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J A X G A Y

MARCH 2023  
ISSUE 151

# LGBTQ or LGBTQ+: Why All the Fuss About the +?

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- Tampa To Host Florida's 1st LGBTQ+ Tourism Conference
- Florida Legislator Aims to Expand 'Don't Say Gay' Law

- Dictionary.Com Just Added Several New LGBTQ+ Words & Also "Grundle"
- And Much More.....

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## SAVE THE DATE THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2023



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## night life

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# News & Politics

## Florida Legislator Aims to Expand 'Don't Say Gay' Law

By David Vandygriff



New legislation filed in Florida could outlaw schools using pronouns based on gender identity in what critics see as an expansion of the state's widely hated "don't say gay" law.

Florida Rep. Adam Anderson, a Republican elected in 2022, filed a bill that purportedly sets policy relating to a person's sex while at public K-12 education institutions. The bill defines sex as "binary" and says it must be treated by the state as an "immutable biological trait."

And while supporters of last year's "don't say gay" law frequently stressed an outright prohibition on discussion of gender identity and sexual orientation only applied to classroom instruction in kindergarten through third grade, the new bill would expand that through grade 8, the end of middle school in most Florida district. It also extends the requirement back to pre-kindergarten.

State law would continue to require LGBTQ+ topics be addressed only in an age-appropriate way in ninth through 12th grade.

The bill also explicitly prohibits

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transgender, nonbinary, and other students from even providing personal pronouns if they do not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

The legislation would cover charter schools in the state, unlike the bill passed last year and signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Critics immediately blasted the proposed expansion.

"Notice the bill title— Florida Republicans are doing more than simply retreating from their 'Parental Rights' message," tweeted former state Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, an Orlando Democrat who lost a bid for reelection last year. "They're revoking the rights of parents to allow their own transgender child a safe and healthy social transition in Florida public schools thru 12th grade.

"The consequences of Florida's #DontSayGay law can be seen everywhere, and our most vulnerable kids are paying the price. Broad censorship and book banning, the removal of safe space stickers, and a decline in the overall

well-being of LGBTQ students— which the state wants hidden."

Equality Florida immediately condemned the bill.

"A bill has been filed to expand Florida's Don't Say LGBTQ law, doubling down on the governor's agenda of censorship that has already led to books being banned, Safe Space stickers being peeled from classroom windows, and refusals to recognize LGBTQ History Month," the organization posted on social media.

"This legislation is about a fake moral panic, cooked up by Gov. DeSantis to demonize LGBTQ people for his own political career. Governor DeSantis and the lawmakers following him are hellbent on policing language, curriculum, and culture. Free states don't ban books — or people."

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# OUT & HEALTH

## Black Trans And Nonbinary Youth At High Risk Of Suicide

By Hunter Griffin



It's well known that LGBTQ+ youth in general and transgender youth in particular are at high risk of suicide. But the risk is especially great for Black trans and nonbinary young people, and there is nothing short of a public health crisis where their mental health is concerned, notes a new study from the Trevor Project.

Data from the Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health shows 25% of Black transgender and nonbinary young people reported a suicide attempt in the previous year, according to the group's new research brief, "Mental Health of Black Transgender and Nonbinary Young People," released Tuesday. That's more than double the rate of suicide attempts among Black cisgender LGBQ young people (12%).

"Simply put, the mental health of Black transgender and nonbinary young people is a public health crisis," said Myeshia Price, director of research science at the Trevor Project.

Among Black trans and

nonbinary young people, those who were assigned female at birth reported higher rates of both seriously considering suicide in the past year (60%) and attempting suicide in the past year (26%) than those assigned male at birth (43% & 18% respectively).

Black trans and nonbinary young people reported higher rates of all indicators of poor mental health compared to their Black cisgender LGBQ peers. This included higher rates of discrimination (77% vs 56) and being physically threatened or harmed due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (40% vs 22%), attempts from others to change their sexual orientation or gender identity (68% vs 45%), & housing instability (34% vs 24%).

Parents and non-LGBTQ+ friends were those who most often tried to convince Black trans and nonbinary youth to change. But supportive families and friends made a positive difference.

Black trans and nonbinary young people who reported high social support from their family reported lower rates of suicide attempts in the previous

year (15 percent) than those with low or moderate levels of support (26%). However, only 13% reported high social support from family, but 77% reported they received that from friends, another factor associated with lower odds of a suicide attempt.

"Black trans and nonbinary young people are an especially vulnerable group as they hold multiple marginalized identities that place them at higher suicide risk. In addition to the challenges faced by all young people, Black trans and nonbinary young people experience violence, discrimination, & homelessness at alarmingly high rates, even compared to their cisgender LGBQ peers," Price said.

"These sobering data illustrate the importance of understanding intersectionality and the unique stressors that exist at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender identity. Immediate steps must be taken by educators, youth-serving adults, and mental health professionals to ensure that Black trans and nonbinary young people feel seen, supported, and protected against a world that so often brings them harm."



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## Nate Berkus & Jeremiah Brent Thank the Fans For All the Love on HGTV

By Trisha Crawford



Designing duo Nate Berkus and Jeremiah Brent are helping moving families get a fresh start. They'll aid their clients in letting go of what they no longer need before renovating the property into the perfect dream home for the family's next stage of life.

Everybody say love!

Nate Berkus & Jeremiah Brent took the world of HGTV by storm with their first season of The Nate and Jeremiah Home Project. The design and renovation show garnered a huge fanbase, with over 13 million people tuning into the first season.

With the 2nd season underway, the hosts are thrilled audiences can see more inspirational stories every week.

"The show at its core is about love and showing people

across the world a family like ours and that you can have this beautiful love story. We're really trying to show people that they can tackle their home and their space in a way that's much more emotional and much more thoughtful than just picking up a hammer and swinging. It means that people care and that people are enjoying connecting, which is really what we're hoping for," said Brent.

By starring in a hit show on a major platform like HGTV, the husbands are honored to show their loving family on the screens of millions of people around the globe.

"For us, we know we have a responsibility to the LGBTQ+ community. It's a big deal. With everything going on in the world right now and all of this

turmoil, it's a happy show. It is a show about a family just trying to figure out how to do what we do and raise our two kids," Berkus says.

The & Jeremiah Home Project truly has something for everyone. Beyond the mind-boggling renovations that audiences get to watch each episode, both Berkus and Brent are grateful that LGBTQ+ youth can see themselves in a positive light on screen.

"We had this really special moment. We were out and this lovely woman walked up to us and said that her son came out last week and she was so depressed and devastated. That night, our show came on & she sat there in the living room and watched it with him. We reminded her that her son can still have the beautiful life



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

## Gay Rugby Player Campbell Johnstone On Coming Out

By Nancy Bennett



During his rugby career, Campbell Johnstone built a reputation as a tough scrummager with "the best right shoulder in the game," according to one of his former coaches.

He played three times for the All Blacks -- a dream for thousands of young rugby players in New Zealand -- and represented club teams at home and overseas.

But for all his commitment and uncompromising physicality on the pitch, Johnstone was also hiding a part of himself.

"I loved playing rugby," he told CNN Sport. "And then one day, this other side of me, my sexuality, was coming through and I liked guys.

"That didn't fit the picture and that wasn't part of my plan. I always pushed that to the back of my head and wouldn't address it -- just kept pushing it away and pushing it away and kept focusing on my goals."

Last month, Johnstone became the first All Black to come out publicly as gay, around a decade after calling time on his rugby career.

The response to the announcement, he says, took

him by surprise. New Zealand rugby stars Ruby Tui and Aaron Smith, among others, praised Johnstone for his bravery on social media, while sports minister Grant Robertson, who is openly gay, thanked him for "blazing this trail" and inspiring "future generations to be open, happy and comfortable."

"So many people have sent messages of support," says Johnstone. "Hundreds of people have sent messages telling of their story and their struggle and how rewarding or refreshing it was hearing me talk and come out.

"In that respect, it's been really overwhelming and so positive."

On top of his three Tests for the All Blacks in 2005, Johnstone, a prop forward, played 72 times for Canterbury and 38 times for the Crusaders. He moved to France in 2009 and went on to make more than 100 appearances for club side Biarritz.

Now, the 43-year-old says he is "at peace" in his private life. But he can still recall the anguish he faced in his playing days when he didn't believe his sexuality aligned with his childhood dream of playing for the All Blacks.

"It was kind of like I was stuck between a rock and a hard place," says Johnstone. "Here was this game and this sport that I loved and enjoyed so much, yet I couldn't be myself. And I felt I was living a double life, basically.

"I'd go home and then the anxiety would rise and then I'd go out the door, go to training. But that, funnily enough, was the enjoyment side, and it gave me the relief, eased the stress a bit. Then I'd come home and realize that I'm not actually being truthful to my teammates."

There are only a handful of openly gay men in the professional rugby community.

Former referee Nigel Owens came out in 2007, and two years later, former Wales international Gareth Thomas became the first openly gay top-level male rugby player.

Both Owens and Thomas have spoken about experiencing suicidal thoughts as they struggled to come to terms with their sexuality, while former Australia international Dan Palmer, who came out as gay in 2020, said he "routinely numbed" himself with a "heavy cocktail of opioids" during his playing career.

But Johnstone is optimistic about rugby's future.

"As long as coaches and players are very open-minded and provide a very caring and supportive culture and framework within the team, then I think it'll progress very well," he says.

"I think rugby is a living culture and it's always progressing and it's progressing in the right directions."

Johnstone never considered coming out during his playing days -- largely because he's always been a private person and "wasn't 100% comfortable" with his sexuality at the time.

He's now speaking publicly in the hope of empowering others to do the same.

"I was happy and very strong in my private life and everything like that, so I thought: 'Yeah, okay, let's address it and take away that stigma,' because there's always been this stigma around the All Blacks and who is the first one and things like that.

"If we can open that door and I can be the first one, then that stigma is gone and it just makes it easier and less stress or anxiety for other people if there are other people out there."

After retiring from rugby, Johnstone undertook coaching roles in Spain, the US and New Zealand.

He recently visited one of his former clubs, the Crusaders, to share his story and highlight the importance of creating a supportive environment within a professional sports team -- something he believes has a positive impact when it comes to the performance on the pitch.

"That, in a nutshell, will make your team stronger and more effective," says Johnstone, "and you'll get better results, I believe."

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# Life and Style



## Dictionary.Com Just Added Several New LGBTQ+ Words & Also “Grundle”

By David Vandygriff

Dictionary.com has added a handful of LGBTQ+ terms to its latest official update, making one of the largest online resources for English just a bit queerer.

Amongst the 313 newly entered words for the website’s winter 2023 update, are pinkwashing, queerbaiting, abrosexual, and multisexual. The update also added 130 new definitions to pre-existing words and 1,140 revised definitions.

In case you don’t know, here are the definitions for each of the LGBTQ+ related words:

**pinkwashing:** (noun) an instance or practice of acknowledging and promoting the civil liberties of the LGBTQ+ community, but superficially, as a ploy to divert attention from allegiances and activities that are in fact hostile to such liberties.

**queerbaiting:** (noun, slang) a marketing technique involving intentional homoeroticism or suggestions of LGBTQ+ themes intended to draw in an LGBTQ+ audience, without explicit inclusion of openly LGBTQ+ relationships, characters, or people.

**abrosexual:** (adjective) noting  
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or relating to a person whose sexual orientation is fluid or fluctuates over time.

**multisexual:** (adjective) noting or relating to a person who is sexually or romantically attracted to people of more than one gender, used especially as an inclusive term to describe similar, related sexual orientations such as bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, etc.

The website also included a few new words that aren’t exactly LGBTQ+ but are terms or concepts that the queer community may also be familiar with.

**grundle:** (noun, slang) the region between the anus and the genitalia; perineum.

**cyberflashing:** (noun) an act or instance of sending someone unsolicited, unwanted, sexually explicit images or video using digital platforms.

**woke:** (adjective, disparaging) of or relating to a liberal progressive orthodoxy, especially promoting inclusive

policies or ideologies that welcome or embrace ethnic, racial, or sexual minorities.

To use woke in a sentence: “Some haters will probably respond to Dictionary.com’s newly included words by claiming that the online dictionary has become ‘woke.’”

The website wrote of its newly added terms, “Our lexicographers observe it all, documenting language change wherever it’s happening and defining the terms that help us to understand our times,”

“Words that are new to the dictionary are not always new to the language (or even remotely recent),” the site noted, adding that its inclusion of new words isn’t an endorsement of the concepts, but rather a documentation of language as it is used (rather than how they or others want it to be used).

In 2020, the website added LGBTQ+ terms like “ace,” “deadname,” and “ambisextrous.”

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# BUSINESS & TRAVEL

## Families Will Love New Seating Policy From United Airlines

By Adam Maher

United Airlines' new seat map feature is welcome news to travelers with children, but how do other airlines compare with family-friendly offerings?

United Airlines has a new seat map feature that will help families with children under 12 find seats together free of charge, the airline announced on Monday.

The feature will include Basic Economy tickets.

The new seat map technology will dynamically find available adjacent Economy seats at the time of booking and open complimentary upgrades to other available seats as needed, the airline said.

In cases where side-by-side seats are not available, customers will be able to switch to another flight to their destination with adjacent seats in the same cabin for free. No fare difference will be charged in such cases, United said in a news release.

"We're focused on delivering a great experience for our younger passengers and their parents and know it often starts with the right seat," said Linda Jojo, Chief Customer Officer for United, in a statement.

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United Polaris, First Class, and Economy Plus seats are not included in the new family seating policy change.

US airline customers have long complained about seating that separates young children from their parents on flights and the added costs associated with purchasing seats in order to sit together.

President Biden addressed the government's efforts to curb such fees in his State of the Union address this month, touting the Junk Fee Prevention Act that will also target resort fees and concert ticket fees, among others.

"Baggage fees are bad enough – they can't just treat your child like a piece of luggage," Biden said in the speech

A July 2022 notice from the Department of Transportation called on US airlines to make seating children next to accompanying adults available at no additional cost

More adjacent seat options will be available on United Airlines immediately. The complete policy change is set to go into effect in early March, the airline said. Delta Air Lines said Monday that it "does not charge family seating fees and



regardless of the ticket class purchased, will always work with customers on a case-by-case basis to ensure their family seating needs are met."

Delta's website refers to family seating "upon request," referring passengers who are not able to secure seats via the airline's website or mobile app to contact Reservations. Delta's seat map technology blocks off some areas for family seating up to 48 hours before a flight.

American Airlines offers booking tips on its website for families traveling with children under 15, noting that "the farther in advance you book, the better."

"Our current policies regarding family seating are designed to allow families to sit together without having to pay extra," American Airlines said Monday in a statement.

On Southwest Airlines, which does not have assigned seating, families with children age six or younger are allowed to board early – right after the "A" group of passengers. The airline's website also offers the option of EarlyBird Check-in for a fee that may yield an "A" group boarding position.

# SATURDAY, MARCH 11TH

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## LGBTQ Or LGBTQ+: Why All The Fuss About The +?

By Drew Williams

The National Lesbian Gay Journalist Association (NLGJA) recently shared that, moving forward, the organization is adding a + sign to LGBTQ to “reflect the many identities that make up our growing community.” It will now be known as NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists.

Not too long ago, I wrote about the word “queer,” and its importance in our community as a descriptor, and the debate that exists as to whether it’s needed. This was after a commentary by humorist David Sedaris on CBS Sunday Morning. He doesn’t like the word, lamenting that the use of the word, at least for him, is another rebrand, i.e., he’s gone from being homosexual, to gay, and now queer.

I was thinking about the Sedaris column when I saw the NLGJA announcement about + as a descriptor and whether it is needed too. Both queer and + cause a lot of people to be happy, and others to be fed-up with yet another addition to a growing acronym that started with four simple letters LGBT.

We here at equalpride have been using the + for some time

now. Even for me, it was hard to make it a habit. After I’d write a column, nine times out of 10, I was going back

through, adding + to every mention of LGBTQ. When you write as fast as I do, you aren’t thinking about +.

It’s not that I find it a nuisance — I don’t — but it begs the question, do we really need it? And what exactly does it stand for?

Adding the + is a sign of inclusion in our community for all those that aren’t covered by LGBTQ. Some would argue that is what the Q represents. I like the use of the word “queer” as all encompassing. And I also like it because if someone is just caught in the middle of where they are on the rainbow spectrum, L, G, B, or T, identifying as queer is an appropriate alternative.

And the “Q” can also stand for some of those who are simply questioning who they are, and for me, that works too. Others go beyond using Q and +, opting for LGBTQIA+. The “I” for intersex, and the “A” for asexual. Then there is another option, more conspicuous, less prevalent, but adding to the representative inclusion, LGBTQ2 – the 2 for two-spirits. Some beg the question, with all these additions, are we going to far?

In its statement as to why

they’re adding the +, NLGJA said, “We realize that adding a plus may not go far enough for some of our members and colleagues but be assured that this change is more than surface-level.”

I reached out to an acquaintance who is in a throuple, and I asked him if he feels that his situation, and relationship, is represented by LGBTQ+. “No,” he wrote back. “We need to add another “T.” It should be LGBTTQ+.” Then he quickly added, “JK.”

He is a man of a certain age, and his two partners are hush-hush about the throuple, so I’ve been forbidden to use his name, but the other reason I reached out to him is that he teaches English as a second language, so as an expert on language, what did he think about all the additions to LGBT in recent years?”

“I wouldn’t say I’m some preeminent expert, but I will say that when you have long acronyms, it can cause confusion. These additions, the + and the Q, seem like they are not for public consumption, but rather for our own community. For some, older folks particularly, it probably causes confusion, but for the younger generation, I suspect these additions are welcomed.

“There’s an irony in that too. The word queer and the plus sign additions appear to be driven by the younger generation who are more freely expressing their sexual orientations and identities. This generation communicates in

short sentences and abbreviated acronyms, like HBU, LMK, and BRB. This new acronym, while inclusive, can be as long as seven characters, which goes against the trend of short and sweet. But if they all want themselves represented, and they're ok with the long acronym, then why should we complain?"

According to the well-respected The Center in New York City, the + is "used to signify all of the gender identities and sexual orientations that letters and words cannot yet fully describe, such as non-binary."

Interestingly, when you go to the "about" section on The Center's website, the explanation says, "Since 1983, The Center has been supporting, fostering and celebrating the LGBT community of New York City." So, does this mean that The Center doesn't support, foster and celebrate queer or questioning, intersex, asexual and non-binary? I'm sure that's not the case. Should they then update the LGBT with the additional letters and symbols?

When I visited GLAAD's website, among the rotating banner of headlines, each of them does not include the +. And, when I jumped over to Human Rights Campaign, HRC, they are using +. It Gets Better Project also uses +. As does GLSEN, SAGE, and PFLAG.

The growing consensus seems to be that the + should be more frequently used, and utilized as a safe bet to ensure that

everyone is represented. After all, if we are all about inclusion, then we have to walk the walk, and talk the talk that includes speaking up for the + sign.

"Our communities are not monolithic, and as the past few years have shown us, it is more important than ever to show our support for all members of the LGBTQ+ community," states the NLGJA. "As trans and nonbinary communities continue to be targeted by politicians and activists, we hope that this change will demonstrate our association's commitment to supporting the members of those communities."

We're not only updating our acronym, but we've also seen that the Pride flag includes some new stitching. According to the HRC, website, the traditional rainbow flag has given way to scores of others. There are not five variations under what's considered the umbrella flag. There are eight under the sexual orientation flag, eight more gender identity and gender expression flags, and there are three intersectionality Pride flags.

The times, they are a changin', and so should we. It's exhilarating that so many people identify in so many different ways, and as such, we



need to recognize the changes, acknowledge them and welcome them, and if that means adding to a few letters or symbols, then so be it.

When I interviewed screen legend Shirley MacLaine last summer, part of the reason I wanted to speak with her was to gauge her sentiment on sexual identity. I asked her what she thought of so many young people coming out in various ways, and as an 89 year-old, she has a very progressive way of looking at it, and summing it up.

"It's easy to contemplate that there are more than two sexes. Let yourself speculate on that for a minute, and it will be very revealing as to who you are. How do you relate to just two sexes? I really ask questions about how we will identify in the future. Or even how prior civilizations defined sexual identity -- there could have been two, three, or more sexes, or ones that we've never even thought about. The fact that there might be many is something that shouldn't be denied. Where does it say that we have to only have two sexes?"

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## Shania Twain Says She's 'Inspired' By Drag Queens

By Lia Cheng



Shania Twain is sticking up for the drag community.

In an interview with GLAAD, the country singer expressed her love of the artform, saying she "so admires the talent there," as well as the "courage" that drag queens show.

"Drag shows are so fun. I've been to a couple of drag shows, big ones in Las Vegas. Obviously RuPaul's Drag Race," she said. "First of all, it takes a lot of courage. I mean, fashion in itself takes courage. You're taking on a lot."

Twain once served as a guest judge on hit competition series RuPaul's Drag Race, and revealed that she draws fashion and makeup advice from drag queens. Saying she admires their "transformation" skills, Twain added that she's

"inspired" by the drag community.

"The ability to put their own makeup on and do such a beautiful job. I've learned a lot from drag queens," Twain continued. "I watched their tutorials because no, I've never seen such transformation in some of these talents that their faces go through, It's very impressive and their fashion, I don't know, I'm very inspired by it."

As of mid-February, 2023, over 320 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were proposed in the United States, surpassing the total amount of 315 proposed in all of 2022. Over 30 bills this year specifically target drag performance, with some aiming to criminalize cases where minors are exposed to shows.

One of the most prominent bills, recently passed in the Tennessee House, would forbid drag shows from operating within 1,000 feet of schools, public parks, or places of worship. Failure to comply could result in a felony.

Critics say many of the anti-drag laws are too broadly written, and could lead to harassment against transgender people broadly, or criminalize their existing in public spaces.

As a historic artform endures unprecedented attacks, Twain instead wants to uplift the drag community and share their perspectives.

She said: "I think we need this inspiration; we need drag queens to share their talent with us."



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# Life and Style



## Gay Underwear Brand Tries to Be Sassy, Forced to Apologize Later

By Michael Franklin

A moment of frustration can turn into a whole lot more.

UK-based clothing and spirits brand Molly and Tommy has been forced to issue an apology & vowed to change course after a recent social media dust-up. The brand, which gets its name from 18th century England ("Molly" used to be slang for gays and

"Tommy" was slang for lesbians), is designed by Darren Edwards, who also operates the company's Twitter account. On Sunday, Edwards sent a tweet from the account that has since caused a maelstrom.

In response to a promo image featuring six muscled models, one commenter wrote, "So the brand is for one body type?"

The brand account, then operated by Edwards, responded shortly after: "Yes so keep scrolling." (The post is now deleted.)

Within an hour, responses began to roll in. When people criticized the response, the account wrote, "That is the response to someone not following us or knowing what we have posted over 3 years and commenting on one pic."

In another, they called the response "suitable" for anyone calling them out.

"I am a brand ran by a person so if you want to make a sweeping statement without researching first, I will reply exactly the same way," they wrote in another post. But the comments kept coming, with more people criticizing the post.

images and how has underwear only been for one body type," they wrote. "Look at the 8k plus people I have retweeted most are large to XXL."

A cursory look at the label's feed shows that on Twitter, they have responded to and retweeted a diversity of body types. And while their promotional imagery does skew more specific, it also contains with it some diversity. When one follower said they were disappointed to see how the brand felt about bigger bodies given the new response, the brand replied again.

"Honestly it's not, I was just frustrated about another comment that my brand is only for one body type." they wrote. "If I thought that I would only retweet the skinny boy pics. It was a silly reply to what I thought was a silly comment." But the damage had already been done, and Tweets from Edwards' personal Twitter account seemingly enjoying the controversy (at one point tweeting, "oops started a Twitter war today" with a smiling emoji) and from weeks prior surfaced.

"When you run your own clothing business and actually

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"The images are marketing

understand marketing, then you can comment," the brand said. "'Standard physique' does not sell product, tried and tested it so many times. Blame the consumer as when I post a hot guy people buy, it's that simple."

But after a few hours of Twitter discourse, the brand was ready to give it another go.

"I made a too rapid, poorly judged reply to a comment about body type," they wrote to the brand account. "We are an underwear brand with sizes from S to 2XL. I am sorry if you feel excluded from these images."

"These shoots were about inclusivity of race, and the first one included some type of body variation, but I agree with your comments that I should have also been more inclusive with body type," the continued. "I am one of the few brands that retweets everyone in our products, most brands do not do that and we do it to show body and all other types of inclusivity. You can see that for yourself. We try to do our best because we are committed to inclusivity."

Three hours later, they followed up

"What I have learnt the last days is people want to see all body types," they wrote. "If you are comfortable posing full body in underwear and live in or around London and would like to pose for a shoot in April drop a comment saying so."

What a full circle moment.

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## Drag Race's Mistress Calls Out Homophobic 'Old Ass Balding White Men'

By Maggie Anderson

The library is re-opened!

Mistress Isabelle Brooks has been absolutely slaying the competition on season 15 of RuPaul's Drag Race. Fans have been living for her old-school attitude, impeccable makeup skills and outfits, and undeniable star power.

Unfortunately, the queens of season 15 have been facing a significant amount of hatred on social media – not only from Drag Race fans who are acting petty whenever their favorite queens don't do well on the show, but also from conservative pundits who are pushing their anti-drag rhetoric in recent months.

"Lmao [conservative] Twitter is sharing a video of me performing and talking about kids at drag shows and how drag is inappropriate when it's literally just me fully clothed performing at a 21+ venue... It's crazy how much

misinformation gets spread and how crazy these people are."

For context, Brooks is talking about the conservative response to a recent performance she did at Roscoe's Tavern – a 21+ gay bar in Chicago, Illinois that is known for hosting several drag artists for performances and viewing parties.

You can watch Brooks' performance at Roscoe's Tavern below.

The season 15 star added to the tweet thread, "You old ass balding white men hide behind pictures of American flags and bald eagles and share videos of queer people literally living their best lives and minding their own business and flood the captions with misinformation to spread hate and create chaos."

"It's honestly so depressing. It's one thing to stand for what you believe in, whether I think it's

right or wrong. However, the fact that you grown ass people not only share these things and harass queer people, but also flood the comments with juvenile insults and these are the people who are shaping our youth," she continued. "These are the 'parents' who teach kids hate. It's f\*cking disgusting. I say all this to say, and if you've been to any of my shows recently you've heard this already. But sh\*t like this is the reason why it is SO important to be visible, to be yourself, and to come together as a community. These people are f\*cking insane and are banding together to make drag literally ILLEGAL."

We must stand strong and together against the current anti-drag, anti-trans, and anti-queer narrative being pushed by conservative forces, so we couldn't agree more with Mistress Isabelle Brooks!

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# News & Politics

## New Santos Scandal Involves Money, Gay GOP & Richard Grenell

By Mark Maddow



Another week brings another scandal for out New York fabulist Rep. George Santos. This time, he's accused of involving himself in questionable financial deals and fundraising efforts around a GOP gay rights project involving a Trump administration official, the funding of which he allegedly misrepresented to the cousin of a Russian oligarch who made a significant contribution.

Mother Jones reports that Santos was involved in Rise NY, a New York registered political action committee created in 2020 that was focused on increasing voter registration, targeted education, and boosting turnout.

It collected a total of \$430,000 for its operation. It turned out that Santos sent a significant portion — \$55,800 — to a Washington, D.C. organization, which used those funds to support a gay rights site associated with Richard Grenell, a prominent gay Republican from Trump's administration who served as the ambassador to Germany and as a special peace envoy to Kosovo and Serbia.

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Grenell eventually endorsed Santos for his House seat.

Although PACs and candidates for office cannot coordinate under federal election laws, Santos's sister Tiffany was listed on Rise NY's payroll as president, and Santos's former campaign treasurer, Nancy Marks, was also listed as the organization's treasurer.

Mother Jones reports that several groups have called Rise NY's affairs and Santos's involvement "unusual" at best.

Rise NY contributed a lot of money to the Liberty Education Forum, a Washington nonprofit affiliated with the Log Cabin Republicans, an organization of queer Republicans. But unlike its stated goal, Rise NY did not send the group any donations related to voter registration, the outlet reports.

Additionally, Rise NY supported a group called Outspoken Middle East, an international LGBTQ+ human rights project. Grenell was one of the founders of Outspoken Middle East.

Grenell told Mother Jones that "the gay left" had failed "the gay community with their anti-American campaigns in West Hollywood and Chelsea"

while simultaneously admitting that Santos is a liar, though he refused to answer questions about the extent of their relationship.

Andrew Intrater, a New York fund manager and cousin to sanctioned Russian oligarch Viktor Vekselberg, was one of Rise NY's primary funders. He invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in Santos' former employer, a Ponzi scheme alleged to have violated securities regulations. Rise NY received \$175,000 from Intrater in several installments between 2021 and 2022, according to Mother Jones.

An attorney for Santos refused to comment to the outlet on an ongoing investigation.

When Santos won the election in November, Grenell celebrated Santos's "historic" election of an out gay Republican.

"It took too long to reach this moment. But big congratulations to George," the former acting director of national intelligence tweeted about the man who fooled everyone about his background.



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# BUSINESS & TRAVEL

## Tampa to Host Florida's 1st LGBTQ+ Tourism Conference

By Jacob Ford



This summer, Tampa, Florida will be home to the inaugural conference for the sunshine state's LGBTQ+ welcoming destinations, hotels, businesses, nonprofits, Pride organizations, travel influencers and more. Florida OutCoast Convention (FLOCC) will be held August 1-3, 2023 at the Hilton Tampa Downtown.

"Never before has there been a space for Florida's tourism and LGBTQ leaders to unite, evolve and flourish as one community," Rachel Covello, publisher of OutCoast, said in a written statement. A digital magazine and Florida travel blog that highlights Florida's LGBTQ-inclusive destinations and businesses, OutCoast organized the conference. "There is no denying that it is a challenging time in Florida for LGBTQ community members

and travelers. Given that travel boycotts and LGBTQ inclusion are on the minds of tourism leaders throughout the country – and especially in Florida – the convention this August will provide a welcoming space to 'FLOCC together' to develop solutions that will strengthen the Florida LGBTQ tourism industry."

Despite its truly appalling state government, Florida continues to be a top LGBTQ+ destination. Hilton is an ideal setting for the convention, having long been inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ+ travelers (and employees). Hilton Tampa Downtown is two blocks from the Riverwalk and features a 24-hour fitness center and a rooftop pool that offers gorgeous view.

The Florida OutCoast Convention will include general

and breakout sessions, keynote speakers, entertainment and an exhibit hall. The conference will also feature Flamboyance, a gala celebrating LGBTQ+ tourism accomplishments throughout Florida. Speakers, entertainers and panel information are yet to be announced. Online registration begins February 14, 2023 at [flocc.lgbt/registration](http://flocc.lgbt/registration)

Hilton Tampa Downtown is offering a special \$185 per night FLOCC Rate from Sunday July 30th to Thursday August 3rd. Click here to book at the conference rate.

Hosted by OutCoast, the inaugural FLOCC convention is sponsored by Visit Tampa, Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB and Visit Lauderdale.

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