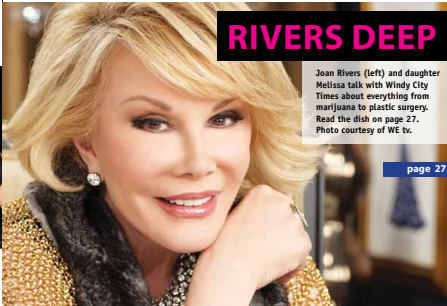
"We will keep you apprised throughout our search and will let you know as soon as we find and secure a new home, and are looking forward to sharing the excitement of this next, new chapter of our existence with you all!" the library said in a statement.

The library's lease is up at the end of April. The Gerber/Hart has not yet stated the anticipated costs of the move or what neighborhoods it is considering.

Turn to page 8

California's Prop 8 ruled unconstitutional Divided fed appeals court panel hands down landmark decision Tuesday in controversial battle for marriage equality

page 4



RIVERS DEEP

Joan Rivers (left) and daughter Melissa talk with Windy City Times about everything from marijuana to plastic surgery. Read the dish on page 27. Photo courtesy of WE tv.

page 27

Univ. of Chicago aims to be site for gender and sexuality studies

BY KATE SOSIN

When the University of Chicago founded its gender studies department in 1996, it trailed other colleges and universities in doing so by about two decades. It is perhaps no surprise then that the prestigious school never became a target for gender studies majors.

However the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, an old campus house wedged into a muddy lot at 5733 S. University Ave., is abuzz this year with change. The center is going after a reputation as destination school for LGBT and women's studies. That effort started with adopting a new name last summer (it was formerly called the Center for Gender Studies), will continue with the hosting of lesbian comic writer Alison Bechdel and will stretch over the next three years as the campus begins recording its LGBT history for the first time.

"We're trying to make the center more visible," said Director Linda Zerilli.

That has meant updating the name of the center to highlight work on LGBT lives and history, which faculty

Turn to page 9

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AFC advocates for extension of benefit lottery tickets

In honor of National Black AIDS Awareness Day Feb. 7, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) and a team of advocates made their voices heard in Springfield, urging the extension of a crucial program that funds HIV prevention and treatment. They planned a press conference at the State Capitol, to support a bill that would extend the sunset date for the Quality of Life Fund's "Red Ribbon Cash" lottery ticket expiring Dec. 31, 2012.

Co-sponsored by Sen. Jacqueline Collins (D-16th) and Rep. Karen Yarbrough (D-7th), S.B. 2971 would extend the ticket sunset date to Dec. 31, 2017.

"This epidemic is particularly hard on young Black men and the African-American community, in general," AFC's Director of Government Relations Ramon Gardenhire said. "We simply cannot allow this lottery program, which provides critical funding for HIV treatment and services, to expire when we know it saves lives."

Enacted in 2007, 100 percent of the proceeds from Red Ribbon Cash lottery tickets go to organizations throughout Illinois that provide treatment and prevention services to those populations most affected by HIV/AIDS—such as youth, African-Americans and Latinos, and the LGBT community.

The Quality of Life Fund is a self-generating revenue fund based on sales. Last year, the Red Ribbon Cash scratch-off game generated \$1.4 million for HIV/AIDS prevention and care. This year, the lottery ticket will fund 14 community-based organizations across the state.

Beside representing only 1.4% of the U.S. population in 2009, African Americans accounted for 44% of all new HIV infections in that year, according to the most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Research focuses on HIV risk in Latino immigrants

The Medical College of Wisconsin has received a two-year, \$411,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Mental Health to research new strategies aimed at increasing HIV testing and counseling in new immigrants to the United States.

Laura Glasman, Ph.D., assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral medicine in the Medical College's Center for AIDS Intervention Research, is the primary investigator of the grant. Latinos are disproportionately affected by HIV, accounting for 20 percent of new HIV infections in the U.S., while representing about 16 percent of the population. According to the Centers for

Disease Control, the HIV infection rate among Latinos in 2009 was nearly three times as high as that of whites. Factors accounting for the discrepancy include uncertain immigration status, high levels of stigma, and unawareness of risk, particularly in new immigrants who come from areas of low HIV prevalence.

Glasman will investigate peer-led strategies to engage recent Latino immigrant men in voluntary counseling and testing for HIV. The goal of these new strategies is to prevent further increases in HIV risk, and help identify HIV-infected individuals earlier.

The Center for AIDS Intervention Research at MCH is one of the HIV prevention research centers in the U.S. funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

HealthHIV surveys HIV and primary care providers

Rising HIV caseloads among overworked specialists and insufficient reimbursement for HIV services are key findings from the 2nd Annual HealthHIV State of HIV Primary Care survey.

Set against a landscape in which the federal government prepares to extend healthcare coverage to 32 million newly insured individuals (including an estimated 600,000-800,000 people living with HIV), the survey reveals a shifting landscape between the readiness of the HIV workforce and its ability to treat the growing number of people living with HIV, especially in primary care settings.

Among HIV treatment providers, two-thirds report an increase in their HIV caseloads and more than a third report inadequate reimbursement as a barrier to expanding their practices. As demand for HIV care providers continues to increase, new HIV care providers are scarce. Twenty-two percent of primary care providers cite reimbursement as a significant barrier to providing HIV services.

Other survey findings reveal that while systemic obstacles keep many primary care providers from treating HIV, out of necessity some have taken steps to begin offering HIV care. Based upon their responses, HealthHIV built a profile of the typical "HIV Primary Care Provider." She is female (58%), non-Hispanic (83%), white (69%), M.D. (58%), aged 50-59 years old (46%), living in an urban community (64%). Further, she is a family practice specialist (49%), practicing in the South (39%), in a community health center (36%).

HealthHIV is a national non-profit working with organizations, communities, and professionals to advance effective prevention, care, and support for people living with, or at risk for, HIV through education and training, capacity building, advocacy, and health services research and evaluation. See www.HealthHIV.org or www.NCHMHC.org.

Talking 'Skin' with author Biodun Abudu

BY JOHN J. ACCROCCO

Chicago author Biodun Abudu's debut novel, *Tales of My Skin* is a book about one man's journey from Africa to the United States. This book confronts issues of sexual orientation, HIV and identity of teens in two different cultures that have more in common than meets the eye.

John J. Accrocco: Who do you hope to reach with this novel?

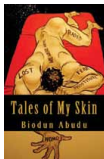
Biodun Abudu: Mainly, I hope this book reaches the LGBT community and the parents of any LGBT children or anyone who has questions about the LGBT lifestyle. It's a book for anyone who is looking for love and finding it in the wrong places. It's a book of advice for people in these situations.

JA: Tell me about your life. What is your story?

BA: I was born in Rhode Island, but a few years later I was relocated to Nigeria. My parents had a bad separation in the '90s and my mom thought it was best to protect me by taking me back to Nigeria. She felt the schooling was better there. I returned to the United States to pursue my dreams of working in fashion, which is considered inappropriate there. In Nigeria, to do my drag shows and costume designing and even to write this book would have been impossible. I found a school in Chicago where I had some family living and it felt like a good idea. I attended the International Academy of Design & Technology and finished with a B.A. in Fashion Merchandising.

JA: What prompted you to write this novel?

BA: It's a story that I think people need to hear. When adults look into teens' eyes, so often they don't see that they have stories to tell, stories that would frighten them. In my country, being gay is against the law, but there's this



Cover of Abudu's book, *Tales of My Skin*.

huge underground LGBT scene and people don't even know to protect themselves, that five minutes of pleasure could cost them their lives.

JA: What was the writing and publishing process like for you?

BA: It took me about two years to actually finish the book about a year and a half to write it and then another six months of editing and finding a publisher.

I found my publisher (Lalibra Books) on a Facebook ad, believe it or not. It was this new company in California and I emailed their editor and told them about myself and my novel. I'm actually the first author aside from the editor. She loved it, and from there we began the editing and discussing the contracts. Privacy was something we had to concern ourselves with since a lot of the book is based on a few people I know.

JA: What kind of books does Lalibra usually publish?



Biodun Abudu. Photo courtesy of Abudu

BA: Well, it's mostly self-publishing, as I said I'm one of the first authors. I went with them because their prices were pretty reasonable and because they got back to me so soon. I could have waited around for an Indie publisher, but rather than waiting for them to notice me, which can sometimes take years, I knew that I had to get my message out there and start saving lives right away.

JA: Do you plan on publishing any more novels?

BA: Definitely. I'm hoping to release a book of poems soon. My next novel I think is going to be about a family member dealing with drug addiction.

JA: What specific LGBT issues is your novel addressing?

BA: It talks about HIV and the online addiction and how the LGBT world struggles in the world of dating. It also is about rape victims and about parents who aren't always there for their kids. In Nigeria, people want to think that there is no LGBT scene and this book discusses it.

JA: What do you mean by the LGBT world struggling with dating and online addiction? What is the correlation?

BA: For example, if a person for certain reasons can't get a real "date," they'll start turning to websites like Adam4Adam and Grindr. It's so easy for people on this site to go from guy to guy, place to place in just one night. This poses a serious danger for people on these sites who are really looking for love and think that this is the only way to find it. There are also people on these sites who only make profiles to scam people and it's usually hard to detect until it's too late. Young men also fall prey to older men with bad intentions who use these sites. The scariest thing I think about is that everyone lists themselves as HIV-, which in reality is just not true.

JA: Is your novel your truth or someone else's?

BA: Some of it is me. It's mostly my friend's truth. I blended some of his life with mine and to protect him, I don't discuss which parts are him and which parts are not.

JA: What are your goals as a writer?

BA: I want to create avenues for youth to speak their truths. Adults want to shut us up because they don't always like the truth, but more young people should speak up to save lives. Without the right people giving you advice, it's really easy to go down the wrong paths and I've seen so many people in my life give up and stop pursuing their goals.

JA: How have sales been so far?

BA: Surprisingly good. I'm at about 200 sales, mostly through Amazon. I'm getting a lot of buyers in Nigeria, Zambia and even a few in London. The book has only been out since October, so I'm very hopeful. I've done a few readings, one at the Center on Halsted. So far no stores are carrying the book but I am talking to a few local bookstores.

Tales of My Skin is available on Amazon, com in a digital and paperback edition.



The Windy City Times AIDS @ 30 series, originally slated for April-December 2011, will continue through February 2012. Turn to Windy City Times each week for more news and features.

See past articles online at
www.windycitymediagroup.com/aids.php