

JULY 2026 ISSUE 203

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**Lil Nas X Shares Update
After Diagnosis of Bipolar:**
'There's Less Fear In My Heart'

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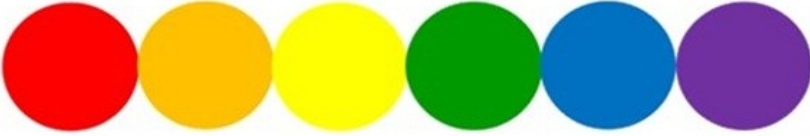
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What Is 'Bottoming
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In

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Lil Nas X Shares Update After Diagnoses of Bipolar: 'There's Less Fear In My Heart'

By David Vandygriff

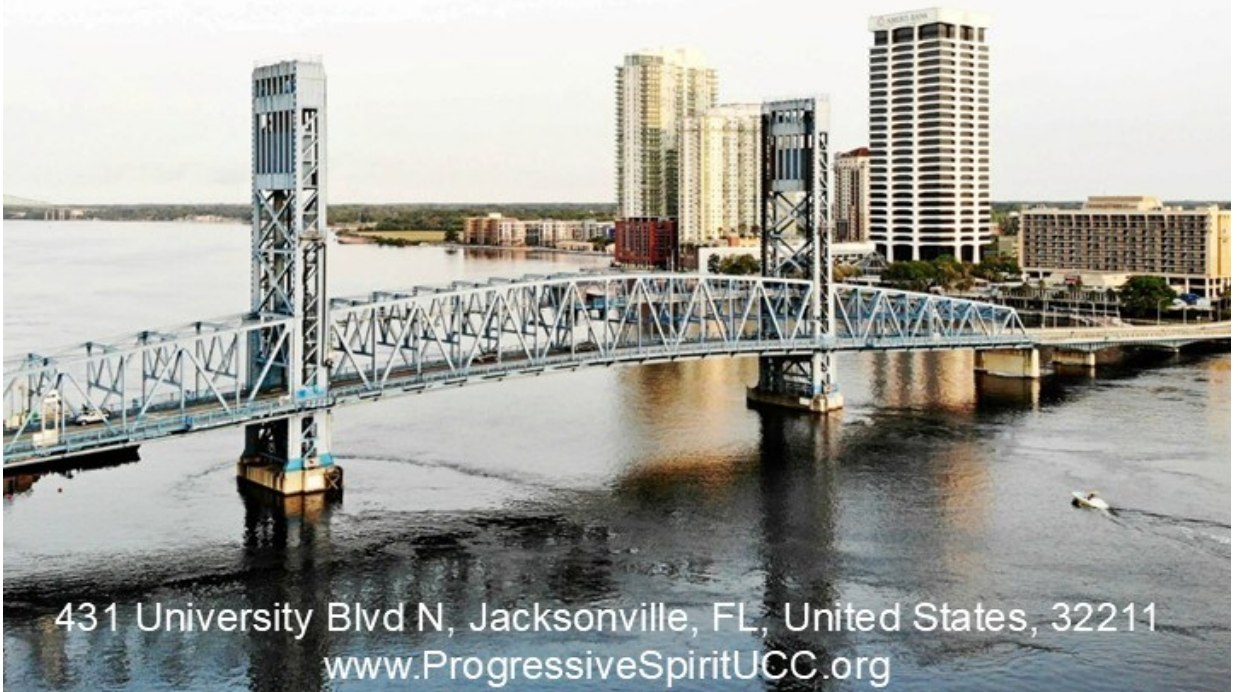


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News & Politics

Trump's 'Not On This Planet' Lie Ensures Historic Blowout In Georgia

By David Vandygriff



Rep. Mike Collins (R-GA) appears to be “leaning into” President Donald Trump’s false election fraud claims in his bid for re-election, but according to CNN data guru Harry Enten, the Trump-endorsed candidate’s midterm strategy is all but certain to hand Democrats a decisive victory.

“If Mike Collins thinks that Donald Trump is going to carry him over the finish line, then I have a brave new world that he needs to face because that is a belief that’s just, simply put, not on this planet,” Enten said on Monday. “It is in some galaxy far, far away.”

Despite no evidence supporting Trump’s claims of there being systemic election fraud in the 2020 election, a staggering 63% of Republicans believe that the 2020 election was, in fact, “stolen,” up three

percentage points from 2021. And, while leaning into Trump’s false claims may bode well among GOP voters, such claims were “a losing message,” Enten cautioned, in a general election.

According to a recent Reuters/IPSOS poll, 64% of Georgia voters overall believe that the 2020 election was “not stolen,” an increase of five percentage points from 2021. Furthermore, Trump’s net favorability among Georgia voters, according to polling data aggregated by Enten, was at -14.

“Donald Trump deeply unpopular in Georgia,” Enten said. “Mike Collins should be running from Donald Trump – instead, he’s leaning into a belief that, simply put, has no evidence to back it up about the 2020 election.”

Trump’s false claims of election fraud still remain supported by a majority of Republican voters, however, something Enten was taken aback by.

“They just believe this garbage!” Enten said. “Most Republicans, despite all the evidence to the contrary, believe that the 2020 election was, in fact, stolen.”

CNN’s John Berman asked Enten whether leaning into false claims of election fraud was a “winning message” for a general election in Georgia.

“No!” Enten shouted. “This is the whole problem, which is the Republican Party is in one camp all the way over here on the right, and the rest of the American public is in the ‘this-is-the-real-world-we’re-dealing-with camp.’”

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OUT & HEALTH

Hayden Panettiere Comes Out As Bisexual

By Debbie Davidson



Heroes and Scream star Hayden Panettiere has come out as bisexual in her memoir.

After previously being “afraid” to talk about her sexuality, Panettiere decided to speak about being bisexual in *This Is Me: A Reckoning*, which will be released on May 19, per an exclusive preview in *US Weekly*.

“That’s something about me I was never able to share with the world, because it was just never the right time,” she told *US Weekly* of her sexuality. “It was either I was too young, and I was being forced to be perfect at all times. I was not encouraged to just be myself. Then came the period where it felt like people coming out, especially women, saying that they were bisexual or liked girls, was a fad.”

Panettiere added that she was “afraid” that if she were honest about her sexuality, it would seem like she was “jumping on the bandwagon.”

“I wanted to make sure that I really sat down and chose my words carefully and was able to tell my story in an honest way, that people understood,” she said. “On one hand, it’s sad that I had to wait till I was 36 years old to share that part of me, but better late than never, right?”

Panettiere said talking about her bisexuality with *US Weekly* was the “first time I got to say it out loud.” Though she noted that she has never fallen in love with a woman, she shared that she has dated a few.

“It was scary, though, because there were paparazzi always

waiting for me outside, to follow me everywhere,” she said. “I had very little privacy. I have dated women. I was much more into women even as a child than I was men.”

She added, “I have explored it, but because I hadn’t shared this with anybody, I didn’t really have the courage to throw myself fully emotionally into it. Because then if I did fall in love, that wasn’t something that I wanted to ever have to hide.”

Aside from bisexuality, Panettiere spoke to *US Weekly* about other revelations from her forthcoming memoir, including her experiences with a stalker and postpartum depression.

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Science & Technology

U.S. Army Develops Advanced Counter-Drone System

By Gregory Payton



The U.S. Army has achieved a significant milestone in counter-unmanned aerial systems (C-UAS) technology by developing an advanced fire-control capability that enables military vehicles to detect, track and destroy hostile drones while moving.

The breakthrough, led by the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) Armaments Center, addresses the rapidly evolving threat posed by small unmanned aerial systems on modern battlefields.

The new capability integrates the Army's "Gunslinger" fire-control technology with a Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS), allowing ground vehicles to engage fast-moving aerial targets without halting. Originally developed under the Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) program, the Gunslinger system has now been adapted for ground-to-air engagements, significantly enhancing battlefield survivability.

Advanced software capable of

engaging small drones

The project, developed under the Science and Technology Integration Office, focuses on creating advanced software capable of accurately tracking and engaging small drones. During successful testing conducted at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland in April 2026, the system demonstrated its ability to maintain accurate targeting while the host vehicle remained in motion.

According to project officials, the initiative was launched in response to the growing threat posed by commercially available and military-grade drones, which have become increasingly prominent in recent conflicts worldwide. The system combines advanced fire-control algorithms with multiple vehicle sensor feeds, enabling real-time target tracking and precise weapon aiming.

"It's a great start to the effort," said Nick Cascia, project officer. "The [project] team has put considerable time and effort into developing our advanced fire control algorithms and preparing for this test. Once we started destroying drones, it

showed the hard work was paying off."

Modular open-system architecture

A notable feature of the new capability is its modular open-system architecture, which allows the software to be integrated across multiple Army platforms. This approach not only simplifies future upgrades but also ensures that emerging counter-drone technologies can be rapidly incorporated without redesigning the entire system.

Beyond improving accuracy, the enhanced fire-control software is expected to reduce ammunition expenditure by increasing the probability of first-round hits against aerial targets. This efficiency is particularly important as militaries seek cost-effective methods to counter the growing number of inexpensive drones employed on the battlefield.

Army engineers reported encouraging results from the initial trials and plan to continue refining the technology through additional testing. Future evaluations will involve higher vehicle speeds and faster drone targets to further improve

system performance under realistic combat conditions.

According to James Little, deputy project lead, the development team received promising results from their April tests and will iterate and build upon these results in subsequent tests to improve system performance. With these tests, developers will continue to increase the speed

of both the vehicle and drone.

The development reflects the U.S. Army's broader effort to strengthen layered air defense against unmanned threats. As drones continue to transform modern warfare, technologies that combine autonomous targeting, advanced sensors and mobile engagement capabilities are becoming essential components of future

battlefield operations.

With continued development and testing, the new counter-UAS fire-control system could provide U.S. forces with a highly effective and scalable solution for defending troops and critical assets against increasingly sophisticated drone threats.



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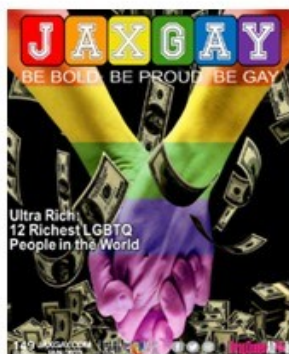
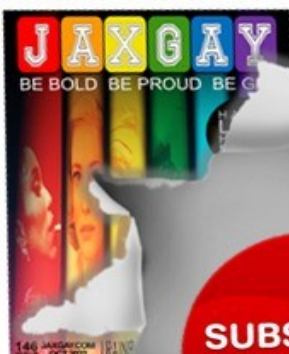
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Red, White & Royal Blue Author Casey McQuiston Sequel Is 'Spicier'

By Adam Bennett

Casey McQuiston has teased that the upcoming Red, White & Royal Blue sequel film will be “a couple degrees spicier” than the first, with more “domesticity” and dialled-up intimacy for Alex and Prince Henry.

Speaking on stage at Prime Video's Obsessed Fest, McQuiston told the crowd: “I can tell you something... There's definitely more domesticity in this movie, because, you know, they're together now. So, you get to see a little bit of their life at home. I really hope I don't get in trouble for saying this.”

They continued: “I would say it is a couple degrees spicier than the first movie. The intimacy is kind of dialled up in a way that is really beautiful and really fun to watch.”

The sequel is titled Red, White & Royal Wedding and is described as the next chapter

Alex and Henry's love story.

Taylor Zakhar Perez and Masters of the Universe star Nicholas Galitzine are set to reunite, with McQuiston executive producing alongside returning producers including Greg Berlanti and Sarah Schechter.

What's been confirmed about the sequel

The follow-up was first announced in May 2024. It is written by Matthew López, with Gemma Burgess and McQuiston, and Jamie Babbit taking over directing duties.

The first film debuted on Prime Video in 2023 and followed President Ellen Claremont's son Alex and Prince Henry after an embarrassing encounter threatened US and UK relations. As they tried to manage the fallout, the pair pretended to be best friends, only to secretly fall in love.

Fans have been eager for any hint of what comes next for the couple once their relationship is out in the open.

Production started in January and filming wrapped in March, though there is no word of when it will be released as of yet.

Casey McQuiston and Red, White & Royal Blue

McQuiston is an American novelist best known for bestselling romantic fiction with LGBTQ+ leads. They wrote Red, White & Royal Blue, a queer romance that became a major BookTok and romance-community staple.

They also authored One Last Stop and I Kissed Shara Wheeler, both featuring queer storylines and characters, and are publicly associated with contemporary queer romance as a mainstream publishing success story.

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OUT & HEALTH

What Is 'Bottoming Fever'? Experts Weigh In

By Daniel Washington



Done correctly and safely, bottoming should be a pleasurable experience for everyone involved. But why do some people feel sick afterward?

If you've ever felt feverish or had flu-like symptoms after a particularly vigorous round of sex, you may have been experiencing "bottoming fever," a collection of symptoms attributed to inflammation from receptive anal intercourse.

Gay urologist and medical influencer Dr. Joshua Gonzalez went viral on TikTok earlier this month for a video he made on this colloquial term for bottoms who feel crummy after sex.

"There's something called bottoming fever," Gonzalez says in his video. "You can have flu-like symptoms, like chills or low-grade fever after intense anal sex. This is an inflammatory response to micro-trauma to your rectal lining."

To find out whether "bottoming fever" is a real condition and if it's something you need to be worried about, Out talked to LGBTQ+ health experts who could answer all of our burning questions.

What is bottoming fever?

The lining of the rectum is delicate and sensitive, which means that if it gets irritated because you spent last night having very enthusiastic sex, you could end up feeling like you're coming down with the flu, according to Gonzalez.

But is this a real condition? The answer is more complicated than a simple yes or no.

"I find this question to be reminiscent of the obsolete and pejorative 'gay bowel disease' that was coined in the 1970s," says Dr. Carl Streed, an LGBTQ+ health specialist and assistant professor of medicine at Boston University, referring to the outdated and homophobic medical term for STI infections and gastrointestinal issues in men who have sex with men.

Streed tells Out that he questions putting any stock in a term that seems to have been coined by a medical influencer. "While the physiology of this purported 'bottoming fever' sounds legitimate coming from a medical influencer, there is no research to back up its existence or suggest it is distinct from other anogenital issues related to receptive anal

intercourse," he says.

But Dr. Evan Goldstein, a leading anal health expert who founded Future Method, a sexual wellness brand dedicated to revolutionizing anal sex prep, says that while "bottoming fever" isn't an official medical term, people may experience these symptoms after "intense anal sex, but it can also occur from douching, as well as micro and macro-tearing (anal fissures) as well."

What are the symptoms of bottoming fever?

Chills, fatigue, a low-grade fever, muscle aches, and other flu-like symptoms have been attributed to "bottoming fever" and should resolve within 24 hours.

"The symptoms are normal per se for what the body does in the situation of an inflammatory cascade," Goldstein says. "The wall of the rectum – from many rounds of douching (using plain water or enemas, large bulbs, shower hoses, and plain ol' overdouching) and certain forms of anal play – get stripped and are basically raw, leading to microscopic tearing, irritation, and what's called bacteremia or the alteration of

the microbiome. The body detects these changes and compensates, which manifests as bottoming fever.”

But Streed cuts right through what he sees as misinformation and says, “It is hard to say what symptoms are normal of a made-up condition.”

What should you do if you get bottoming fever?

In his TikTok video, Gonzalez says these symptoms are “nothing to worry about” and suggests you should “rest, hydrate, and it should resolve on its own within 24 hours.”

Basically, your body needs time to recover. It’s telling you to take a break. Listen to it.

If you find yourself suffering from “bottoming fever,” Goldstein insists you don’t need to worry because the symptoms should pass quickly. “Rest. Hydration is key. You can even take Advil or Motrin to assist. And then just let the wave pass,” he suggests.

Streed doesn’t buy into the diagnosis but says if you are having the kinds of symptoms Gonzalez has attributed to “bottoming fever,” you should “try to avoid or minimize overly aggressive or prolonged sessions if you’re prone to symptoms,” get regularly tested for STIs, and “maintain general good health through adequate sleep, balanced nutrition, and exercise, all which help maintain your physical health (especially your immune system).”

How can you avoid getting

bottoming fever in the future?

Minimizing altering your rectal microbiome is key, says Goldstein, who recommends calibrating down on how much you douche (or skipping it altogether), optimizing your diet, taking fiber supplements, using lube shooters, and trying anal-specific dilators to thicken the anal walls over time.

“We can help minimize the risk of bottoming fever by either skipping douching entirely or refining your pre-sex routine,” he says. “This includes using supplements designed for bottoming, implementing better lubrication techniques, and incorporating toy-work practice before bottoming and on your off days.”

Streed says he doesn’t have any advice for avoiding “something that sounds made up to garner likes, clicks, and shares,” but he does think that safe bottoming techniques are an important part of your sexual health.

He recommends eating fiber, staying hydrated, using a gentle rinse instead of “harsh or frequent douching, which can irritate tissue and worsen symptoms,” taking things slowly, and using a lot of water or silicone-based lube, and maintaining open and honest communication with your partner because “saying what hurts and what feels good improves the experience for



everyone.”

When should you get medical help?

Goldstein says that if your symptoms persist beyond 24 hours or your fever goes above 101 degrees Fahrenheit, you should seek medical help.

“Also, there may be some mucus discharge from the act of bottoming itself, but that should not persist,” he says. “If it does, a full STD panel should be obtained. And if anything out of the ordinary for you happens, then seek medical attention. Earlier intervention is always better.”

Streed agrees and also says you should get medical help from “a trained professional, not a medical influencer” if you have abdominal or rectal pain, significant rectal bleeding, pus or unusual discharge, painful urination, sores, a rash, or “symptoms that keep recurring with every bottoming episode.”

He continues, “These all could be signs of an infection or injury that require medical attention and care.”

Life and Style

Two Tablespoons Of This Sauce Will Upgrade Steak

By Alia Ali



Looking for a new way to upgrade your steak marinades? There are infinite ways to add flavor to meat, but if you want something simple that packs a flavor punch, we recommend an Asian ingredient you may already have in your pantry: hoisin sauce. Just a couple of tablespoons on your favorite cut of steak, balanced with an equal amount of soy sauce, will give you a marinade worthy of Gordon Ramsay's kitchen table.

What exactly is hoisin sauce, and what flavors does it carry? For those uninitiated, hoisin sauce is often made from a base of fermented soybean paste, then sweetened and spiced with various flavorings. Kikkoman uses plum purée for the sweet component, while Lee Kum Kee hoisin sauce adds sweet potato powder. It is has been described as having a warming spice note like of Chinese five-spice powder, which contains

star anise, cloves, and cinnamon, among other spices. Texture-wise, hoisin sauce has a thick, spoonable consistency that clings to other ingredients. These qualities make it perfect for use in meat-based dishes as a marinade or dipping sauce — something that is already done in many East Asian and Southeast Asian cuisines. It makes culinary sense to pair this condiment with steak, amping up the beefy flavors and fatty textures with an all-in-one marinade that is savory, sweet, and spicy.

Choosing the best hoisin sauce for your steak

Now, we're not telling you to marinate meat in hoisin sauce for two whole months like the experimental folks over on Guga Foods, though we do admit that what they came up with looks incredibly delicious. It is much easier and simpler to marinate meat perfectly in less than a day. Adhere to the ratio of a ½ cup of hoisin sauce per pound of steak, and let it sit in

the fridge overnight (or 24 hours), covered. This will allow enough time for the flavors to penetrate the steak while still maintaining a moist texture. Let the meat come to room temperature before introducing it to the heat — it's a mistake to grill steak straight from the fridge because it can cause uneven cooking.

So, which hoisin sauce should you choose for this marinating job? There are several brands on the market, and many swear by stalwart labels like Lee Kum Kee and Kikkoman. For hoisin beginners, Lee Kum Kee may be your best bet, as it is popular for its milder flavor. If you want to try making your own, this homemade hoisin sauce recipe combines miso paste with peanut butter as its flavor and texture base, and sweetens it with honey. Have some of the aforementioned Chinese five-spice powder on hand? Sprinkle a dash of it into a homemade sauce for a deep, warming flavor.



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COVER STORY

Lil Nas X Shares Update After Diagnoses of Bipolar: 'There's Less Fear In My Heart'

By David Vandygriff



The musician Lil Nas X posted a moving video update to his Instagram account during June.

In the nearly three-minute clip, the artist — born Montero Lamar Hill — shared that he “has been in rehab for a few months,” and since then, has returned home to both Atlanta, where he is from and his family lives, and Los Angeles, where he resides.

The update comes in response to an event last summer in which the musician was charged with attacking Los Angeles police officers.

In April, a judge allowed the 27-year-old to enter a mental health diversion program intended to lead to the charges being dismissed. The musician was eligible for the program because the court found that the encounter involving police was the result of his since-diagnosed bipolar disorder and appeared to be an aberration compared with his usual behavior.

In Wednesday's video, Lil Nas X publicly discussed his mental health diagnosis. “I

have a therapist now and a psychiatrist, which has been really helpful. When I got my bipolar disorder diagnosis, I feel like I had known for the past few years, but I didn't want to admit to it 'cause I didn't want to have to take medication and, I don't know, have people think different of me.”

“I'm doing much better,” he continued after joking that he's “living life on extreme hard mode.”

“I'm feeling better. I'm creating freely. And there's less fear in my heart,” he said.

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that causes dramatic shifts in mood, energy, activity levels and concentration. These range from periods of extremely elated, irritable or energized behavior — known as manic episodes — to very sad, indifferent or hopeless periods, known as depressive episodes.

“I've been doing music for seven years now,” Lil Nas X said in switching gears near the end of the clip. “I wanted to let you guys know there is new music on the way.”

Then he addressed his fans directly. “I love you and all I want to do is continue to try to make you proud and make myself proud.”

The arrest and treatment plan

Lil Nas X was arrested and briefly taken to a hospital for a suspected overdose in August after Los Angeles police say he charged at officers responding to a report of a naked man walking on a busy boulevard.

Authorities allege the musician was walking naked down a street in L.A.'s San Fernando Valley and charged at police officers who were responding to calls about him. A criminal complaint says three officers were hurt. Photos and video apparently shot before the police confrontation showed Lil Nas X walking in the street in only white briefs and white boots.

After spending three days in jail, he was released on \$75,000 bail on the condition that he attend drug treatment. He pleaded not guilty in a court appearance to three counts of battery with injury on

a police officer and one count of resisting an executive officer.

In his first public comments shortly thereafter, the artist posted a video to Instagram, saying “these last four days have been terrifying.”

But he added with a laugh, speaking of himself, that “Your girl is going to be OK. She’s going to be all right.”

Then two months ago, Judge Alan Schneider allowed Lil Nas X to enter the mental health diversion program. If he sticks to his treatment program and obeys all laws for two years, the four felony counts against him will be dismissed.

A history-making artist

The Atlanta-raised artist is best known for 2018’s country and hip-hop merging “Old Town Road,” which spent a record 19 weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and won him two Grammys. It is one of the most popular singles of all time, and in 2019 broke the Billboard record set by Mariah Carey’s “One Sweet Day” for most weeks at No. 1.

Known for his genre-bending, innovating sounds and style, Lil Nas X’s first full studio album, 2021’s “Montero,” went to No. 2 on the Billboard album chart and was nominated for a Grammy for album of the year. Other hits have included “Industry Baby” and “Montero (Call Me by Your Name).”

Higher Rates Of Bipolar in Gay & Bisexual Men

While bipolar disorder itself is a neurobiological condition, studies indicate that gay and

bisexual men experience higher rates of mood disorders, including bipolar disorder, compared to heterosexual men. This elevated prevalence is not considered a direct symptom of sexual orientation itself.

The increased rate is primarily attributed to “minority stress,” a term used to describe the chronic toll of discrimination, trauma, and societal bias.

Key Factors Contributing to Higher Rates

Minority Stress & Trauma:

Gay and bisexual men are at a higher risk of experiencing adverse childhood events, bullying, and social stigma, which are known triggers for underlying genetic predispositions.

Internalized Stigma:

Navigating feelings of shame, lack of familial acceptance, or fear of rejection can exacerbate the onset and severity of mood episodes.

Social Isolation:

Disconnection from a supportive community can complicate coping mechanisms, making mental health conditions more difficult to manage.

Intersectionality & Care

Managing bipolar disorder while being part of the LGBTQ+ community can be uniquely complex. The intersection of sexual identity and mental health can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation in both the general and LGBTQ+ populations, as individuals may navigate unique challenges regarding relationships and coming out.

When seeking treatment, it is highly beneficial to look for LGBTQ+-affirming healthcare providers or therapists who understand how minority stress impacts mental well-being.

Resources tailored to supporting this intersection include:

Educational insights on navigating LGBT and Bipolar provided by recovery platforms. Academic and clinical discussions on the Mental health of LGBTQ people. Perspectives on Gay and bipolar disorder support via health information networks.

This is for informational purposes only. For medical advice or diagnosis, consult a professional.





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Science & Technology

New Audi Q4 E-Tron Offers 368 Mile-Range, Doubles As A Mobile Power Station

By Brenda Camp



German luxury car producer Audi has put its Q4 e-tron through a real-world road trip through the Bavarian Alps to show the electric SUV's 368-mile (592-kilometer) range and its new bidirectional charging technology.

The Audi Q4 e-tron, a battery-electric luxury crossover SUV, demonstrated it can do more than cover long distances, during a 124-mile (200-kilometer) drive from downtown Munich to the scenic Bavarian foothills of Tegernsee.

The mixed route showcased the electric vehicle's range, performance and comfort in everyday driving conditions. It also highlighted the Q4 e-tron's newest feature, bidirectional charging. This means that the SUV can power external devices when parked, effectively becoming a mobile power station.

Herman Verbeek, product specialist at Audi sales and marketing, stressed that the SUV can handle city streets, highways and winding country roads with equal ease. "You

instantly feel good after getting in," Verbeek said. "There are no distractions, and everything is right where you need it."

Comfort in every mile

The Q4 e-tron's interior focuses on comfort and practicality. The SUV features sports seats, a simplified cabin layout, and 24 liters of interior storage distributed throughout the doors, center console, and armrests. The vehicle also includes dual wireless charging pads, which make it possible to charge two smartphones at the same time. A SONOS sound system provides in-car entertainment during longer journeys.

Driver assistance reduces urban stress

The first part of Herman Verbeek and his team's route passed through Munich's city streets. According to Audi, the vehicle's navigation and driver assistance systems keep the SUV centered in its lane. They also help it maintain a safe following distance in stop-and-go traffic, and reduce driver workload in congested urban conditions.

Up to 368 miles of range

The car manufacturer emphasized the electric drivetrain's efficiency at steady speeds. Lower-speed country roads help it use less energy. Audi offers the Q4 e-tron as both an SUV and a Sportback, each available with 63 or 82 kilowatt-hours (kWh) gross battery packs. Depending on the variant, the lineup delivers up to 340 horsepower, while a spacious five-seat cabin and a standard electric tailgate enhance everyday practicality. The updated Q4 Sportback e-tron performance offers a driving range of up to 368 miles (592 kilometers).

A portable power source

The car provided electricity to a small coffeemaker and a cooler stocked with drinks through a socket in the trunk or the charging port outside. Its high-voltage battery can charge from the grid and supply power to external devices. The Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) function allows users to charge e-bikes. In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, the Q4 e-tron also supports Vehicle-to-Home

(V2H), allowing it to power a home using stored energy and maximize solar self-consumption.

Performance outside the city

The vehicle produces up to 335 horsepower (250 kilowatts) and accelerates from 0 to 62 miles per hour (100 kilometers per hour) in 5.4 seconds. It features great steering precision and cornering stability. The varied itinerary showed how the car performs in different conditions, from efficient cruising to dynamic driving on twisty roads. "The drive is still relaxing after a few hours," Verbeek reported. Its battery charges from 10 to 80 percent in approximately 27 minutes. It can also be preconditioned automatically or

manually to optimize charging performance.

Supporting longer journeys

To support longer journeys, Audi increased the SUV's maximum DC charging power from 175 to 185 kilowatts (kW). The combination of long driving range, assistance technologies, and a practical cabin is intended to reduce fatigue during extended trips. Inside, the Q4 e-tron features a panoramic digital display combining an 11.9-inch instrument cluster with a 12.8-inch MMI touchscreen. An optional 12-inch passenger display adds extra functionality. It also boasts ChatGPT-powered voice controls, a redesigned center console, dynamic ambient lighting, dual

15-watt wireless charging pads, and a premium Softwrap dashboard.

Expanding EV functionality

The company also upgraded the lighting system with segmented digital LED daytime running lights. At the rear, engineers integrated second-generation digital OLED lights to improve visibility and safety. Optional proximity lighting warns nearby road users when they get too close to the vehicle. The road trip showed how new EV technologies can add practical value beyond driving. "The Q4 e-tron doesn't intrude, it just supports where it makes sense," Verbeek concluded

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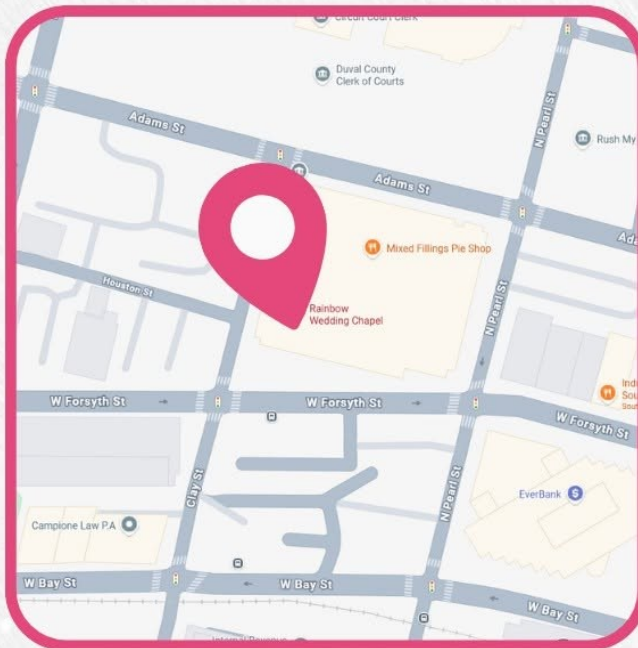
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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

LGBTQ+ Guide to Santa Maria Valley: Wine, Beaches & Affordable California Getaways

By Joey Amato



Psst! Can you keep a secret? There's a hidden gem along California's Central Coast that delivers everything travelers love about the Golden State—award-winning wine, scenic beaches, incredible food, and laid-back charm—without the sky-high prices or overwhelming crowds. Nestled between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria Valley is the kind of destination where LGBTQ+ travelers can truly unwind, connect, and explore at their own pace.

Whether you're planning a romantic same-sex couples' getaway, a fun trip with chosen family, or a solo recharge filled with wine and wellness, Santa Maria Valley offers a warm, welcoming vibe that feels refreshingly authentic.

Santa Maria Valley is one of the world's most dynamic wine-growing regions, producing complex and beautifully balanced wines thanks to its unique coastal climate. The region is especially celebrated for Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Syrah, though adventurous wine lovers will find plenty of varietals worth sipping.

30 www.JaxGayMag.com

With more than 30 tasting rooms and over a dozen wineries along the famous Foxen Canyon Wine Trail, you could easily spend an entire long weekend hopping between vineyards. Best of all, the atmosphere here is approachable and inclusive. Unlike some California wine regions that can feel exclusive or overly polished, Santa Maria Valley embraces a more relaxed experience where everyone is welcome exactly as they are.

That means no pressure to dress up, no impossible reservation lists, and no intimidating tasting rooms. Whether you arrive in designer resort wear or jeans and sneakers, you'll fit right in. Many wineries throughout the region proudly welcome LGBTQ+ travelers, making it easy to sip, socialize, and celebrate without pretension.

There's one thing Santa Maria Valley has been doing almost as long as winemaking: barbecue. Santa Maria Style barbecue is a beloved 150-year-old culinary tradition centered around tri-tip steak slow-

cooked over native red oak and seasoned simply with salt, pepper, and garlic. Pair it with pinto beans, fresh salsa, grilled bread slathered with butter, and a crisp green salad, and you've got a meal that feels both rustic and unforgettable.

Beyond barbecue, the area's growing culinary scene includes farm-to-table dining, cozy cafés, wine bars, and locally owned eateries perfect for date nights or casual dinners with friends. Travelers looking for relaxed dining without big-city prices will appreciate the variety and welcoming atmosphere throughout the valley.

Santa Maria Valley makes an ideal home base for outdoor adventure. Located near some of California's most iconic coastal destinations, it also offers easy access to quieter stretches of shoreline where you can actually breathe, relax, and enjoy the scenery.

With 15 beaches spread across a 30-mile stretch of coastline, there's a perfect spot for every kind of traveler. Surf, hike, fish, explore dunes, ride off-road

vehicles, or simply enjoy a sunset walk hand-in-hand with someone special. The region's uncrowded beaches provide a more peaceful alternative to California's busier coastal hotspots.

Nature lovers will find plenty to appreciate here. Santa Maria Valley sits at the intersection of Pacific coastline and oak woodland habitat, creating an ecosystem that attracts an impressive range of bird species.

Every December and January, bird enthusiasts gather for the National Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count, where recent counts have identified roughly 147 species. Whether you're a serious birder or simply enjoy quiet mornings in nature with binoculars and coffee, the region offers countless opportunities to reconnect with the outdoors.

You don't have to be a birdwatcher to appreciate Santa Maria Valley's natural beauty. Thanks to its mild coastal climate, the region offers hiking opportunities year-round for all experience levels. With 24 trails throughout the area, visitors can enjoy ocean views, wildflowers, wildlife encounters, and mountain biking adventures.

A few standouts include: The Oso Flaco Lake Trail, a gentle 1.7-mile walk through scenic dunes with a wheelchair-accessible overlook, is perfect for travelers seeking a relaxed outdoor experience. Los Flores Ranch Park spans 1,778 acres with 15 miles of trails for hiking,

horseback riding, and mountain biking. Guided nature walks throughout the year add an educational and community-focused touch that LGBTQ+ travelers and families alike will appreciate.

Santa Maria Valley is also perfect for couples or solo travelers looking for some culture. The region provides meaningful cultural experiences that help visitors connect more deeply with the history and creativity of California's Central Coast. The Santa Maria Museum of Flight showcases aircraft, aviation artifacts, and stories dating back to the Wright Brothers, creating an inspiring look at the evolution of flight.

For travelers interested in Indigenous history and culture, the Santa Ynez Chumash Museum and Cultural Center offers a thoughtful and immersive experience honoring the people who have called this land home for thousands of years. LGBTQ families traveling with children—or adults who simply embrace their inner child—will enjoy the Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum, a lively space filled with interactive exhibits, crafts, bubbles, and imaginative play.

One of Santa Maria Valley's biggest perks is its affordability. LGBTQ+ travelers can enjoy a stylish and comfortable California getaway without draining their vacation budget. From boutique properties to trusted hotel brands, the region offers accommodations for every travel style. One of my

favorite places to stay is the Wine Stone Inn. Located in the heart of Old Town Orcutt, this intimate 12-room boutique hotel delivers upscale comfort with a warm neighborhood feel. Expect plush robes, locally made pastries, gourmet coffee, spa-inspired amenities, and easy access to nearby tasting rooms, breweries, and restaurants. It's an ideal option for couples looking for a romantic wine country escape.

Another very cool option is the Historic Santa Maria Inn. A California landmark since 1917, this historic property combines old-world charm with modern hospitality. Palm-lined courtyards, cozy fireplaces, fountains, and inviting patios create a timeless atmosphere. Guests can enjoy California cuisine at The Century Room before sipping local wines or cocktails in the Olde English Tap Room or The Barrel Room.

Whether you're planning a romantic wine weekend, an LGBTQ+ group getaway, a coastal road trip with friends, or simply craving a slower pace and a little sunshine, Santa Maria Valley offers an inviting mix of affordability, authenticity, and Central Coast beauty.

Best of all, it's a California escape where you can focus less on your budget and more on making memories.



&ENTERTAINMENT

Meet Trans 'Next Gen NYC' Star Emira D'Spain

By Jennifer Davis



American model Emira D'Spain became the first full-time trans cast member of a Bravo show after joining Next Gen NYC last year.

The reality series premiered in June 2025, and follows the children of several Bravo stars as well as newcomers like Emira D'Spain. Bravo explained: "Next Gen NYC follows a tangled web of friends raised in the spotlight — or at least close enough for good lighting — as they stumble into adulthood one brunch, breakup and spontaneous decision at a time." It returned for its second season earlier this month.

Emira D'Spain, 29, was joined by Bravo newcomers Shai Fruchter, Georgia McCann, and Charlie Zakkour.

Real Housewives children Gia Giudice, Ariana Biermann, Brooks Marks, and Riley Burruss also star, and their parents also appear in the series. Alongside them were be Ava Dash, the daughter of Damon Dash and Rachel Roy, and Ariana's then-boyfriend, Hudson McLeroy. Rowan Hency and Liam Obergfoll joined for season two.

Posting about her casting on Instagram in April 2025, D'Spain wrote: "time to be messy."

Next Gen NYC certainly is messy. During one group dinner in season one, things got a little tense for Gia, Brooks, and Ariana. At one point Gia said: "Shut the f*** up." Meanwhile, Ariana called Brooks out for being "a d***".

Dramas also unfold over money, fashion, and family.

Emira D'Spain's casting represents a new milestone for the reality-TV network. Until now, restaurant hostess, Billie Lee, had the biggest role on a Bravo show held by a trans person. As a part-time cast member on Vanderpump Rules, she appeared in 10 episodes before leaving the show in 2019.

Responding to Newsweek about D'Spain's casting, a Bravo spokesperson said: "It was important for Next Gen NYC to highlight the diversity and authenticity of this generation."

Who is Emira D'Spain?

The model and influencer is originally from Dubai but was

raised in Dallas, Texas. She graduated from New York University and secured a job as Paper Magazine's beauty director.

She previously worked with Victoria's Secret and was the first Black transgender model for the brand. WWD reports she has also modelled for Fenty Beauty, Ugg, Anastasia Beverly Hills and NARS Cosmetics.

A bio for D'Spain on the Bravo website reads: "Ambitious, driven and always two steps ahead, Emira lives life on her own terms and never apologizes for her success. She usually stays above the fray when drama unfolds, but this summer, balancing romance and friendship loyalties might disrupt her perfectly planned hustle."

In 2022 she appeared in Galore magazine where she was referred to as TikTok's 'It Girl', though she's said she's struggled with how to effectively use social media in the past. Newsweek reports her as saying: "Part of me goes back and forth where I feel like I'm not doing enough for my community, and then

sometimes when I feel like my transness plays too big of a role on my platforms.

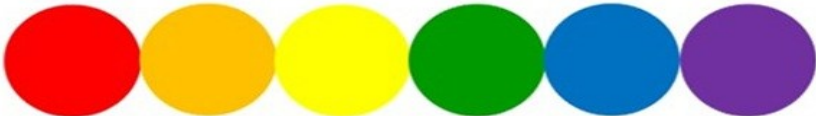
"I never want my page to solely be about being trans because

it's just one part of my life. That being said, I still want to lift my community up and champion them always. So I don't know yet—I'm still finding a way to

accomplish that perfect balance."

Next Gen NYC airs on Bravo, and is available to stream outside the US on Hayu.

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Life and Style

2-Ingredient Bourbon Cocktails Has Been Around Since 1914

By Taryn Pire

Some whiskey cocktails are ubiquitous, even for those who don't drink them. Old fashioned, Manhattans, mint juleps, whiskey sours, and Irish coffees have stood the test of time. But if we're talking forgotten whiskey cocktails of bar menus past, there are a few standouts worth reviving. Take the Kentucky colonel, an old-school bourbon cocktail that's been around since 1914.

Not only is it classic and tasty, but it's also easy to prepare, considering the recipe only has two ingredients. It's as simple as combining two ounces of bourbon with a half an ounce of Bénédictine D.O.M. (a honeyed, warm-spiced liqueur made with 27 herbs and spices) in an ice-filled cocktail shaker and stirring until cold. Next, it's strained into an old-fashioned glass filled with ice, although some fans prefer it straight up or chilled without ice. Some recipes also call for bitters, as well as an expressed lemon twist, which imparts citrusy aromatics and flavor to the drink.

The libation is certainly on the boozy side, as both its components contain alcohol. It's like an herby, nuanced old fashioned, where the sweet

Bénédictine takes over for traditional sugar and infuses the drink with unique spices and aromas, but its nuances depend on what bourbon you use. The Kentucky colonel is similar to a Monte Carlo, which calls for rye instead of bourbon and a dash of Angostura bitters. There's also the Monte Carlos, made with añejo tequila instead of whiskey.

The Kentucky Colonel cocktail honors its namesake state

The Kentucky colonel cocktail dates back to the "1914 Manual of Mixed Drinks" by Jacques Straub. Straub was one of the most prolific cocktail experts of the late 19th and early 20th century. Most notably, he was head of The Pendennis Club's beverage program in Louisville, making him familiar with the Kentucky drink scene despite his Swiss heritage.

The drink's name is most likely a nod to the main spirit or perhaps to Honorary Kentucky Colonels, the highest

appointment in Kentucky since 1885. Bourbon was invented in Kentucky in the 1800s, and while not all bourbons are made there, it's no doubt the state's signature spirit. To be bourbon, the mash must be mostly corn and aged in a new, charred oak container, most often a barrel; this gives the liquor its uniquely rich, rounded, sweet-and-slightly-spicy flavor.

Bénédictine is non-negotiable for a Kentucky colonel, so you'll need to snag some to properly make one. A 750-milliliter bottle usually costs between \$35 and \$40. As for the whiskey, go with one of the best Kentucky bourbons you can find. Maker's Mark and Wild Turkey boast the soft-spiced, vanilla-caramel notes that Kentucky bourbon is famous for. Buffalo Trace and Woodford Reserve have fruitier, herbier notes, while Elijah Craig has more smokiness. Since this cocktail is nearly all bourbon, splurge on one you genuinely enjoy for the best results.



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RPDR Jade Sotomayor In Critical Condition After A Car Accident

By Jacob Smith

Jade Sotomayor, one of the drag queens who starred in the inaugural season of RuPaul's Drag Race, is currently in the hospital in critical condition.

The news that Jade, whose real name is David Sotomayor Jr., was involved in a fatal car accident that left her needing emergency medical care was reported by Drag Crave, a fan-operated social media account dedicated to all of the Drag Race franchises.

"Jade Sotomayor has reportedly been involved in a fatal car accident and remains

critical condition," the post reads. "Please send support to her friends and family at this time."

It is unclear from the post how many people were in the car at the time of the accident and who passed away as a result.

Jade is best known for making waves on the first season of Drag Race where she was not only the first queen to perform the splits during a lip-sync battle, but was also the show's first Latina contestant.

Few details have been released yet about the car

accident or the 41-year-old performer's condition, but season 4 queen DiDa Ritz posted her condolences on X (formerly Twitter).

"I want to send love and support to the family of Jade Sotomayor. She was in a serious car accident. I'm keeping her in my thoughts and hoping for her recovery during this difficult time."

DiDa and Jade were not on the same season of Drag Race, but they have co-hosted shows together at Hamburger Mary's in Andersonville.





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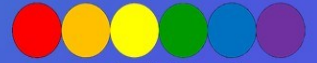
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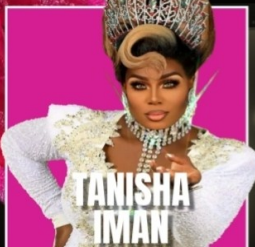
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News & Politics

Trump's Anti-Trans Prison Policy Halted By Court Driver's Licenses

By James Slaughter



A federal judge has blocked the Trump administration from transferring 14 transgender women in federal custody to men's prisons, ruling that the women are likely to succeed in their legal challenge against the policy.

The Sunday (7 June) decision prevents the Federal Bureau of Prisons from enforcing part of President Donald Trump's 2025 executive order requiring incarcerated people to be housed according to their sex assigned at birth.

In a sharply worded ruling, US District Judge Royce C. Lamberth found that each of the 14 plaintiffs had demonstrated a substantial risk of serious harm if transferred to men's facilities.

The court cited evidence that

the women, many of whom have undergone gender-affirming medical treatment and have histories of sexual assault, self-harm, or other vulnerabilities, could face heightened risks of violence, sexual assault, and psychological trauma if moved.

Lamberth rejected government arguments that low assault rates at the proposed facilities resolved those concerns, writing that the key issue was whether the women faced unique dangers because of their specific circumstances.

Lamberth also criticized the administration's position that any resulting harm could simply be treated after the fact: "It is fundamentally unreasonable for prison officials to respond to serious risks such as mental health deterioration, self-harm,

and suicide by intentionally creating those risks and offering to treat them after they predictably occur," he wrote.

The ruling stems from a lawsuit filed by 16 states and Washington, DC, challenging federal efforts to restrict protections for transgender people. While the injunction applies only to the 14 women involved in this case, LGBTQ+ advocates hailed the decision as a significant victory.

Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for LGBTQ Rights, said in a statement that the ruling reinforces a fundamental constitutional principle: "This decision reaffirms a bedrock constitutional principle: the government cannot knowingly place people in grave danger and simply look the other way."

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2020 election, which Trump lost, was stolen.

Grenell's influence over the Kennedy Center's programming and artistic direction remains unclear. The

institution does not have an official "executive director" position, leaving many wondering whether he is replacing current Kennedy Center President Deborah

Rutter or if Trump simply created a new title for his loyalist, the Washington Post reports. The White House and the Kennedy Center have yet to clarify.



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

LGBTQ+ Entrepreneurs Starting Businesses In Record Numbers

By Michelle Fox



In the face of the anti-diversity, equity and inclusion environment, LGBTQ+ small business owners have remained resilient — and are actually starting businesses in record numbers.

Some 10% of entrepreneurs who started their own businesses last year identified as LGBTQ — a “milestone” and a 50% increase from 2023, according to a recent survey from small business software company Gusto. That brings the LGBTQ entrepreneurship representation in line with the general population, the company said.

“For too long, LGBTQ entrepreneurs have faced barriers to capital, visibility, and opportunity,” Nich Tremper, Gusto’s senior economist, said in an email. “Reaching parity in business creation shows that more LGBTQ people are not only stepping into entrepreneurship, but doing so on their own terms — building companies rooted in care, autonomy, and community.”

About a third of LGBTQ entrepreneurs said they started a business so they can be a positive influence on their

community.

For 38-year-old Lissette Briggs, who goes by Liz Whalen, opening up her hair salon Rebel Rebel in Libertyville, Illinois, was a way to give a safe space to her clients. She started her business with former co-worker Ashley Levin in 2020 after working in the industry for several years. The salon they worked for at the time was very conservative, Whalen said.

“I have a lot of gender queer, non-binary and trans clients, and they definitely did not feel comfortable there, so it was not a good fit for me,” she explained. “We wanted a more inclusive space.”

Whalen isn’t feeling any of the effects of the backlash against DEI and only feels support from her clients and her community, including a local LGBTQ+ center.

“They support us. We support them,” Whalen said. “It’s really a beautiful thing to see everybody kind of come together and support our little business.”

Economic impact of \$1.7 trillion

Jonathan Lovitz, senior vice

president of campaigns and communications at the Human Rights Campaign, said that is emblematic of the community across the board in the face of any anti-DEI efforts or cuts to small business funding.

President Donald Trump has signed executive orders targeting DEI programs in both business and the public sector. The administration has also proposed cuts to the Small Business Administration.

“LGBT business owners are extraordinarily resilient,” Lovitz said.

The average American small business goes under around the five-year mark, but those that are certified LGBTQ+ are, on average, 12 years or older, he noted.

“They’re already good at sticking it out through the tough times,” Lovitz added. “The pendulum swings back and forth on government and corporate support, but these companies are thriving because they’re great companies.”

In fact, LGBTQ-owned businesses contribute \$1.7 trillion to the United States economy, according to the National LGBT Chamber of

Commerce.

Being your own boss

Danielle Stringer, who owns Dandi Cleaning & Organizing in Atlanta, is one of those businesses. Stinger, who is 37 years old and also considers herself pansexual, started her business in 2022, after doing it as a side hustle for years.

"In the political environment that we are in, especially with the last election, ... I have lost clients because of my choice in

the LGBT community and good riddance," said Stringer, who is currently in a relationship with a man after an 8-year relationship with a woman.

However, she's also found a lot of support.

"The great thing about being your own business owner is that you're allowed to choose — you get to choose who you work with and who you don't work with," she said.

Gusto's Tremper said that is a

benefit that many in the community likely crave.

"LGBTQ founders were 30% more likely than non-LGBTQ founders to say that they started their business in order to be their own boss," he said. "This could signal a desire for more autonomy, but for traditionally marginalized groups it's also possible that they're starting a business to avoid discrimination — either overt or more subtle — in the traditional workplace."

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Service Fee	\$3.04
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The Los Burger	\$20.67
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Service Fee	\$6.57
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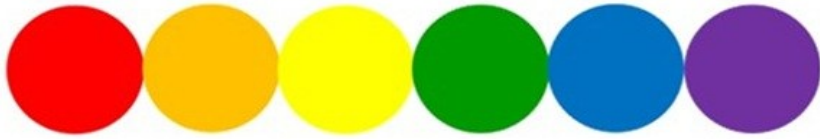
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