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Jax Gay Inc. is a Community Marketing and Events organization incorporating Jax Gay Magazine, Rainbow Events, and Drag Queen Aholic.

Our mission as a 502(c)3 non-profit is to promote North Florida and especially in Jacksonville, as a welcoming LGBTQ+ destination through marketing and events. Jax Gay produces many events a year, including Jax Equality Festival in Jacksonville. Other events include the Rainbow Awards Show, White Party, Big Gay Picnic, Taste of Pride and Red Party. Visit www.JaxGayMag.com for more information.

Jax Gay Inc. also plans to launch our Jax Event Center & LGBTQ+ Art Gallery in Fall of 2023.

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Cover

Femmephobia In Gay Communities

By David Vandygriff
Cover photographed by:
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News & Politics

Disney Neutered DeSantis' Board Before State Takeover

By Robert Conner



The battle between Disney and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis may not be over yet.

The new board handpicked by the Republican governor to oversee Disney's special taxing district said Wednesday it is considering legal action over a multi-decade agreement reached between the entertainment giant and the outgoing board in the days before the state's hostile takeover last month.

Under the agreement -- quietly approved on February 8 as Florida lawmakers met in special session to hand DeSantis control of the Reedy Creek Improvement District -- Disney would maintain control over much of its vast footprint in Central Florida for 30 years and, in some cases, the board can't take significant action without first getting approval from the company.

"This essentially makes Disney the government," board member Ron Peri said during Wednesday's meeting, according to video posted by an Orlando television station. "This board loses, for practical purposes, the majority of its ability to do anything

beyond maintaining the roads and maintaining basic infrastructure."

The episode is the latest twist in a yearlong saga between Disney and DeSantis, who has battled the company as he tries to tally conservative victories ahead of a likely bid for the 2024 GOP nomination.

The board on Wednesday retained "multiple financial and legal firms to conduct audits and investigate Disney's past behavior," DeSantis spokeswoman Taryn Fenske said. According to meeting documents, the board was entering into agreements with four firms to provide counsel on the matter.

"The Executive Office of the Governor is aware of Disney's last-ditch efforts to execute contracts just before ratifying the new law that transfers rights and authorities from the former Reedy Creek Improvement District to Disney," Fenske said. "An initial review suggests these agreements may have significant legal infirmities that would render the contracts void as a matter of law."

In a statement, Disney stood by its actions.

"All agreements signed between Disney and the District were appropriate, and were discussed and approved in open, noticed public forums in compliance with Florida's Government in the Sunshine law," the company said. Documents for the February 8 meeting show it was noticed in the Orlando Sentinel as required by law.

Multiple board members did not immediately respond to request for comment. The Sentinel first reported on Wednesday's vote to hire legal counsel.

According to a statement Wednesday night from the district's acting counsel and its newly obtained legal counsel, the agreement gave Disney development rights throughout the district and "not just on Disney's property," requires the district to borrow and spend on projects that benefit the company, and gives Disney veto authority over any public project in the district.

"The lack of consideration, the delegation of legislative authority to a private corporation, restriction of the Board's ability to make legislative decisions, and giving

away public rights without compensation for a private purpose, among other issues, warrant the new Board's actions and direction to evaluate these overreaching documents and determine how best the new Board can protect the public's interest in compliance with Florida Law," the statement from Fishback Dominick LLP, Cooper & Kirk PLLC, Lawson Huck Gonzalez PLLC, Waugh Grant PLLC and Nardella & Nardella PLLC said.

The spat between Disney and the governor stems from the company's opposition to a Florida law that prohibits the instruction of sexual orientation and gender identity through third grade and only in an "age appropriate" manner in older grades. In March of last year, as outrage against the legislation spread nationwide, Disney released a statement vowing to help get the law repealed or struck down by the courts.

DeSantis and Florida GOP lawmakers retaliated by eliminating the Reedy Creek Improvement District, the special taxing authority that effectively gave Disney control of the land in and around its sprawling Orlando-area theme parks. But Republicans in control of the state legislature changed course this year and

voted instead to fire the board overseeing the district and gave DeSantis power to name all five replacements. It also renamed Reedy Creek as the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District and eliminated some of its powers.

DeSantis stacked the board with political allies, including Tampa lawyer Martin Garcia, a prominent GOP donor; Bridget Ziegler, the wife of the new chairman of the Republican Party of Florida; and Peri, a former pastor who once suggested tap water could be making people gay.

The controversy is central to DeSantis' political narrative of a leader who is unafraid to battle corporate giants, even one as iconic and vital to Florida as Disney. It is a saga that is featured prominently in his new book and one he often shares at events across the country as he lays the groundwork for a likely national campaign.

At last month's signing ceremony for the bill that gave him control of Reedy Creek's board, DeSantis declared, "The corporate kingdom finally comes to an end."

"There's a new sheriff in town," he added.

However, it may be a while before the new power structure has control, if Disney gets its

way. One agreement signed by the outgoing board -- which restricts the new board from using any of Disney's "fanciful characters" -- is valid until "21 years after the death of the last survivor of the descendants of King Charles III, king of England," according to a copy of the deal included in the February 8 meeting packet.

The stealth move by Disney prompted allies of DeSantis' chief political rival, former President Donald Trump, to suggest the governor had been out-manuevered.

"President Trump wrote 'Art of the Deal' and brokered Middle East peace," said Taylor Budowich, spokesman for the Trump-aligned Make America Great Again PAC. "Ron DeSantis just got out-negotiated by Mickey Mouse."

DeSantis' political operation insisted the governor's appointees were holding Disney accountable.

"Governor DeSantis' new board would not, and will not, allow Disney to give THEMSELVES unprecedented power over land (some of which isn't even theirs!) for 30+ years," Christina Pushaw, of DeSantis' rapid response team, wrote on Twitter.

ONE COMMUNITY





OUT & HEALTH

Religious “Freedom” Laws Are Trying To Drag Us Back To The Height Of The AIDS Epidemic
By Drew Griffin



In late March 2023, it was announced that U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor had struck down the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) mandate that insurers cover, without cost, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)—a drug that protects people who are seronegative from acquiring HIV.

This decision was in favor of Braidwood Management Inc—a company based in Texas that objected to including PrEP coverage in its insurance plans on the grounds that doing so violates its leadership's religious freedom—and affects insurance plans across the nation.

In his opinion, O'Connor wrote that while the government had a compelling “interest in inhibiting the spread of a potentially fatal infectious disease like HIV...the question is whether the government has a compelling interest in requiring all private insurers to cover PrEP drugs in every one of their insurance policies.”

After referencing the fact that neither Congress nor the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (PSTF) had expressed a “compelling interest” in PrEP,

Connor reasoned that the ACA's PrEP mandate on exemptions and grandfathered plans undermined the “exceptionally demanding” least-restrictive-means test—which applies to government decisions that might restrict any constitutionally guaranteed rights.

In this instance, that means the religious freedom-protected right of Braidwood and other small businesses to deny access to PrEP coverage because—as O'Connor ruled in September—doing so “forces religious employers to provide coverage for drugs that facilitate and encourage homosexual behavior, prostitution, sexual promiscuity, and intravenous drug use.”

While dismissing the government's case—which was brought forth under Xavier Becerra, Sec. of the Health and Human Services (HHS)—O'Connor also declared that any A- or B-rated, compulsory preventive care coverage requirements made by the HHS “on or after March 23, 2010,” were a violation of the Appointments Clause (essentially an overreach). With that, he vacated their

application, and prohibited the HHS from enforcing the “compulsory preventive care coverage mandate in the future.”

What It All Means for Ending the HIV Epidemic

Though far from unexpected, the harm that this ruling will cause is impossible to calculate—especially when one considers that PrEP access is a major pillar of the U.S.' plan to End the HIV Epidemic by 2030. While O'Connor's decision protects the religious freedom of people who object to the possibility that PrEP might be used by men who have sex with men or sex workers, it ignores the basic understanding that what affects one, will affect all. For instance, married people who have different HIV statuses and who use PrEP to prevent HIV transmissions from occurring.

Though antiretroviral therapy (ART) provides effective treatment for HIV, it cannot be ignored that because of rulings like O'Connor's—which create barriers to care—40% of people living with HIV are not virally suppressed, may develop additional life threatening illnesses, and are able to transmit the virus

through sex.

In the past, some homophobic people argued that AIDS was God's punishment against gay people, HIV was not a threat to heterosexual people, and that if there were no more gay people, the virus would disappear. As if to mock their religious homophobia, by 1994, HIV was the leading cause of death among people aged 25 to 44 in the U.S.

With his latest ruling, O'Connor upholds this decidedly Christian interpretation of who does and does not deserve care and empowers a religious perspective that violates anyone who believes that they have a religious right to live free of infectious diseases or to use harm reduction.

By including the PSTF's A and B recommendations in his opinion, O'Connor has opened the door to denying such people access to screenings for numerous cancers—including cervical,

colorectal, lung, and skin cancer)—tests for STIs, and even consultations on anxiety or suicide among children. It also embolden's anti-science decisions made by legislators, such as the governor of Kentucky who recently declared that he will reject federal funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that have been earmarked for HIV testing, prevention, and treatment.

Worse, it follows a pattern of so-called "Don't Say Gay" laws that are attempting to drag LGBTQ people back into the closet. Combined with this ruling's attack on the right to access healthcare, such bills open the door for a possibility that the U.S. will also introduce laws that make it illegal for one to identify as LGBTQ—a law that was recently passed by Uganda's parliament, with assistance of financial backing from U.S. based, conservative religious groups. Years ago, it was not illegal to be or to

identify oneself as LGBTQ in Uganda. Though still terrible, it was only illegal to have same gender loving sex. With this bill, things have changed for the worse.

While it might have once seemed far-fetched to suggest that the U.S. would ever imitate such openly oppressive laws, a view of the current landscape reveals that we are already there. And like a frog that is sitting in a pot of slowly boiling water, we are close to the point of being cooked alive.

The possibility that O'Connor's ruling may appear before a decidedly conservative Supreme Court is far from inspiring. But even if the worst case scenario comes to pass, it is essential that we who are affected stay alert, fight, protest, and advance life-affirming legislation. Otherwise, these religious freedom laws will be used to drag us all back to the pits of the AIDS Epidemic.

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Ted Lasso Introduces Show's First Gay Character

By Brenda Wilson



Editor's note: this post contains spoilers Ted Lasso season 3, episode 3, entitled "4-5-1."

Ted Lasso, an Apple TV+ show centering around the titular character (Jason Sudeikis), an American college football coach who is hired to coach an English Premier League soccer team, AFC Richmond, even though he has no experience, has just introduced its first gay character.

Up until now, this progressive series has yet to feature an out character. However, in the third episode of the third season, "4-5-1," Richmond left-back Colin (Billy Harris) reveals he is not

only closeted, but also in a relationship with newbie Michael (Luke Ashton).

The timeliness of the storyline is relevant, as at least three active football players have openly come out over the last eighteen months: first Jake Cavallo in Australia, then Jake Daniels in England, and most recently Jakub Jankto over in Prague. Their openness has also been met with overwhelming support and celebration, for the most part.

GQ UK notes that there are around 550 active players in the Premier League, which makes it statistically likely that

at least one player is gay. At that, no one has come out while playing in England's top tier since Justin Fashanu in 1990, who ultimately committed suicide eight years later after enduring massive hostility from the press.

Although England as a whole has changed in support of gay rights, the Ted Lasso storyline could be setting up an openly gay footballer in the fictional Premier League to hopefully influence the real one.

New episodes of Ted Lasso stream on Apple TV+ every Wednesday.

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that you obviously want for your children. That really speaks to what our experience has been. We lead with kindness, empathy, and understanding, and that is what we have received from people. You can learn a lot in the safety of your living room," Brent says.

Although the fathers are thankful they can show their love and talent on screen, they're also cognizant of the trailblazers that came before them in the fight for mainstream representation.

"We have such respect and admiration for the people that pushed this movement of equality. We know that we are standing on the shoulders of Harvey Milk, of everyone who's ever marched, of all of these incredible people who looked around and said society could be better. Now many years later, families like ours have an opportunity to be on television and on a platform like this," Berkus says.

Plus, the couple's adorable kids Poppy and Oskar are growing up in real time as the show continues to gain momentum.

"Poppy's been on the show since she was three, which is crazy. It's really this beautiful time in our lives. They're so sweet and we are obsessed with them. I can't wait to go see them tonight. I find myself anxious to be around them," Brent concludes.

The Nate and Jeremiah Home Project airs Wednesday nights on HGTV.

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OUT & HEALTH

New Erectile Dysfunction Nasal Spray Claims To Work In Five Minutes

By David Reimer



Scientists in Australia claim to have created a new treatment for erectile dysfunction that can be administered via a nasal spray. They say its main advantage is that, unlike tablets, it can take as little as five to 15 minutes to take effect.

Common medications for erectile dysfunction include sildenafil (better known under the brand name Viagra) and tadalafil (Cialis).

Once taken, the tablets can take 30-60 minutes before eliciting their desired effect.

This is not so great if a spontaneous opportunity for sex arises (or fails to arise, so to speak).

“Our nasal delivery bypasses the digestive system, so it really goes straight into the bloodstream and has an effect in five to 15 minutes,” Lee Rodne, executive chairman of biotech company LTR Pharma, told *The Australian* on Monday.

“We expect it to be a lot more effective than oral tablets so that it works consistently and in a quicker and faster amount of time, so men don’t have to plan ahead and they don’t have variable results.”

The Australian nasal spray has the name SPONTAN. The active ingredient is Vardenafil (also known by the brand name Levitra). It acts in the same way as sildenafil. It increases blood flow to the penis when you’re sexually aroused. A preliminary proof-of-concept study undertaken in California illustrated how quickly SPONTAN acts.

Fast-Track Approval Sought

According to a press statement from LTR Pharma, the company has “today secured Ethics Approval for a bio-equivalence clinical study of its intranasal spray for erectile dysfunction (ED), ‘SPONTAN™’ – a crucial step in fast-tracking approval for this world-first product with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).”

The company says ED impacts approximately 30 million people in the US alone.

“We are thrilled to have received ethics approval for this pivotal clinical study,” said Mr. Rodne in the statement.

LTR Pharma says that it will be seeking out trial participants in Sydney later this year. It’s also already applying to the FDA to be considered for expedited

approval. It can apply for this fast-track process because the FDA has already approved Vardenafil in the past. Approving a change in the method of administration should be a quicker process than seeking approval for a new drug.

If SPONTAN is found to be safe and effective, it could be available in a couple of years.

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Life and Style

White Gay Artists Gilbert & George Open Own Gallery Because Museums Too "Woke"

By Jacqui Palumbo



Famed artist duo Gilbert & George, who describe themselves as two men who are together one artist, have unveiled a new gallery in London dedicated to their work.

The pair — Gilbert Prousch and George Passmore — have been working together for six decades, creating absurdist performance art and image-based works centered on the idea that the artists are "living sculptures" — and that everything they do is art.

Opening to the public April 1, the Gilbert & George Centre's first show, "The Paradisical Pictures," displays a series of hallucinatory large-scale mixed media works that appear like stained-glass and feature religious and nature motifs and self-portraits.

Speaking to CNN's Christiane Amanpour ahead of the launch, Prousch said, "New museums don't have the space anymore, and it is limited what they can show.

"We started out with the idea that we wanted to be seen, and the only way to be seen is to build your own little museum... They are too full up with other artists."

In 2021, the artists told the Financial Times in an interview that "all the museums are now woke," with Prousch saying the Tate has 23 of their works that "they never show." He added: "At the moment it's all Black art, all women art, all this art and that art. Just go and have a look at Tate Modern, I'm sure they don't have a (Francis) Bacon up."

Their remarks resurfaced last year, with critics pointing out that their comments are at odds with their ethos of "art for all."

Others didn't mince words. The Nigerian artist and academic Chika Okeke-Agulu posted to Instagram in October 2022: "These two white British men are getting themselves their own museum because Black folks and women have taken over the white man's art institutions."

The artists did not talk about race or gender during the recent conversation with Amanpour, and when CNN Style reached out to Gilbert & George after the interview regarding the artists' earlier statements, a representative declined to comment.

A History Of Provocation

In the interview, the artists expressed that they are political outliers for their conservative beliefs.

"In Britain, for many, many years it was a bad thing to say you're conservative; it was as if you were weird or something," Passmore told Amanpour. "We always vote Conservative because we like to vote for the winning party... We think Conservative is more normal; the other side is more foreign, more revolutionary, more communist or more atheist or something weird. Conservative means normal, average."

But Prousch and Passmore have long been provocative in their works, creating photographs of urine streams, feces, and Catholic iconography, and displaying themselves suitless — a rarity — and bent over in the 1994 self-portrait "Bum Holes." In an early diptych together, from 1969, the young artists wore cut-out letters on their suits that spelled out "George the C***" and "Gilbert the S***."

When asked if they considered themselves "eccentric," the Passmore replied "Certainly not. We're normal — normal weird."



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Dying Gay Bars? There's A Sobering Upside

By Desmond Wilkerson

It is a fact of queer life: Your favorite gay bar, the one where you found your tribe for the first time, will someday close.

Neighborhoods are gentrifying, nightlife is changing, and the Gay Bar — home — feels increasingly like a relic from when cities were cheap, dirty, and wild. I posit — for the first time in my writing career — that maybe this is OK, mostly because of some recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Last November, the CDC released an alarming report. In recent years, “excessive drinking” accounted for one in five deaths among Americans ages 20 to 49. That’s a lot of people. Most of my friends fall in that range. Following COVID-19, another report from the CDC showed equally grim numbers: In 2020, over 93,000 Americans died from overdose, the highest number ever recorded in a 12-month period and a 30 percent increase from the year before. Those were 93,000 friends.

Data on those who identify as LGBTQ+ relies on self-identifying, but most available data shows that we struggle with substances — drugs and

alcohol — at higher rates and with worse outcomes than our hetero, cisgender peers. In 2020, research from Oxford University showed that all

subgroups of queer — from bisexual women to transgender folks — have high rates of alcohol abuse disorder.

All that rings sadly true. Familiar, even. I’ve heard it in many variations: Gays have a drug problem. I lived it. I became a gay trope: the slutty sex worker with a drug history who ages a bit before doling out sage advice to young sprites. Gay films have endless versions of me, a tired queen droning on with war stories because, thank God, they survived.

But I did. Others did not. We drank heavily, used the same meth, went to the same parties, and fucked the same people or the same kinds of people. I did not lose friends to AIDS, as queer generations before me did, but I have lost them to a queer drug culture that existed before, during, and after AIDS — and exists today. Strides have been made by countless nonprofit agencies and organizations — like GMHC in New York and the Los Angeles LGBT Center — to provide counseling, 12-step groups, harm reduction, and so on. But still, our queer battle with consumption feels like an ongoing motif, a song on a loop.

I asked Andrew G. Marshall, a London-based therapist and author, the obvious question: Why?

Marshall, who is gay, says the issue is twofold. “Most of us were told from a young age that what we do is wrong, dirty, and disgusting, and there’s a lot of shaming,” he says. “Alcohol and drugs help facilitate sex in the gay world and make it easier. They quiet down the fears of not being good enough, not having the right body, not fitting in. These fears are quieted in a way that people who haven’t received that amount of shame don’t need.”

The second problem, he says, is that queer folks tend to come of age in bars and clubs, where drugs and alcohol are part of the experience of growing up. This is as true for me as for countless others. I found my people in a gay bar, met my first sex work client on a barstool, and got stuck in messy drugs for a bit. In the thick of those drugs — when I was steeped in drug overuse if not yet abuse — I got help from a harm-reduction therapist who worked at a nonprofit run by queer people for queer people. Just as LGBTQ+ people brought me to my adult life and showed me who I am via drag shows and party tickets, they also sent me a lifeline out of the pit before things got scary. Other queer men I loved were not so lucky.

Some might not have had any success from my harm-reduction approach. They might have needed the



stringent rules of abstinence and 12-step meetings to get back into life. Everyone struggling, even mildly, with substances should explore all options and try all approaches before giving up. I have my personal issues with abstinence and 12-step, but I accept that some of us need all-or-nothing and the ritual of the rooms in order to stay alive. Every queer person alive now who participates in nightlife or at least enjoys the occasional gay brunch has — thanks to sobriety or simply moderation — survived a culture that inextricably links our identities to something in a bottle or pipe. Our sex is bound to substances. As a sex writer and worker, I know how serious that is. Sex is self. If sex is only reachable via mind alteration, a human will get high to feel good. We feel we need it in order to live.

So, what can we do? I asked the therapist. “We should be offering courses and workshops on how to connect without drugs,” Marshall says. “Can you feel your desire without the drugs artificially doing it to you? The answer, of course, is: You can, but to do so, you need to be able to connect deeply with yourself, and that’s not something everybody can do easily.” A

therapist helps. And, Marshall says, we should normalize these conversations. “They should be happening everywhere.”

Increasingly, there are more spaces for queer folks to gather and have these dialogues than ever before — without booze present. L.A. has Cuties, a queer, sober hangout cafe run by Virginia Bauman and her business partner, Iris Bainum-Houle. NY has GMHC, Bluestockings Cooperative, & a monthly mixer hosted by Safer Spaces NYC. Across the United States, in big and small urban areas, queer-owned businesses have started to fill the growing gap between our community’s mental health and our long-standing tradition of gathering in the gay bar. In Berlin, where I live, there is Village, a multi-use space that holds dance classes, yoga, “heart circles,” meditations, and other events that build the social networks that once formed on barstools and in backrooms. While sex-positive, Village is not a sex club and offers a sanctuary for those who might not want to be touched or flirted with too heavily. And it’s dry — always.

For better and worse, queer culture has shifted out of the bar. We now have sports teams & parent groups. One hopes we can move the culture for our trans brothers and sisters.

Making space matters, but more than that, we must talk more about shame. “As a

community, we’ve tried to replace shame with pride,” Marshall says. “We think if we’re proud, we can drown out those earlier messages. But that’s not possible. We must listen to shame rather than try to escape it. When we listen to it, talk about it, and hear other people’s shame, it begins to dissolve. Shame disappears in the light of attention.”

I still love — and work in — nightlife. Gay nightlife will never die. But it will change. It has evolved into queer. It will evolve again. Gay men tend to get nostalgic about the past — about lost bars, aging divas, and music from our youth — but it is important to cherish what was while also letting the more harmful parts of our culture go, even when they were sometimes wonderful too. Love of culture often butts up against the painful truth that culture must change and that this change is needed. Every queer generation — especially those that did not call themselves “queer” — has struggled with this. Every future one will. But change is inevitable, and sometimes it’s for the better.

To leave the Gay Bar is not to say it didn’t matter, and all this is certainly not to isolate or attack the sexy, boozy, cruisy gathering spaces still open and running, like the ones I visit and love. We just need more sober spaces too so that the rest of us — the ones we need to be taking care of, who often struggle to ask for help, who need friends right now — can feel like they belong.

Femmephobia In Gay Communities

By David Vandygriff

The 10-Year Challenge first appeared in 2019 as a social media fad on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. For the challenge (also called the 2009 vs. 2019 Challenge), people post two side-by-side photos of themselves to show how much they've changed: one photo is current and the other from 10 years ago.

The opportunity to self-reflect on a decade's worth of changes can be a wonderful opportunity to assess one's development. This may be especially true for queer and trans people who may have significant changes to share as they become more open about their identity.



But for others, the posts may feel less celebratory. They may even feel self-denigrating.

Many gay men

described their 2009 picture as "gross," "unattractive" or "grotesque" in ways that link these qualities to femininity. These attitudes are consistent with societal messages that

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sentiments expressed reveal a deep femmephobia within LGBTQ+ communities. They also echo widespread issues of body dysmorphia (the obsessive feeling that a part of your body is flawed) and include fat-shaming or inadvertently praise disordered eating.

The posts raise alarms for us because we believe they are part of a growing culture of gay men glorifying femmephobia and elements of toxic masculinity.

Dating Apps: Hotbeds Of Body Image Struggles

Within our research, we seek to understand and illuminate femmephobic attitudes. For many gay men, Facebook and Instagram and gay-specific dating apps are hotbeds of body image struggles and online gender-based discrimination.

Research suggests that this phenomenon is linked to gay men's tendency to openly discriminate against other gay men who express

men should not express femininity.

As we scroll through these posts, especially by gay men, we believe many



a gender outside of traditional masculinity. Gay men's skinny and thin bodies are viewed with disgust by other men seeking more "masculine" presenting partners.

On dating apps like Grindr, there is the ubiquitous hateful saying: "No fats, no fems, no Asians". This saying is reflective of the systemic denigration and discrimination against feminine gay men — both fat and thin male bodies — as well as Asian men.

Asian men have historically been stereotyped as passive, submissive and failing expectations for masculinity, with gay Asian men experiencing high amounts of femmephobia and gender-based stereotyping within gay men's communities.

Scruff, a gay hook-up app is a prime example of the privilege masculinity receives in gay men's communities. Scruff is marketed and catered to a "scruffy" demographic. Scruffy or rugged men who have hair on their bodies and large amounts of facial hair can congregate online, commonly leaving those considered more feminine ostracized from such spaces.



Likewise, Grindr, the most popular gay hook-up app, is well-known for its focus on fit bodies, muscular physiques and gym selfies.

In this pursuit, researchers have shown gay men to have high levels of body dysmorphia, which can result in a preoccupation with gym culture, or taking silicon implants and testosterone enhancers to grow muscle mass.

Gay men interact with one another online in heavily masculinized ways, with a focus on short sentences, quick phrases and highly sexualized text. They tend to avoid emotional expressions and committed relationships.

Twinks

Some researchers suggest that gay men commonly express femininity during adolescence, yet this is diminished to conform to masculine ideologies as adults. An especially influential example of this in the gay subculture is “twinks,” a common term to describe young, effeminate, typically white and slender gay men.



Although twinks are highly valorized by certain segments of the gay community for their

youthfulness, they are also often negatively stereotyped. They deal with perceptions of frivolity, passivity and superficiality. and are fetishized or objectified as play-things that simultaneously affirms the masculinity of other men.

Young twinks are encouraged to either masculinize their gender expression or become submissive for the consumption of more masculine gay men.

Within twink communities are high rates of sexual assault experiences and high suicide rates.

Toxic Masculinity

An especially influential study by clinical psychologist Kittiwut Jod Taywaditep found many gay men endorse femmephobic sentiments and engage in a processes of “defeminization” between adolescence and adulthood.

For many gay men, growing out of their femininity is seen as a sign of adulthood — an evolution of the body and self as they shed their former feminine and boyish self and enter adulthood as a stable and masculine man who has internalized dominant notions of masculinity.

With femininity’s associations with youthfulness and incompleteness, masculinity is secured as a cultural symbol of adulthood. This adulthood is then associated with a masculine and athletic body. This evolution narrative crafts a spectrum of gender expression that places femininity on the left and masculinity on the right.

It creates an ideology that views feminine men as inferior or “not fully developed.”

Comments on these posts on social media about body size and youthful appearance bolster the narrative of femininity as inferior and infantile.

The narrative of the 10-Year Challenge seems to be that all is OK once a femme defeminizes and grows into a respectable masculine man. These attitudes towards the “femmes of 2009” need to stop to avoid solidifying toxic masculinity in LGBTQ+ communities.



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A Brand New Gay Reality Dating Show Is Coming & Dannii Minogue Is Hosting

By Daniel Galbraith



They kissed some boys, and they liked it!

The UK is getting its first-ever exclusively gay reality dating show on television: *I Kissed a Boy*. The new series will air on BBC Three and BBC iPlayer, with singer Dannii Minogue appearing as the host. Set in Italy, 10 guys will enter a villa looking for love... but before talking, flirting, or doing anything else, the contestants will have to share a kiss first.

Minogue wrote in a tweet:

“In a picture-perfect Masseria

in Italy... it all starts with a kiss for 10 boys in their search for love. *I Kissed a Boy* is the UK’s first-ever gay dating show, and it was a pleasure for me to be there to help these guys in their search for love.”

I Kissed a Boy was first announced by the BBC back in May 2022. The series was described in a release:

“As soon as they meet, they kiss. No small-talk, no ‘flanter,’ just one rom-com-worthy moment that might just take their breath away.”

In a free-for-all format similar to shows like *Love Island* and *Too Hot To Handle*, “everyone is a possible love interest” on *I Kissed a Boy*. This is different from past queer dating shows like *Finding Prince Charming*, *12 Dates of Christmas*, and *24 Hours of Love*, where one leading gay man looked for love among a group of contestants in the style of *The Bachelor* franchise.

We’re already excited to watch *I Kissed a Boy* once it comes out!

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Life and Style

Lizzo's Yitty Launches Gender-Affirming Shapewear
By Janet Livingston



It is no secret that Lizzo is a passionate advocate for self-love. Alongside her confidence-boosting music — which includes tracks "Good as Hell," "2 Be Loved (Am I Ready)" and the Grammy-Award winning "About Damn Time" — the singer launched shapewear brand Yitty in 2022 with a goal of helping women of all body types "feel unapologetically good about themselves."

In late March, the brand announced that it will offer gender-affirming shapewear for the first time.

Titled "Your Skin," the collection features a binder top and tucking thong that have been two years in the making, according to an announcement posted on the brand's Instagram page. These garments — which are often used by trans or gender-diverse people — are designed to allow for a visibly flat contour to the chest or crotch areas.

"I can only speak from my own experiences but I often feel lost in my body," wrote non-binary model Shaheem Anderson, who features in the "Your Skin" campaign, on Instagram. "I have ALWAYS looked to clothing to express who I am
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inwardly... but there are still some challenges with specific silhouettes. How cool that FINALLY a mainstream brand like Yitty will be selling BINDERS and TUCKING BOTTOMS!!

"It's one thing to be included in a campaign but included in a campaign that could potentially make a difference in someone's life and affirm how they feel on the inside means the [world]."

The "Your Skin" collection, the rest of which has yet to be unveiled, will be made available in late summer 2023, the brand said.

"Yitty believes in radical self-love for people of all gender identities — including the trans, non-binary, gender-fluid and gender non-conforming communities that have been chronically underserved," the brand wrote in a press release. "It is Yitty's mission to continue serving all bodies, which is why these core styles will always be available at Yitty."

Lizzo launched her brand in partnership with Fabletics in April 2022, after she had spoken of her own painful experience growing up wearing uncomfortable shapewear. The

singer turned fashion entrepreneur has committed to offering her inclusive shapewear in a wide range of sizes, from XS to 6X.

"I've watched countless videos of people crafting their own garments to wrap or tuck their bodies so their body can truly feel like theirs," Lizzo wrote in an Instagram post. "I've heard people talk about their presence of wanting to be fluid in how they want to present their bodies depending on their mood or style of clothing. And I wanted to help."

"Because we do this for you," she added. "Every damn body."

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Sasha Colby Tells Her Drag & Gender Journey In Style

By Jennifer Williams



Sasha Colby was introduced on season 15 of RuPaul's Drag Race as a certified drag legend.

She had already won the famed Miss Continental pageant, developed relationships with high-profile designers, and mothered several drag children — including season 14 star Kerri Colby. For Colby, her journey in the world of drag — and as a transgender woman — is stitched into her garments.

Beginning with her youth in Hawaii, Colby formed a lifelong relationship with clothes as a means of gender expression and freedom. And she had some unintentional helpers.

"The funny thing is how my parents would dress me," Colby reflects. "In elementary school, I was already a blond kid in the middle of Hawaii. I had green eyes, pretty fair skin, and was femme-presenting. Then they'd put me in these little shorts that no other boy was wearing. And I was like, 'So you really want me to just get more beat up, right?' I felt like my parents unintentionally dressed me up very feminine, and they didn't even realize it."

Short shorts were just the beginning. As a child, she tried on different forms of feminine presentation, which allowed her to access new realms of creativity.

"The first gender-affirming clothes I ever put on were my sister's negligee and bra," she recalls. "From elementary to high school, I would come home and I would play in my sister's makeup because she would have it in the bathroom. So it was easy for me to just grab a little liner, put some mascara on, light a candle, put on music. There was a radio inside our bathroom, and I would lip-synch in front of the mirror for hours — three hours, from 3 to 6 [a.m.] And my dad would be pounding on the door saying, 'Get out, I have to shower!'"

Even today, Colby doesn't believe her family understood what she was doing in the bathroom. "No one asked... ever," she says with a laugh. "Maybe they noticed that I had black around my eye or little leftover remnants of makeup. But they never really pressed it. They'd just be annoyed that

I'd be taking up the bathroom."

Her teenage years also marked a major turning point in her sartorial self-discovery. "My first gender-affirming, 'Oh, I'm trans and this is how I'm going to present myself,' was in high school," Colby says. "I was around 17 and dressing up for Halloween. A bunch of my friends rented a hotel in Waikiki. My best friend, Lindsay, who's still my best friend to this day, fully let me be in drag. We all walked around Waikiki and I just felt like... 'I'm a girl.' It was so empowering. I was finally seen but not gawked at. I was really awkward before I transitioned, but as soon as I started presenting [as] how I actually felt on the inside, a lot of people were like, 'You just seem so much happier now.... It's so nice to see you.'"

Over the years, Colby kept expressing herself through fashion and evolved her style as she gained more confidence and experience. In fact, every dress tells a story. Read on to hear about them.



Crowning Glory

Colby triumphed in the 2012 Miss Continental pageant, which garnered her this

crown. She recalls, “This is right when I won. When you win any big pageant, it is a job you’re taking, which is why I always think about it when I wanted to do Drag Race. Everyone thinks that the competition is the real hard part, but it’s actually doing the job after.”

Winning Miss Continental gave Colby a sense of responsibility that comes with the platform of the title. “Being able to represent what I felt I loved about Miss Continental was really important. I was traveling so much.... The Continental schedule was fierce. I sometimes had to do two or three different cities, different states even, in one weekend.”

The “First Incarnation In Drag”

Colby was gifted this leather piece from one of her sons, the fashion designer

Ajust Getty; previously, it was hanging in his personal closet. Even though she first wore it for a recent photo shoot, the look is



reminiscent of her “first incarnation in drag.” She explains, “I was the rock-and-roll girl, this platinum blond thing, walking in Hawaii. Not a lot of girls had the commitment to go blond-blond...and I was platinum. I was feeling my Gwen Stefani era, very ‘Hella Good’ [by No Doubt]. I am a kid of the 2000s, so I did love me some emo, Hot Topic. Give me a rubber band bracelet up to my elbows, please.”



Something Borrowed

“When I first ran Miss Continental in 2005, that was the first gown that I ever wore,” Colby says. “And it’s actually my drag mother Cassandra Colby’s gown that she wore when she won Miss Universal Show Queen, which is a very big pageant based in Hawaii. It was a big bustle that she had, and I repurposed it as a cool little coat. I just love having sentimental drag pieces. That gown goes back so far — 15 years now.”

Hawaiian Warrior

This drag veteran put a lot of thought behind how she would enter the Werk Room of RuPaul’s Drag Race for the very first time. “My drag is very everywhere, like a drag

chameleon. So I thought, What story do I want to tell first?” she muses. “And it went back to who I am as a

person, being Hawaiian. I wanted to take on the idea of a powerful warrior, mixing in the black skirt, which is actually more so of a man’s skirt. It’s called a malo, which men wear more often than women. It felt like a little touch that maybe only other queer Hawaiian people would understand and be like, ‘Oh, wow. She’s doing the masculine/feminine thing, but in a Sasha Colby way.’”

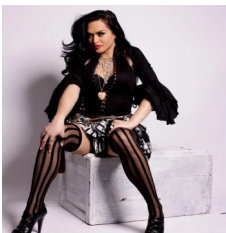
As for the tattoos, Colby met with a Hawaiian culture specialist, Kumu Mehana Hind, to ensure she was making the accurate references to her origins. “I had a really long talk with her, and she wanted to really know my reasoning behind why I chose to have tattoos for this look,” Colby says. “For me, it was just aesthetics, but then she told me why we tattoo as Polynesians. It’s a very sacred ritual act, usually to commemorate a big thing that happened in your life: a big death or a big birth or a big transformation. When she said transformation, I realized that’s why I innately went to it, because it’s showing my transness as well. Even though I didn’t realize it at first, that was also a really powerful statement that I got to make.”





First Impression

Colby's first runway look on RuPaul's Drag Race was a 10-year-old gown made by a New York City-based designer named Gustavo Bustos; she previously wore it the year she won Miss Continental. "He would do all the Miss Venezuela pageants back in the '80s and '90s, and he started doing a lot of drag, a lot of trans-drag pageants, which is why we all fell in love with him," she says. "He's a legend in the drag industry, so I really wanted to make a statement that night."



The Next Chapter

Despite her already sizable reputation, Colby never underestimated

the Drag Race experience as she went into filming season 15. "Let's be real, Drag Race is the hugest competition in drag culture," Colby points out. "I think of it as a televised pageant, so that's why it was so

easy to see myself competing. Going there, I've had a lot of life happen to me. I was also ready to just be present in not just the competition but understanding that it is a show as well.... A lot of people see me as standoffish and maybe intimidating when they see me on stage, but everyone that meets me is like, 'Oh, but she's so sweet and goofy.'"

Could Colby soon wear a Drag Race crown with a story of its own? Considering the possibility, she becomes a little emotional. "To be quite honest, I just wanted my foot in the door," she confesses. "'Just get me on TV, please, and I promise you I'll take whatever I get.' I've just been working so hard and never thought that anybody was watching or even noticed it. The amount of love that I've gotten has made me feel like my 20 years of work really meant something, that people are really watching.

"My goal with Drag Race is to follow in the footsteps of all the successful Drag Race sisters that I've seen become more than their wildest dreams. Being able to seize opportunities. This is what Drag Race is about. Even the non-winners are such winners. It's insane what you can do with just the opportunity. And I definitely go into this not just wanting to win, but just being like, 'Man, if I could just get somebody to see me, then it's on.' That's what I feel like. My opportunities are so much bigger now, and my dreams just got bigger."

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News & Politics

Lauren Boebert Calls Pete Buttigieg A Diversity “Sympathy Hire”

By David Vandygriff



Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO) attacked gay Secretary of Transportation a diversity hire because he has not stopped all transportation accidents from occurring.

“Another train derailment – now in Minnesota. And it was carrying ethanol!” she wrote. “When we had a real Transportation Secretary instead of a DEI sympathy hire, this didn’t happen every day!” “DEI” is short for “diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

She was referring to a train derailment in Raymond, Minnesota yesterday. Several of the cars carrying denatured ethanol – used as a fuel additive – ruptured and caught fire.

Homes within a half-mile of the derailment were evacuated for around 12 hours. No one was injured and the sheriff’s

department said that there was no impact on the groundwater.

Derailments like that are fairly common in the U.S., with around a thousand occurring each year. Most of them are not large-scale disasters.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – which Buttigieg was one of the main proponents of and Boebert called “wasteful” and “garbage” – contained funds for railroad improvement projects.

Boebert has had it out for Buttigieg for years. In 2021, Boebert proudly proclaimed that she gave birth in a truck in order to insult Buttigieg for taking “maternity leave” to “figure out how to chest feed” his two children. She said he wasn’t doing his job and accused him of making an “R-rated” movie with Jeff Bezos instead.

Just this year, she made fun of him for wearing safety equipment at a disaster site.

Many on the right have said that they believe Buttigieg was hired only because he’s gay, even though he is the only out LGBTQ+ Cabinet secretary in the history of the U.S.

This comes several years after some liberals in straight media claimed that Buttigieg isn’t gay enough. Slate ran a column with the headline “Is Pete Buttigieg just another white male candidate, or does his gayness count as diversity?” in 2019 that pondered if he ever faced “setbacks or barriers to success because he’s gay.” And the LA Review of Books accused him and his husband, Chasten Buttigieg, of “Heterosexuality without women” because the couple didn’t have sex on the cover of Time magazine.

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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Native Queers Are Taking Back Paradise

By Penelope Stricklin



There are few artists who've shaped Westerners' visions of the island paradise as much as the Postimpressionist French painter Paul Gauguin, who spent time in Tahiti and other locations in French Polynesia more than a century ago. And yet Gauguin was himself seduced by the romantic idea of the island Eden presented through Western cultural works like 1719's *Robinson Crusoe*.

One of the first British novels ever published, *Crusoe* is, essentially a story of colonization — as Elif Batuman notes in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*— focusing on an Englishman exploiting the natural and human resources of an island. Batuman points to Edward Said's 1993 book of essays, *Culture and Imperialism*, to suggest the novel — as a format of literature — is inherently and symbiotically bound to imperialism.

Tourism probably holds a similar symbiosis with colonialization, historically bringing Europeans to island communities and developing nations. Many of these are still being exploited for their resources, even if those resources are now sometimes intangible.

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In “Constructing Paradise in the Western Imagination: Reflections on Colonial Legacies and Developing Nations' Tourist Industries,” Jamaican artist and scholar Oneika Russell writes, “One could argue that without paradise, tourists might not be able to bear the burdens associated with its own man-made systems and structural socio-economic and political problems.”

Having long ago stripped their own lands of resources, most empires can only be sustained by exploiting those of others. Today one of those resources may be the replenishing effect that travel can provide.

As a visual artist, Russell writes elsewhere, “My work often investigates the trope of the fetishized and mythologized native within the paradigm of ‘paradise’ and tourism industries.” In “Constructing Paradise,” Russell describes her series “After Gauguin” as an examination of the connection between “exoticism and the colonial, Western and European fascination with places like Tahiti and Jamaica.”

And yet Russell acknowledges, “When he arrived in Tahiti, [Gauguin] was disappointed. It

was too colonized and settled. It was not quite the primitive land of his dreams.”

The Polynesian islands Gauguin visited and the subjects he painted were also not quite what consumers of his paintings wanted to see. They were too multidimensional and too queer. So Gauguin subtly painted those parts out of the picture — but he couldn't entirely erase the queerness of his inspiration.

In turn, the French painter inspired Sāmoan-Japanese artist Yuki Kihara's own “After Gauguin” series, presented in the critically acclaimed “Paradise Camp” exhibit at 2022's Venice Biennale. Kihara told Cristina Verán of *Cultural Survival Quarterly* that when she first saw Gauguin's paintings, “I recalled an essay written by [Māori] Professor Emerita Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, which discussed the models of Gauguin paintings as being mähū, the Tahitian third gender.”

Kihara herself identifies as fa'afafine, which translates to “in the manner of a woman” and describes Sāmoa's third gender. She said Gauguin's “figures reminded me of my

fa'afafine friends, as the landscapes also reminded me of home. I would later discover that Gauguin had actually used photographs of people & places in Sāmoa as inspiration."

Those figures would also feel familiar to many Hawaiians. DeSoto Brown, historian at O'ahu's Bishop Museum, recently curated an exhibit sharing the story of four powerful trans healers who traveled from Tahiti to Hawai'i around the 1500s. Brown explains that "there was a period in Hawaiian history where there was actually regular visitation between Tahiti and Hawai'i. And this is not a small thing to do."

The two Polynesian island nations are roughly 2,630 miles apart.

"It's an arduous journey," Brown says, especially when made in a double-hulled Polynesian voyaging canoe before the invention of navigating equipment.

The visitors from Tahiti "are said to have been māhū," Brown continues. "They were transgendered." Before these dual male and female spirits left the islands they imbued their powers into 4 monoliths, which stood on the shores of O'ahu for generations until colonizers buried them. Today, the recovered healer stones are located along one of the busiest stretches of Waikiki Beach, but few know their stories. The 2021 animated short film *The Healer Stones* of Kapaemahu hoped to change that. It did spark a subsequent

museum exhibit.

In "Paradise Camp," Kihara wanted to tell the stories of Sāmoans and reclaim her island from Gauguin's distortions. "In order to disrupt Gauguin's heteronormative view of paradise," she explained, "I chose to deploy an exaggerated, camp aesthetic, showing paradise instead from a fa'afafine perspective. This re-directing of his paintings toward their original inspiration became a process of reclaiming the narrative."

One of her photographs, *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the rainbow* (opening image), features a group of fa'afafine posing riverside. The models are members of the Aleipata Fa'afafine Association, who were also first responders in the devastating aftermath of the 2009 tsunami. Choosing them for the project reiterates the way the (queer) people living in paradise have less luxurious lives than tourism marketing might suggest.


The lives of LGBTQ+ residents of color are often starkly divergent from the experiences of queer travelers. In a 2022 roundtable discussion, "Black, Queer & Trans: Mobilizing in the Caribbean and Beyond," hosted by the Barnard Center for Research on Women, Jamaican trans women Kymm Foster from TransWave Jamaica and Emani Edwards of Connek JA joined Chaday Emmanuel of Connek JA to speak about facing poverty and discrimination. Despite hailing

from a vacation destination, Foster is "never at liberty to just rest" and said, "We don't know what vacation is." Emmanuel added she wasn't even allowed into entertainment spaces in Jamaica because of "how I dressed."

Other island natives share similar stories of living in poverty in paradise. Drag performer Ana Macho told *Global Press Journal* her original song "Blin Blin" is "about the paradise that Puerto Rico is, but the one who lives here can't live it." The native Puerto Rican identifies as non-binary and is among the queer musicians finding their voices in reggaeton. "It's a genre of music that's tightly tied to irreverence," Macho explained. "And that attracts many oppressed bodies: feminine bodies, queer bodies."

Oppression can be exhausting, but it can also spark creativity. Jamaica's multitalented entrepreneur Emmanuel responded to the exclusion she faced at clubs and parties by launching her own inclusive spaces, including *Jamsterdam*, *Tribe876*, and *Tribe Tours*. Now *Connek JA* organizes events, media, and travel experiences that bring together queer family and allies across borders.

"It belongs to us," Foster said in the roundtable. She was talking about trans creative talent, but she could have just as easily been speaking about the island itself. "We are owed when you take it."



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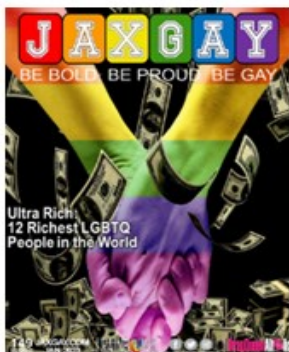
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