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## BE BOLD BE PROUD BE GAY

Jax Gay Magazine is published every first Friday of the month (12 issues/year).

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## WHO WE ARE

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

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

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

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## OUR AUDIENCE

Jax Gay Magazine is available in more than 150 locations from Pensacola to Jacksonville and reaches an audiences exceeding 300,000 monthly across our print, digital network.

We offer comprehensive and cost-effective advertising programs on multiple platforms including:

- Print Magazine
- Web Advertising
- E-mail Marketing
- Event Marketing
- Social Media

# Monthly Group Schedule

1st  
Monday

6 - 7 PM: Anger  
Management Support  
Group in Rm 1

1st  
Tuesday

6 - 8 pm: Resume  
Workshop in Library  
6 - 7 PM: 50+ Social  
Hour in Rm 1

1st  
Saturday

10 - 11 AM: Coffee  
and Conversation  
in Library

2nd  
Monday

6 - 8 PM: Book  
Workshop in Library

2nd  
Tuesday

6:30 - 7:30 PM:  
De Colores LGBT Peer  
Group in Rm 1  
6:30 - 7:30 PM: The Real  
"T" M2F Peer Group in  
Rm 2

2nd  
Saturday

10 - 11 AM: Coffee and  
Conversation in  
Library  
2 - 4 PM: Book Club  
in Library (starts 5/13)

3rd  
Monday

6 - 7 PM: Sexual  
Identity Support  
Group in Rm 1

3rd  
Saturday

10 - 11 AM:  
Coffee and  
Conversation in  
Library



4th  
Monday

6 - 8 PM: Book  
Workshop in  
Library

4th  
Tuesday

6:30 - 7:30 PM: The  
Real "T" M2F Peer  
Group in Rm 1

4th  
Saturday

10 - 11 AM:  
Coffee and  
Conversation in  
Library

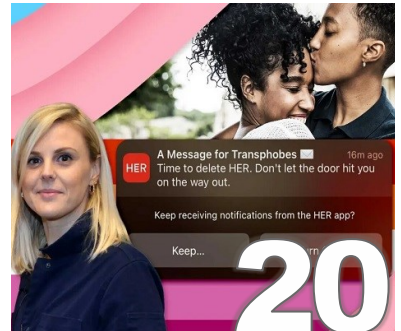
All events are welcoming, supportive, and safe environments that center the lived experiences of self-identifying lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual adults.

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# Cover

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By Remi Jones



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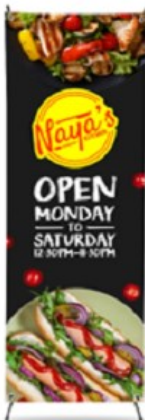
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# News & Politics



## Colorado's Gay Governor Signs Gun Control Bills Into Law In Wake Of Club Q Shooting

By Alexis Cooper

As the U.S. continues to grapple with gun violence, Colorado has joined several other states in passing gun control legislation. The state's out Democratic Gov. Jared Polis signed four such bills on Friday, five months after the massacre at Club Q.

The new laws raise the buying age for any gun from 18 to 21, create a three-day waiting period between buying a firearm and then getting it, expand the state's red flag laws, and remove certain legal protections for companies if their guns have defects.

"Today we are taking some important steps to help make Colorado one of the ten safest states, and building upon the ongoing work to make Colorado communities safer. Last year, I was proud to sign a comprehensive public safety plan of action into law to put Colorado on track to becoming one of the ten safest states in the nation, and this legislation today will improve public safety and reduce gun violence. I thank the bill sponsors for bringing this common-sense legislation to my desk," said Polis in a statement.

Friday's signing comes months after a shooter gunned down patrons of a gay club in Colorado Springs in November. Many others were injured in the violence that saw five people — Daniel Aston, Raymond Green Vance, Kelly Loving, Ashley Paugh, and Derrick Rump — killed. The alleged shooter is facing more than 300 charges related to the shooting.

"Coloradoans deserve to be safe in our communities, in our schools, in our grocery stores, in our nightclubs," Polis said at the signing in his office, according to the Associated Press. Gun control advocates wearing red "Moms Demand Action" shirts stood with him as well as a mother of a victim of the Aurora theater shooting in 2012, and several students from a Denver high school that saw gun violence.

The Gun Violence Archive has tracked 174 mass shootings in 2023 so far. It counted 646 last year.

Gun rights groups are already suing over the laws related to raising the gun purchasing age and the waiting period.

Democrats passed the legislation even after filibusters

from Republicans.

The laws look to stop increased suicides, youth violence, and mass shootings as well as provide openings for gun violence victims to sue manufacturers.

The state has a history of mass shootings going back to the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999.

"It's a sad day for Colorado; we are becoming one of the most anti-Second Amendment states in the nation," said Rep. Mike Lynch, the Republican minority leader, according to the AP.

Republican lawmakers called the laws attacks on residents' Second Amendment rights.

The new red flag law — which is also called an extreme risk protection order — now allows more people to petition judges to temporarily remove one's firearms. The previous iteration of the law limited those who could do so to family members, household members, and law enforcement. Now, those who work with youth — those who are at risk for suicide or attacking others — like doctors, mental health professionals, and teachers can do so.



The state has the sixth-highest suicide rate in the U.S., with nearly 1,400 in 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

On Twitter, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre applauded the laws.

"Today, Colorado has enacted four common-sense gun reforms, including elimination of some of the barriers to holding gun manufacturers and dealers accountable," she tweeted Friday. "Thank you, Colorado leaders and gun violence survivors, for this important step forward."

Senate President Steve Fenberg, a Democrat and one of the bill's sponsors, said at the signing ceremony that Republicans and other gun control opponents say it's always too soon after gun violence to do something.

"It isn't too soon. It's too late for so many of the lost souls," Fenberg shared. "We needed to have done more to prevent what happened."

*If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned that someone you know may be, resources are available to help. The 988 Suicide & Crisis*

*Lifeline at 988 is for people of all ages and identities. Trans Lifeline, designed for transgender or gender-nonconforming people, can be reached at (877) 565-8860. The lifeline also provides resources to help with other crises, such as domestic violence situations. The Trevor Project Lifeline, for LGBTQ+ youth (ages 24 and younger), can be reached at (866) 488-7386. Users can also access chat services at [TheTrevorProject.org/Help](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/Help) or text START to 678678.*

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# OUT & HEALTH

## Dylan Mulvaney Breaks Silence After Transphobic Backlash Over Bud Light Partnership

By Alex Warrington



Dylan Mulvaney, The Multi-Hyphenated Trans Influencer, Posted A Video On Tiktok On Thursday Giving An Update To Her Millions Of Followers.

"It's Day 9,610 Of Being A Human," Mulvaney Begins The Video, Referencing Her Series Documenting Her Transition Called "Days Of Girlhood."

She Then Says That She's Leaving Gender Out Of The Video "Since That's How We Found Ourselves Here."

The Controversy Began After Mulvaney Posted A Video Online Drinking Bud Light And Thanking The Company For "Possibly The Best Gift Ever."

Conservatives Reacted Violently, Literally, To The Marketing Campaign. While Many On The Right Called For A Boycott Of Bud Light, Some Went To Extremes. For Example, Kid Rock Shot Up A Stack Of Cases Of Bud Light With An Automatic Rifle In A Video He Posted On Social Media. Others Have Gone To Stores That Carry The Product And Have Been Caught On Video Vandalizing Displays And Coolers Selling Bud Light.

The Company Initially Stood Behind Its Decision To Include A Prominent Transgender Influencer In Its Marketing Campaign, With Heinersheid Defending Her Decision To Green-Light The Project.

But After Days Of Backlash, Anheuser-Busch, Which Owns Bud Light, Backtracked With A Statement By Ceo Brendan Whitworth That Appeared Apologetic About Including Mulvaney.

"We Never Intended To Be Part Of A Discussion That Divides People. We Are In The Business Of Bringing People Together Over A Beer," He Wrote.

Two Execs Have Gone On Leave After The Ordeal.

In The Video Shared Thursday Evening, Mulvaney Gets Personal, Sharing, "I've Been Offline For A Few Weeks, And A Lot Has Been Said About Me, Some Of Which Is So Far From My Truth That I Was Like Hearing My Name, And I Didn't Even Know Who They Were Talking About Sometimes. It's A Very Dissociative Feeling."

Mulvaney Says She Decided To Not Engage In Hopes That The Critics Would "Tucker Themselves Out."

She Says That She Realized, However, That Millions Of People Had Chosen To Follow Her: "I Want To Talk To Those People. So, Hi, Long Time No Talk, How Are You?"

Mulvaney Explains That She's Been Grabbling With The Cruelty Of People Against Her.

"I've Always Tried To Love Everyone, You Know, Even The People That Make It Really, Really Hard And I Think It's Okay To Be Frustrated With Someone Or Confused. But What I'm Struggling To Understand Is The Need To Dehumanize And To Be Cruel," She Says In The Post. "I Just Don't Think That's Right."

She Tells Her Followers She Did Get Concerned That Some Of Her Fans Would Start Thinking Badly Of Her Because Of The Backlash And What The Transphobic Critics Were Saying.

"I'm Just Going To Go Ahead And Trust That The People Who Know Me And My Heart Won't Listen To That Noise," Mulvaney Says.

The Creative Also Explains That Going Forward She'll Focus Not So Much On Her Identity But On What She Loves.

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## Sara Bareilles Celebrates Her LGBTQ+ Anthem “Brave” A Decade After Its Release

By David Vandygriff



Ten years ago, Sara Bareilles released the song “Brave,” and my whole world changed. I was 18 years old at the time and struggling to come to terms with my sexuality. Hearing “say what you wanna say / and let the words fall out” was just the nudge I needed to finally admit to myself what I already knew: I was not straight, and soon after, the lyrics accompanied my own coming out post on Facebook.

My story is just one of the many impacts of “Brave.” In 2013, Bareilles embarked on her first-ever solo acoustic tour in an effort to live out her own bravery, and audience members filled out postcards with things they were “brave enough” to do.

“I’m remembering every kind of story on those cards,” said Bareilles.

“Sometimes it was really big moves like coming out to your family or shifts in identity. And sometimes it was something very quiet and small like a shift in a relationship or telling a friend something that was hard to say.”

adds, “The things that made the most impact on me were anything where it feels like someone is coming closer to themselves.”

Bareilles wrote the song with famed producer Jack Antonoff for a friend who was struggling to come out.

“The stories about coming out meant a lot to me, especially given the genesis of the song,” she explains.

In the last decade, the reach of “Brave” has gone beyond the LGBTQ+ community. In 2013, cancer patients and staff at the University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital recorded a lip-sync video of “Brave” that went viral. In 2014, Bareilles joined Cyndi Lauper on The Today Show for a mash-up of “True Colors” and “Brave,” and the accompanying fundraiser yielded more than \$300,000 dollars for pediatric cancer. In 2016, First Lady Michelle Obama walked out to “Brave” at the Democratic National Convention. And currently, Bareilles is partnering with a non-profit organization called Brave Gowns to bring colorful hospital gowns to

The Grammy-winning artist

children’s hospitals across the country.

In some ways, Bareilles credits the queer community with helping make “Brave” as popular as it has been. “‘Brave’ has had a really unique journey through the world, and it is in no small part due to the adoption of the queer community taking that song and making it theirs,” says Bareilles. “I just feel so lucky to be here, ten years later celebrating the life of this little love letter that has really grown into a beautiful movement in the world.”

Though “Brave” has made a tremendous impact on the LGBTQ+ community, writing the song was not Bareilles’ first foray into being a queer ally.

“One of the first communities where I felt like I was accepted and allowed to be my fully expressed self were my mom’s friends from theater who happened to be gay,” remembers Bareilles. “I’ve always had a large number of friends in the queer community. These are my people! So I wanted to lift them up and highlight their joy and make sure that they know how much they mean to me and my story,



even though I'm a straight woman."

Over the course of her career, Bareilles, who currently stars in the queer-inclusive musical comedy *Girls5eva*, has always made a point to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, no matter what creative medium she is working in. In 2014, she helped a lesbian couple get engaged in the music video for her song, "I Choose You." When she made the move to television and created and executive produced *Little Voice*, she featured queer female characters of color on the show. And on her *Amidst the Chaos* tour, she sang "Bad Idea," a steamy duet she wrote for the hit musical *Waitress*, with a female musician named Butterfly Boucher.

"Singing with Butterfly Boucher on my tour was one of my favorite moments of the entire night. It was fun to watch the delight wash over my queer fans, especially my queer lady fans," Bareilles shares. "The stories we tell, we have to allow them to continue to evolve and include more people because the story only gets richer the more points of view it encompasses and the more perspectives it can hold."

As Bareilles embarks on her next creative chapter, she is committed to continuing to include and celebrate the LGBTQ+ experiences. "My next big project is my next record," reveals Bareilles. "As always, I'm looking for ways to include the queer community in that process, especially in terms of performing for people."

Bareilles also remains committed to being a visible ally, especially given the upcoming election and all the "pushback and hatred, especially [against] trans kids." "It's so clear to me that the negative legislation and all of this hatred is the wrong side of history, and that things will be able to move in the way that I believe they're meant to," says Bareilles. "For those of us who are standing in love, it just affirms our motivation to try to be available to amplify voices and continue to educate and lift up and show up where we can."

"The [queer] community has been by my side since day 1," says Bareilles. "Everything I can do to lift up and support and shower you back with love, I am here to do it."

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# OUT & HEALTH

## Surprising Study Indicates Trans Women In Gender-Affirming Care Contract HIV Less Often

By Drew Williams



New research published in The Lancet HIV indicates that transgender women who receive gender-affirming medical care are less likely to contract and transmit HIV. This surprising finding is probably due to the health education trans women get while receiving such care.

The study revealed that about one in 200 trans women in the U.S. contract the immunodeficiency virus each year.

Researchers, led by Dr. Andrea Wirtz of John Hopkins University, followed 1,312 HIV-negative trans women in-person and online in six U.S. cities including Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Miami, New York City, and Washington, DC, and through a digital mode in 72 smaller eastern and southern U.S. cities.

The ongoing study started in 2018 and included in-person or online health check-ups.

As of May 2022, 15 individuals had tested positive for HIV infection.

Of those women, seven had never taken pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and seven had previously been on PrEP

but were no longer taking it. One participant declined to answer the question. The findings suggest a deficit of HIV education and access to medication.

Nine women (or 0.33 percent of the total study group) died annually from circumstances including murder and suicide, overdose, cardiac arrest, another health condition, and unknown causes. None of the deaths were related to HIV.

Study participants who sought gender-affirming and transition care were less likely to contract HIV or to die during the study. Researchers attributed this finding to the medical support that accompanies those services, which decreased women's risks of HIV and death. More vulnerable women may be less likely or able to access gender-affirming care and the medical support that comes with it, the study said.

Research also revealed Black women were more likely to contract HIV over the course of the study. Latinx trans women and trans women who had been arrested within the last 12 months also had a higher incidence of death.

Risk factors that increased the likelihood of HIV and death

included stimulant drug use, being in a relationship with a cisgender man, and living in the South.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as of 2019, 19 percent of new HIV diagnoses were among cisgender and trans women. An estimated 14% of trans women in the U.S. are now living with HIV.

The Human Rights Campaign calculates that trans women are almost 49 times more likely to test positive for HIV than the general population.

Researchers said the study was a chance, beyond their focus on HIV prevention, to address those indicated risk factors as part of a holistic approach to help vulnerable populations.

They wrote, "A singular focus on HIV prevention is a missed opportunity to address other threats to the lives of people prioritized in HIV services and programming."

HIV diagnoses are one of the six indicators employed in the public health campaign entitled "Ending the HIV Epidemic in the United States.

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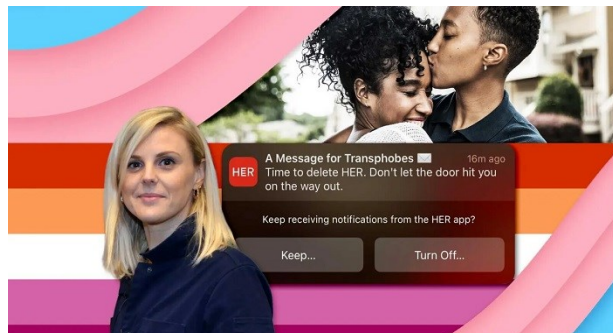
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# Life and Style

## Lesbian Dating App HER Tells All Transphobic Users To Delete Their Accounts

By Michael Bryson



A lesbian dating app has told all transphobic users to delete it from their phones, after a pile-on resulted in the app's Twitter account being temporarily suspended.

HER, an inclusive dating app which has a user base of more than 10 million, was deplatformed on Twitter on Lesbian Visibility Day for hitting back at transphobes.

Throughout the day, the app's social media team had been responding to an onslaught of "violent messages" from anti-trans activists, who took issue with the fact HER welcomes trans and non-binary lesbians.

Anti-trans bigots reported the app's Twitter account in droves & Twitter issued a temporary suspension. HER's account has now been restored.

The pile-on came after the app released a blog post in celebration of Lesbian Visibility Day, describing how it is "reclaiming 'lesbian'" from "the clutches of TERFs and bigots who've tried to hijack it to fuel their transphobia and hatred".

After returning to social media, the app sent a push-notification to all its users telling

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transphobia to delete the app, adding: "Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

HER CEO Robyn Exton explained the app being an inclusive space is "nothing new". "HER has always been a platform that is for trans women, for non-binary people and anyone who identifies as a woman," she said.

"So it's kind of absurd that we're now getting this like vitriol coming back, saying that we're a lesbian app that is now 'promoting' inclusion of trans women. It has always been since day one."

The CEO said the team at HER are "so sick" at the levels of "aggression and violence" so-called gender critical activists aim at the app and its users, when "all trans women want to do on our app is meet someone to fall in love with".

### HER 'Doubling Down' On Trans Support

Despite the heightened attention on social media, Exton said HER is not slowing down in its support of its trans users & the wider community.

"We're certainly not slowing down. I'd say we're probably

doubling down," she stated.

"As TERFs want to pick up and try and question our position, I think we're using this time to make our position exceptionally clear."

Since Musk took over Twitter, the platform hate speech rose.

Earlier in April, the social media platform quietly dropped longstanding policy protecting transgender people from deadnaming and misgendering.

The move to remove the policy was described by GLAAD as "the latest example of just how unsafe the company is for users and advertisers alike".

Under the tech billionaire's ownership of Twitter, the 'groomer' conspiracy theory – which pushes the idea that LGBTQ+ are inherently out to harm children – has also soared by 119 per cent.

Research by the Center for Countering Digital Hate identified 1,714,504 tweets and retweets since the start of 2022 that mention the LGBTQ+ community via keywords such as "LGBT", "gay", "homosexual" or "trans" alongside slurs including "groomer", "predator" and "pedophile".

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# BUSINESS & TRAVEL

## New San Francisco Restaurant Transports Diners To The World Of ‘Golden Girls’

By Keri Schneider

Thank you for being a friend! Following the massive success of its Beverly Hills and New York City pop-ups, now it's San Francisco's turn to enjoy the ultimate "The Golden Girls"-themed dining experience. This fully immersive pop-up restaurant transports guests the moment they walk through the doors into the world of this endearing fan favorite.

The Golden Girls Kitchen invites guests to nosh on the likes of Sophia's Lasagna al Forno (meat or vegan), a Miami-style Cuban sandwich called The Lanai, Blanche's Georgia-style cookie, and a bacon lettuce potato sandwich (say it fast). Most importantly, there's cheesecake in every

flavor, including chocolate, strawberry, pumpkin, and Oreo. All of these delectable mains, sides, and sweets will be served by a lovable Shady Pines waiter.

Additionally, The Golden Girls Kitchen creates moments for fans to play in the world of Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sofia. Cozy up to the kitchen table, grab some sun on the lanai, or snap a selfie in front of everyone's favorite banana leaf print. Take a spin through Shady Pines on your way to the pop-up store and get your hands on brand-new "Golden Girls" merchandise – no layover in St. Olaf required.

Fans can expect a recurring drag brunch featuring top local

performers starting May 21st through July 30th. Fans will also want to check out its Trivia Nights as well as "Dinner with The Golden Gays" on May 27th and National Golden Girls Day, July 30th.

Tickets for the restaurant are available exclusively through Bucket Listers. Every ticket purchase will include a reserved seat and guaranteed window of time to dine, a choice of an entree, and most importantly, cheesecake. Additional Golden Girls Kitchen locations will be opening in Chicago this May and in the Miami area later this year. Follow @goldengirlskitchen for all the latest news and details.



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## Moving To Gay Florida? Things To Know Before Relocating Here As An LGBTQ+ Person!

By Remi Jones



One of the most common thoughts you might have before relocating anywhere is how accepting the locals are towards the LGBTQ+ lifestyle. It is a very valid concern and something that sadly still needs to be considered in this day and age.

To help queer folk who are considering moving to Gay Florida, we have put together this guide from experts on the ground, considering the pros and cons of life here, discussing LGBT rights in Florida and whether Florida embraces our community.

We also take a look at the most gay-friendly cities in Florida, and LGBT community organizations in Florida that you should be aware of!

Florida is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque states in which to live. The state is the ideal retirement location for many people, including LGBT individuals. We mean, who wouldn't like to spend a large portion of the year enjoying warm sun and water?

Other than the hurricanes and bugs, there's much to look forward to about living here. There are plenty of living

options for LGBTQ people in Florida. The LGBTQ community in Florida is estimated to total around 1 million, though this estimate does not take snowbirds and tourists into consideration.



Florida provides opportunities for everyone who chooses to live here, whether you're looking for a coastal home, an LGBTQ+-rich neighborhood, or a skyscraper with exceptional water views in the city. Despite the headlines, much of Florida can be considered a very gay-friendly state. You can find lively gay enclaves with rainbow-painted sidewalks, LGBTQ+-owned businesses and families where all identities are welcome!

This might be unexpected given how historically anti-LGBTQ the state has been. The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee made an effort to drive out LGBTQ

students from schools in the 1950s and 1960s by condemning gay teachers and destroying their careers. More recently, Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' law says public school teachers may not instruct on sexual orientation or gender identity in grades kindergarten through third grade, which has fuelled anti-LGBTQ hate.



The reality, however, cannot be put out by harsh legislation and outmoded philosophy. LGBTQ people will persist here unless Florida itself ceases to exist; it is just frustrating that we still have to be fighting the same battles over and over again.

To reduce the stress of your relocation, we recommend engaging a gay realtor in Florida early in the process to help you find your new perfect home there in the most gay-friendly areas. They will have up-to-the-minute information on the best cities and areas for LGBT people and be able to



match your needs to a neighborhood most suited to you.

You can just start with a no-obligation conversation, and if you decide to continue with your move to Florida – they will not only have your best interests at heart but also ensure you are treated with dignity and respect throughout the entire process.



### Highlights Of Moving To Gay Florida

Different aspects of every state make it a unique and tempting proposition to transplants, locals, and visitors – and residents of Florida are well aware that their state is brimming with hidden gems. After all, this is why many chose to live here.

Once you move here, you'll be able to quickly befriend locals and spend your free time discovering the best sights and culture Florida has to offer. On top of this, thanks to an offbeat yet deeply engaged LGBT community, which congregates at a few fabulous queer hot spots, securing a relocation to Florida should allow you to meet queer people with similar interests.

We are certain they will have many more to add, but to get

you started, here are a few highlights of moving to LGBT Florida.

### Safety

Florida is generally a safe state for LGBT residents, families, and visitors. South Florida locations with vibrant LGBT nightlife scenes and establishments that warmly welcome gay tourists should be expected to have the highest levels of tolerance.

Even so, it's advisable to always take safety precautions and be aware of your surroundings and take safety precautions wherever you are. Take care when out on your own at night.

Florida has a lower total crime rate than the rest of the country, so you will definitely love living in a safe state. You may have to contend with hurricanes, potential storms, flooding and lightning since Florida is prone to extreme weather. When visiting the beach, always pay attention to caution flags because rip currents are a danger.



### Gay Nightlife

From the excitement of the charm of seaside tiki bars and nightclubs, the gay nightlife in Florida has it all. For high-octane excitement at its array of gay bars, visit South Beach

in Miami. A few gay clubs in Fort Lauderdale and the nearby neighborhood of Wilton Manors highlight the area's expanding LGBT culture.

Gay visitors visiting Tampa have a space to be themselves and find gay-friendly establishments along the main street in the historic area of Ybor City. Don't forget Orlando's storied gay clubs, which provide a variety of experiences, from intimate dives to massive clubs with lots of entertainment and dancing. Or the hedonism and freedom at the edge of the world offered by Key West.

### Respect For LGBTQ history

The largest gay archive and library in the country is the Stonewall National Museum & Archives, recognized as Florida's LGBTQ community's Smithsonian since its inception in 1974.

The gallery hosts recurring exhibits from its holdings, which include autographed orange pants from the TV series "Queer as Folk," as well as an authentic printing of sex research from Dr. Alfred Kinsey. The World AIDS Museum, the first institution devoted to the HIV/AIDS crisis, is also located here and features pieces of Keith Haring's AIDS Quilt.



## LGBTQ+ Rights In The USA

The laws governing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have altered considerably over time in the United States and vary from state to state. In many ways, LGBT rights are some of the best in the world – but the devil is in the detail, and some places are much more hostile to queer life than others.

While same-sex marriage has been legal in every state since the landmark Obergefell v. Hodges ruling on June 26, 2015 (before Obergefell v. Hodges, same-sex marriage was legal in 36 states and Washington, D.C. ), LGBT people are still treated differently in different states – both societally and as inequality under the law.

Over half of all states still allow discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, while counties and cities within states often have distinct laws as well. While some states permit adoption by all couples, others forbid it for all unmarried couples.

This is all to say what most of us already know is that LGBT rights and equality differ greatly across the USA, and the specifics of family, marriage and anti-discrimination laws are different in every state.

Thus, while it is comforting to know that you can choose to marry whoever you love across the USA (and have it recognized as such) and are protected against hate crimes  
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based on sexual orientation or gender identity (which can be punished under Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr.

Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009), there are still many questions you will likely have about moving to Florida and what you can expect of LGBT life there.



### Does Florida Embrace The LGBTQ Community?

Living options for LGBTQ people abound in Florida. Beaches, sunny weather, and a wide range of activities in Florida evoke a sense of freedom that appeals to visitors and residents of all orientations, but particularly to the LGBT community seeking a sense of community and acceptance. In its marketing brochures, the state's official tourism promotion division frequently uses the word "gay."

The "don't speak gay" bill, which was passed recently by the state Senate and hasn't yet been signed into law by the Governor, has drawn attention to Florida. The "Don't Say Gay" bill, which prohibits the discussion of gender identity and sexual orientation in public schools, was recently signed by Governor Ron DeSantis.

The reality, however, cannot be put out by harsh legislation and

outmoded philosophy. The Parental Rights in Education bill, as it is officially known, forbids kindergarten through third-grade teachers from discussing gender identity or sexual orientation in the classroom, or in a fashion that isn't developmentally suitable or age-appropriate for pupils.

The proposed bill has drawn criticism for potentially harming LGBTQ children or children with gay parents; President Biden dubbed it "hateful." The bill has sparked protests outside Disney World, in schools, and in the state Capitol. It has also sparked outrage from activists and replies from famous people on social media.

The message is in direct opposition to the inclusive and welcoming environment that advocates for LGBTQ tourism have been trying to promote for years. They are hoping that despite the opposition to the measure, tourists would continue to patronize the bed-and-breakfasts, pubs, cultural institutions, and restaurants that welcome gays.



### Is Florida An Expensive State To Move To

Florida can be reasonably priced even though it's one of

the most well-liked retirement and vacation locations in the United States. In actuality, the state's average cost of living is only 1% higher than the country's average.

**Housing costs.** The average home in the state costs \$196,800, which is \$8,100 lower than the \$204,900 national median home value. Homes built in 1939 or before cost, on average, \$198,500, while those built in 2014 and later are worth, on average, \$322,700. In Florida, the average renter pays \$1,128 per month for housing, which is \$105 higher than the \$1,023 average monthly rent nationwide.

**Utilities.** The cost of utilities such as phone service and energy is typically 13% lower than the country's average. Miami is somewhat in line with the national average and is in the middle of Florida's cities.

**Transportation.** The average driver in the state may anticipate spending \$920 on gas alone each year, based on the average price of gasoline, at \$2.14 per gallon.

**Food:** A single adult in the state spends an average of \$3,400 on food each year, while a family of four is likely to spend an average of \$9,850. For comparison, the average yearly food expenditure in the United States is \$9,350 for a family of four and \$3,230 for an adult.

## LGBTQ+ Community Organizations In Florida

Wherever you live, it is essential that you support LGBT organizations in any way you can use so that they can keep reaching out to and assisting other, more vulnerable members of the community. After all, we are stronger when we work together, and each of us will likely have a time in our lives when we require a little extra support.

Thankfully, Florida has a supportive and diverse LGBTQ community, which has helped the state become more gay-friendly in recent years.

As a result, there are a variety of LGBT resources available to community members, their allies, friends, and families – and you ought to feel free to utilize them or consider giving your support as needed to keep your new home state moving forwards! They are also great places to meet new people and find your queer chosen family in Gay Florida.

### ACLU

The LGBT division of the American Civil Liberties Union fights for complete equality for all people in Central Florida and the state. The ACLU focuses on legislative issues and evidence-based solutions, similar to Equality Florida. Their fundamental objective is to guarantee that everyone, whether gay or straight, bisexual or transgender, has access to the same civil liberties as everyone else.

The ACLU campaigns for a

more secure and accepting environment where LGBTQ people can be themselves without fear of violence or harassment. The ACLU's singular concentration on The Constitution sets it distinct from grassroots organizing efforts.

The objectives of the LGBT Rights Project are supported by resources and precise constitutional justifications for each purpose.

### Equality Florida

Equality Florida is the state's largest civil rights organization fighting for complete equality for residents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The organization was founded in 1997.

With thousands of supporters across the country, this alliance-building organization can effectively push for proper rights for LGBTQ+ individuals in businesses, schools, and homes. The organization is made up of two entities, unlike many other nonprofit organizations. It is made up of:

### Equality Florida Institute and Equality Florida Action

Together, these two groups can make a significant difference in Florida, by advocating for better services to protect the health and safety of the area's LGBT population. Equality Florida has also initiated a number of campaigns that help to make the state a more inclusive place.



## Most Gay-Friendly Cities In Florida

In Florida, there are many wonderful areas to live in, but when relocating to LGBTQ Florida, you should be cognizant that there are a few cities and gaybourhoods that are nearer to the queer hubs of life. Knowing them will allow you to pull your U-Haul up to your new house in a gay-friendly neighborhood or town that is best suited to your needs.

If you're a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or otherwise queer person seeking a welcoming neighborhood with facilities you'll cherish, start with these top gay and gay-friendly Florida cities to discover your perfect new home, each with its distinct personality.

Give yourself enough time to acquaint yourself with Florida's diverse personalities, and remember that there is no one perfect answer when it comes to the most gay-friendly places in Florida... and just because it does not make our list doesn't necessarily make it a bad option.

We recommend speaking to a local LGBT real estate agent for a more detailed understanding of the best options today. Now, let's take a look at where these fabulously gay-friendly cities in Florida are and why you might want to consider them!



## Miami Beach

Miami Beach, known as the Gay Riviera, has flown the rainbow flag for many years. In 1992, the municipality approved the state's first comprehensive law outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation. As a resource for gay tourists, it opened the nation's first LGBT Visitors Center at the intersection of Washington Avenue and 11th Street.

More than 10,000 lesbian and gay visitors attend the city's renowned White Party Week in November, which features high-energy parties hosted by renowned DJs and artists, sports, comedy shows, and leisure events. White Party Week is the country's largest and oldest HIV/AIDS fundraiser.

The beach is a major magnet for South Beach, particularly the gay beach around Ocean Drive and 12th Street, in addition to the area's striking assortment of warm Art Deco treasures and boutique hotels. Spring during the Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and the Miami Beach Gay Pride is the most popular time to visit.

Two miles of South Beach are taken up by eye-catching Art Deco treasures and boutique hotels. The district of South Beach has been sufficiently gay for a long period of time for its gayness to permeate every sphere of life there.

The artistic center of the city, Wynwood, possesses a more gay-friendly hipster attitude and

is teeming with lively restaurants, clothing stores, artwork, breweries, clubs, dance venues, and several other retail alternatives.

The area is distinguished by vibrant paintings and murals that delicately cover the walls of numerous buildings.



## St. Petersburg

Locals don't refer to this seaside city as Gay St. Pete for nothing. This city is the heart of gay culture on the state's Gulf Coast. The 'burg also boasts a flawless score from HRC's Municipal Equality Index, an accolade achieved every year since 2014. This is in addition to holding the largest LGBTQ Pride festival in the state each June.

Queer life in this city is tops, according to the Equality Index, which evaluates how well-treated LGBTQ communities are in various locations. There are three LGBT neighborhoods in St. Pete, not just one. The Grand Central District, which runs along Central Avenue from around 16th to 31st streets, is the area with the most activity.

Take a stroll or ride a bike along this lively strip to browse adorable boutiques, take pictures of towering murals, or snack at hip restaurants. The

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trendy coffee shop/bar Intermezzo is open late, and Freya's is a delicious vegan diner just adjacent to St. Pete's rainbow crosswalk.

The Grand Central District is home to much more than 70 GLBT-friendly enterprises, including antique shops, home décor galleries, hairdressers, restaurants, and bars. It is the center of the LGBT community in St. Petersburg.

Sunset Beach, a prominent LGBT beach on the West Coast, is also located in St. Pete. The barrier islands that stretch along the Gulf of Mexico all the way to the west of St. Petersburg are home to a number of islands, including St. Pete's Treasure Island, where Sunset Beach is situated.



## Wilton Manors

In the City of Wilton Manors, diversity is celebrated rather than tolerated. Wilton Manors was designated the "Second Gayest City" in the US after the 2010 US Census. Since there are many people who identify as LGBT in the community, Wilton Manors has long been a progressive location to live, work, and play.

The city has embraced its status as a popular travel destination for the LGBT

community. The Pride Center at Equality Park, which is the gay and lesbian community center for Broward County, is located in Wilton Manors, and frequently collaborates with LGBT+ organizations. The Stonewall Pride Parade and Street Festival are jointly sponsored by the City.

Since Wilton Manors achieved the honor of electing Broward County's first openly gay official in 1988, there's been a significant gay representation on the City Commission. By the year 2000, the city had become the second American city with a majority of LGBT elected officials. Among them were a gay vice mayor, and councilman.

In November 2018, the city became the second in the country (after Palm Springs) to have an all-LGBT+ City Commission, making history once more. The major thoroughfare is "the Drive" (also known as Wilton Drive), where establishments big and small proudly fly rainbow flags.

The Island City is located 40 minutes north of Miami and 10 minutes north of downtown Fort Lauderdale. Wilton Manors' sister city is Oakland Park, and even the Wilton Manors police are skilled at keeping things queer.

The police force launched a squad car with a rainbow theme in 2019. Enjoy some time on Wilton Drive, a bustling commercial district that is home to more than 40 queer-owned or gay-friendly companies.



## Finding Gay Realtors In Florida

When looking for the ideal realtor, why would you consider someone's sexuality? This may seem strange at first, but there are several reasons why contacting a gay realtor in Florida is a great way to find your dream house.

After all, when it relates to one of life's most significant transactions, it's not unreasonable to expect fair, equal, and honest representation from someone who understands the queer community's particular needs and wishes.

Furthermore, unfortunately, many people (up to a third of Americans) believe that our community does not deserve protection and dignity in housing, adoption, employment, and other areas of life.

So it's no surprise that LGBT people who use mainstream realtors often describe feelings of discomfort, unnecessary trouble, unenthusiastic representation, or even antagonism or outright contempt.

Everyone deserves a pleasant, stress-free home buying or selling experience while being adequately represented, and

this is why we feel you should hire a gay realtor to assist you in finding your future home.



LGBTQ realtors are more likely to be familiar with the diverse communities in their area and know which ones may be best suited to you when looking for a home.

That's not to say a heterosexual realtor isn't capable, but they've probably never had to address many of the issues LGBT people face. Rather than just being concerned with how bustling, fashionable, or up-and-coming

a neighborhood is (or what it may appear like), gay realtors conduct extensive research into the neighborhoods in which they sell homes to ensure that clients are safe.

It used to be challenging to locate professional LGBT-friendly real estate agents in Florida, and it was virtually impossible to find one if you were relocating here from out of state and didn't have access to a local referral.

You no longer have to search for a realtor without knowing whether or not they are accepting of others because you can use a list of gay, lesbian, and gay-friendly agents in Florida to do all of your homework for you.

Simply go to the page, and you'll be presented with a free list of gay, lesbian, and gay-

friendly agents who can help you with your relocation, as well as other useful information like LGBT+friendly schools, shopping, storage firms, tradespeople, and more.

Read the biographies of LGBT real estate agents, then choose the one that is right for you. It's critical that you find someone who will be by your side and support you and your family during one of life's most exciting occasions.

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## Hannah Gadsby's New Netflix Show Is 'Something Special'

By Deborah Wilson



Netflix has released the trailer for Hannah Gadsby's next comedy special, titled *Hannah Gadsby: Something Special*, which will premiere globally May 9.

In the trailer, the queer comedian promises, "This will be a feel-good show," then says, "Or is it?" Gadsby then assures the audience that it will be a feel-good special — as a matter of fact, it will be a romantic comedy, as they recently got married to Jenney Shamash, the director of the program.

"We tell couples stories now," Gadsby says, although the two of them often see the same event differently.

Gadsby's previous Netflix

specials have dealt with fairly heavy subject matter. Their first, *Nanette*, from 2018, was a takedown of misogyny and homophobia. It went on to win a Peabody Award and a Primetime Emmy Award. The follow-up, *Douglas*, from 2020, was nominated for two Primetime Emmy awards and won an AACTA Award. It dealt with autism (with which Gadsby had been diagnosed), aging, and the transphobia of J.K. Rowling, among other issues.

*Hannah Gadsby: Something Special* was filmed last fall at the Sydney Opera House. In addition to a discussion of Gadsby and Shamash's wedding, it covers traumatic encounters with rabbits and much more.

"Just for the next hour, we're going to feel good together and then we can head back out there and be the mass extinction event that we are," they say in the trailer.

Gadsby announced plans for further Netflix specials last year, even though the performer had publicly criticized the streaming giant for invoking their name to indicate Netflix's commitment to diversity — after the company was blasted for giving a platform to Dave Chappelle's transphobia.

Watch the trailer to find out why Gadsby couldn't propose to Shamash on bended knee (it's also why Gadsby doesn't have sex with men, the comic says).

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# Life and Style

**Heartstopper Star Yasmin Finney  
Opens Up About Her Dating Life:  
'Guys Get Intimidated By Me'**  
*By Brianna Rutherford*



Yasmin Finney, the unstoppable Heartstopper icon and endless beacon of trans joy, is more than happy being single, thank you.

Ever since Alice Oseman's revolutionary queer teen graphic novel series became a Netflix hit last year, with Finney up front and centre as student Elle Argent, the actress has become something of an international phenomenon.

With roles in Russell T Davies' upcoming Doctor Who series and the return of Heartstopper season two, Finney's celebrity keeps on growing. But along with the praise and acclaim comes one huge challenge – navigating a public dating life.

Speaking to Elle Magazine, the 19-year-old revealed that while she enjoys going out on dates, she's been banned from most of the big dating apps for supposedly impersonating a celebrity.

In addition, men aren't always in love with her high-profile celebrity status.

"The guys I go out with, dare I say it, they do get intimidated by me and I'm trying to date people my own age," she explained, adding that she's

not bothered about being on her own.

"When you have to rely on other people's validation you're not going to survive in this world," she said. "This world wasn't built on your boyfriend buying you everything. Be your own sugar daddy!"

While Finney might be more than content with being single, the same can't necessarily be said for her Heartstopper character, Elle.

Earlier this week, Netflix revealed that the show's wildly anticipated second series will make a big return on 3 August.

Alongside the cast and crew teasing some more "mature" themes, Netflix has revealed that Elle will start the season trying to work out whether she and friend Tao (William Gao) could become more than just friends.

Nick (Kit Connor) and Charlie (Joe Locke) will of course be returning, with much of the second series focussing on the pair trying to navigate their new, public relationship – though Charlie may also begin to struggle with an eating disorder.

Elle swiftly became a fan favourite following

Heartstopper's debut last April, putting Yasmin Finney in the public spotlight as one of the UK's most visible trans women.

Yet, despite her status, she too experiences the daily struggles that come with being an out trans person. Reflecting on her experience of accessing gender-affirming care in the UK, Finney said that she has had to wait years for treatment.

"Everything was changed before I hit college. Change your name. Change it on your passport, change your gender, get diagnosed with gender dysphoria," she shared.

"The NHS is a completely broken system. I've been on a waiting list for eight years now. So even me, almighty trans beam of light, struggles with the system. You can't escape it no matter who you are."

There is currently a concerningly long waiting list for trans people hoping to access gender-affirming care in the UK, with activist groups demanding the health service urgently fix the years-long wait time.



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## The Rich Queer History of American Drag Queens

By Brenda Howard

To many, the stereotypical image of a drag queen is one of a gay man dressed in exaggerated feminine getup, oversized wigs and heavy makeup. But drag's image -- and history -- is far more complex.

Drag is a grand dame in a glittering gown, commanding the stage with a power ballad or disco classic. Drag is also an underground performer twirling onstage to Madonna's "Papa Don't Preach."

It's the glitzy cast of "RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars" and small-town performers with dedicated local followings. It's a queen named Meatball dressed as a ghoulish exaggeration of George Santos, singing the "Greatest Showman" anthem "This is Me," and a king named Mo B. Dick in a firetruck-red pompadour and drawn-on goatee. It's cisgender and trans men, trans and cis women and nonbinary people. Its performers are gay and straight. It's masculine and feminine; it's neither or both.

"Drag is the theatrical exaggeration of gender," said Joe E. Jeffreys, a drag

historian and adjunct instructor at New York University, who noted that the artform constantly subverts "what people think they know about gender."

At its core, drag is an art form that for over a century has affirmed and uplifted LGBTQ people who perform and enjoy it. But this year in particular, some US states have attempted to impose legislative measures that would impact where and when drag can be performed. In Tennessee, where the most restrictive measures to date were passed in March, people who perform in drag in an area where children could see them could be charged with a misdemeanor or felony. (The ban was temporarily blocked hours before it was expected to be implemented.)

Drag has become increasingly visible in recent years through mainstream shows like "RuPaul's Drag Race" and popular public events such as drag brunches, drag bingo and drag queen story hours, in which drag performers read children's books to young audiences, often at libraries. Outside of the impact recent legislative measures will have

on drag performers, many fear that trans people could also be wrongly criminalized for expressing their gender in public. And all of these bills are being introduced amid a wider campaign in many states to roll back the rights of queer and trans people.

Drag probes and questions gender and social norms, provoking audiences to do the same -- and that is "inherently political," Jeffreys said.

LGBTQ historians and performers say drag will endure in spite of any fearmongering and hate. Survival, they say, is baked into the art form's long, defiant legacy.

### The First 'Queen Of Drag' Was A Formerly Enslaved Person

Drag is likely as old as gender norms -- it's a "part of the human condition," said Larry La Fountain-Stokes, a professor of Spanish, American culture and women's and gender studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor who also performs in drag under the name Lola von Miramar.

"As long as people have been using clothes or marking

gender in different ways, you've had people transgressing and challenging those conventions," he said in a phone interview. New York's Harlem neighborhood is thought by many to be the birthplace of drag balls in the 1860s. There, Black queer and trans residents donned dresses and wigs to perform in a safe, creative environment. (One theory about the origin of the term "drag" is that it referenced the way gowns "dragged" across the floor; another is that it derived from Polari, a slang-y language used frequently by queer British men, Jeffreys said.)

One of the first known people to call themselves a "queen of drag" was William Dorsey Swann. A formerly enslaved man, Swann in 1882 began hosting guests, many of them former slaves, for drag dances at his Washington, DC home.

When Swann confronted police in a cream satin gown after they raided one of his parties in 1888, he was arrested and charged with "being a suspicious character." He was arrested several more times throughout his life after protecting queer friends during raids, according to Channing Gerard Joseph, an LGBTQ historian and Princeton University instructor who has said he's the first academic to highlight Swann's contributions to drag history.

Swann's drag dances and subsequent arrests were some of the first recorded acts of resistance in the burgeoning queer liberation movement in

America, in which drag has played an essential role for more than 100 years, said Nino Testa, an associate professor of professional practice in women and gender studies at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

"The pleasure was the resistance," Testa said in a phone interview. "The celebration of queer joy when it's been denied in all these other spaces is activism."

Drag performers were often stars of the vaudeville scene of the early 20th century, Jeffreys said. "Female impersonator" Julian Eltinge was a particularly popular performer who published a magazine and launched his own makeup line, Jeffreys said. Those who perform exaggerated forms of masculinity, now often referred to as drag kings, also commanded stages across the US, proving masculinity could be prodded as much as femininity.

The term "homosexuality" came into greater circulation in the '30s, Jeffreys said, as did "pansy acts" -- hyper-feminine queens whose routines included innuendos about same-sex desire. And even though the '50s were a "dark period" for queer and trans people, Jeffreys said, some drag acts like the Jewel Box Revue found national success and catered to mainstream audiences.

### **Drag queens have long been leaders in the queer liberation movement**

Even after the counterculture movement took over the '60s and sizable LGBTQ

communities were forming in major cities, dressing in drag in public could still be dangerous. Police regularly raided gay bars in the US -- until the late '60s, Jeffreys said, it was illegal for bars in New York to serve a drink to a "known homosexual."

Despite the pervasive danger of living authentically, drag performers in this era also experimented with the traditional drag format. Queens founded their own drag houses -- and chosen families in the process; for many Black and Latino queer and trans people this was a reaction to the racism they faced within the gay pageant scene. This was also the era when lip syncing became the norm, Jeffreys said, and drag became less binary -- "genderf\*\*k" drag was used to describe some performers who weren't easily defined as masculine or feminine.

Offstage, many queens led collective efforts to aid queer and trans people. When the AIDS crisis worsened in the '80s, groups like the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco raised money to house AIDS patients and pay for their health care. Others gladly hosted events or lent their talents to fundraising efforts.

"We had to get out on the street and save our own lives," said Joan Jett Blakk, a drag queen who ran for US president in 1992.

Blakk, then an advocate with AIDS grassroots organization Act Up and political group

Queer Nation, never ran to win -- she wanted to do "something different with drag and tie activism in," she said in a phone conversation.

"It's great to think that you made a little dent in history," Blakk said. "But I'm surprised we have to get back out in the streets again and keep going."

How trans performers contributed to drag history  
Trans drag performers have played a key role throughout the history of the art form -- "you can't tell the story of drag without trans people," Testa said.

As drag grew in popularity in the '60s and beyond, many trans women found themselves performing because rampant transphobia and homophobia made it difficult to find other work. Drag was often a form of financial survival, said Testa.

Devin Antheus, who coauthored the photo book "Legends of Drag" with Harry James Hanson, said many of the queens he and Hanson photographed and interviewed began performing in the '60s and '70s, before terms like "trans" came into popular use.

Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, two trans women of color best known for participating in the 1969 Stonewall protests, used several terms to describe themselves throughout their lives, whether it was drag queen, "transvestite," which then wasn't widely considered

a slur and was more commonly used than "transgender," or trans, La Fountain-Stokes said.

"People of our generation and after grew up in a realm where identity categories are very important and delineated," Antheus said over the phone. "And for a lot of the girls, both queens who currently now identify as trans and those who don't, back in the day, there weren't such precise divisions when people were in internal spaces ... they all rolled together."

And yet, even within the LGBTQ community, trans women who performed in drag were often ostracized, particularly among some cisgender gay drag queens, according to Esther Newton, an anthropologist who authored the seminal 1979 book "Mother Camp" about Midwestern drag queens.

Some trans drag queens who received hormone injections were "strongly deplored by stage impersonators who (said) that the whole point of female impersonation depends on maleness," Newton wrote.

That sentiment has not entirely disappeared. In 2018, RuPaul Charles, one of the world's best-known drag queens and host of the Emmy-winning reality series "RuPaul's Drag Race" franchise, said that he would "probably not" allow trans women who'd undergone gender-affirming procedures to compete on the series.

(Despite this, several contestants had already come out as trans while appearing on the show or after their season aired, like Monica Beverly Hillz, Kylie Sonique Love and Peppermint.)

"Drag loses its sense of danger and its sense of irony once it's not men doing it, because at its core it's a social statement and a big f-you to male-dominated culture," RuPaul said in an interview with The Guardian, positioning the "trans movement" and the "drag movement" as two dichotomous groups.

RuPaul later walked back his comments, and the series has seen several trans contestants since, including Season 15 winner Sasha Colby. Many "Drag Race" cast members have graduated to appearances on Broadway, sold-out tours and recording careers. But "Drag Race" has also skewed viewers' definition of drag -- no drag kings have ever competed on the series, Testa noted, and the judges have long imposed somewhat traditional beauty standards upon contestants.

### **Drag Performers Say It Will Survive**

Drag's growing popularity hasn't come without challenges.

While recent legislative attacks like Tennessee's restrictions on public drag performances took some LGBTQ researchers and performers by surprise, Jeffreys said they shouldn't be shocked.

"As soon as anything gets that level of visibility, there's going to be pushback," he noted.

Drag performers and scholars said they believe drag is being scapegoated as a distraction from serious issues in the US, including gun violence, poverty and institutional racism, all of which disproportionately impact LGBTQ people, particularly Black trans women.

And as bills aim to limit drag performances in public, advocates fear how they might affect trans people who are not drag performers. Antheus said that if police interpret the law to apply to trans people wearing gender-affirming dress in public, they could potentially criminalize trans people's very existence. The rights of trans people have already come under attack in more than half of US states, many of which have introduced bills that would restrict trans young people from receiving gender-affirming health care or from

participating in a sport that matches their gender.

There's no evidence that exposure to drag "harms" children, as many conservative lawmakers and drag ban supporters claim, Testa said. These lawmakers falsely claim that drag performers "groom" or sexualize children, of which there is also no evidence. Drag acts containing sexual innuendos and adult themes take place in age-restricted bars or at events children aren't allowed to attend or that require parental consent.

What drag does do is expose people of all ages to alternative ways of thinking about gender and sexuality, La Fountain-Stokes said, and encourages spectators to consider their own identities more critically.

"Queer people have always found creative ways to resist the violence of their experience and norms that have tried to restrict our ability to live freely

in the world," Testa said. "Drag is a process of that resistance. These communities formed as a response to harassment, exclusion and violence. I'm hopeful in the sense that we've done this before -- we never stopped doing it."

Drag has survived for as long as it has because it's always been a vessel for expression for queer and trans people who've had to carve their own paths. It's why Alaska Thunderf\*\*k, the blonde bouffanted winner of the second season of "RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars," first got into drag -- to make art that wasn't bound by rules. That, she said in an email, and to have pure, unadulterated fun.

"The great thing about drag is that the second you think you've got it figured out, it changes and turns into something else," Alaska wrote. "That's why we'll always survive."

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# News & Politics

## Montana Republican Lawmaker Suggested She'd Prefer Her Daughter Die By Suicide Than Transition

By David Vandygriff



A Montana state lawmaker & sponsor of the state's ban on gender-affirming care for transgender youth has been blasted online after she commented on the state's House floor in March that she would rather have her daughter be suicidal than allow her to transition.

Though Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe, a Republican, didn't say that her daughter was transgender, she said she was "one of those parents who lived with a daughter who was suicidal for three years."

A video of her comments has gone viral after being shared by the Twitter account of the website The Intellectualist.

"One of the big issues that we have heard today and we've talked about lately is that without surgery the risk of suicide goes way up. Well, I am one of those parents who lived with a daughter who was suicidal for 3 years," Seekins-Crowe said in her speech. "Someone once asked me, 'Wouldn't I just do anything to help save her?' And I really had to think and the answer

was, 'No.'"

She added, "I was not going to give in to her emotional manipulation because she was incapable of making those decisions & I had to make those decisions for her."

She went on to say that she wasn't going to let her daughter "tear apart my family."

"And I was not going to let her tear apart me because I had to be strong for her, I had to have a vision for her life when she had none, was incapable of having none," she said.

Seekins-Crowe continued that she had "spent house on the floor in prayer because I didn't know that when I woke up if my daughter was going to be alive or not. But I knew that I had to make those right decisions for her so that she would have a precious, successful adulthood at that time."

One user on Twitter said, "My gut tells me that the hours she spent in prayer could have been used to find her daughter real help."

"Suicide as 'manipulation.' What a mother," another wrote.

And another user replied,

"Imagine believing this and then telling everyone."

"I vehemently disagree with this speech by GOP state rep Kerri Seekins-Crowe," U.S. Rep. Ted Lieu, a Democrat from CA, tweeted. "But you know what she didn't say? That it should be the government's role to make personal decisions for families. Why is she now shoving her private decision down other people's throats?"

The backlash comes after the state's GOP Gov. Gianforte signed a law banning gender-affirming care. His nonbinary gay son, David Gianforte, had spoken to local media about lobbying their father against signing the bill.

It also comes after the state's House voted to kick out transgender lawmaker Zoey Zephyr, for the remainder of the session. Zephyr, who is the state's first trans lawmaker, can still vote virtually, but cannot participate in debate. She was punished after she told GOP colleagues that passing the gender-affirming care ban would leave them with "blood on your hands."





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# BUSINESS & TRAVEL

## Why It's Time For LGBTQ+ Travelers To Go Back To Jamaica

By Brian Daniels



"Don't go to Jamaica." That used to be the advice given queer travelers. And there were certainly reasons for LGBTQ+ travelers to take a cautious approach to visiting the Caribbean island whose colonial era "buggery" law punished same-sex relations with 10 years of hard labor.

But the island celebrated its first queer Pride in 2015 and in the eight years since, the anti-gay sentiment in Jamaica (and some other Caribbean nations) had begun to thaw. For example, last year the Barbados High Court struck down that nation's anti-LGBTQ+ law. Some of these countries are reconsidering the draconian laws enacted under the colonial rule of the British Empire because of the death of Queen Elizabeth and pending coronation of King Charles. While Queen Elizabeth was

internationally beloved, some are ready for the end of the monarchy and a rejection of its colonial legacy.

The LGBTQ+ community in Jamaica and the Caribbean diaspora is gaining more international attention, and they are using it to point out that boycotts can hurt local queers as well.

New York artist and chef DeVonn Francis is Jamaican and says, "Groups like Connek JA and Ragga NYC have taught me so much about queer Caribbean liberation. Queerness in the Caribbean isn't a new phenomenon, and safety is a global issue."

Indeed, as the annual index of the most dangerous places for LGBT people to travel shows, dozens of countries still receive failing marks. Out of the 203 countries on the list, Jamaica

comes in 161. The U.S. continues to fall (dropping to 25 this year) in light of its growing backlash to LGBTQ+ rights. Recently Equality Florida, the state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, issued travel advisory warning trans travelers that Florida is no longer a safe destination.

"The press makes it seem like Jamaica is solely homophobic," Francis muses. "and that thought process erases the hard work that so many LGBTQ+ groups have done over many years to support our queer brothers and sisters. We're all looking for liberation, and the more you travel — that is to say, the more you meet people where they are — the more you can see how similar your desires and frustrations might be to queer communities living outside of your region."

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