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

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

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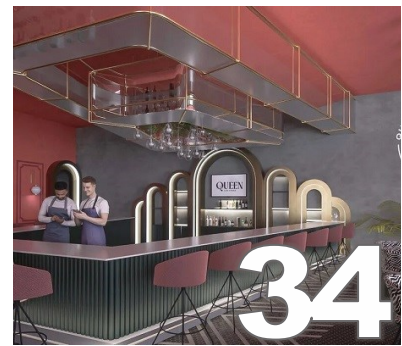
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By Brenda Campbell



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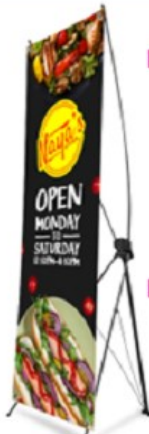
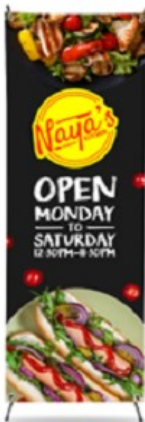
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News & Politics

Tennessee DA Threatens Pride With Unconstitutional Anti-Drug Law, Gets Sued

By David Vandygriff



The prosecutor for Blount County, Tenn., says he'll enforce Tennessee's anti-drag law against a Pride festival scheduled for this weekend, even though a federal judge has ruled the law unconstitutional. Now Pride organizers and drag performer Flamy Grant have sued him.

District Attorney General Ryan Desmond sent a letter to Blount County Pride organizers, officials in Blount County and the city of Maryville, and administrators at Maryville College, where the festival is to be held Saturday. The letter was obtained by the Law Dork blog and various local media.

Desmond said he has become aware of an event that "is marketing itself in a manner which raises concerns that the event may violate certain criminal statutes within the State of Tennessee," he wrote. "After thorough research and reflection, and in order to put potential parties on notice of possible ramifications of criminal conduct, I believe it is appropriate to share my prosecutorial position on the issues at hand."

He is aware of the ruling that the law in question, the Adult Entertainment Act, was unconstitutional, but he has concluded it is applicable only in the state's 30th Judicial District, made up mostly of Shelby County, where the lawsuit against it originated. The Tennessee attorney general has concluded that as well and has appealed the ruling, Desmond added.

"It is certainly possible that the event in question will not violate any of the criminal statutes, however if sufficient evidence is presented to this office that these referenced criminal statutes have been violated, our office will ethically and justly prosecute these cases in the interest of justice," he continued. He said his office has found there is no legal way to prevent the performance.

The Adult Entertainment Act classifies drag performances as "adult cabaret acts" and says they cannot be held on public property or where they might be viewed by a minor. In a June ruling, U.S. District Judge Thomas Parker found that the law interfered with the right to free speech. The First Amendment to the U.S.

Constitution "commands that laws infringing on the Freedom of Speech must be narrow and well-defined. The AEA is neither," Parker wrote.

That's the argument that Blount County Pride and Grant, known offstage as Matthew Lovegood, are making in their suit, filed late Wednesday in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee and seeking a temporary restraining order to stop any prosecution of festival participants. Desmond's letter "is a blatant attempt to chill Plaintiffs' speech and expression protected under the First Amendment," the suit states. It notes that Desmond admitted he tried to find ways to keep the event from happening and asserts that his letter constitutes retaliation "because he disagrees with the content and message of Plaintiffs' speech."

The festival, to be held from 1 to 8 p.m. at Maryville College's Clayton Center for the Arts, is set to include a drag queen story hour, a comedy revue, arts and crafts activities, and performances by various drag queens, climaxing with a concert by Grant, who recently topped the iTunes Christian

charts with the album Bible Belt Baby and the song "Good Day."

"Our goal with Blount Pride has always been simply to provide a safe place for LGBTQ people to connect, celebrate, and share resources," Blount Pride board president Ari Baker said in a press release from the ACLU of TN, which is representing his organization & Grant. "We've worked hard to create a supportive Pride celebration, but now we are worried that law enforcement wrongly thinks this anti-drag law applies to our event. We are filing this lawsuit to protect that space and our entertainers' ability to perform. We appreciate community members' support and we encourage families to attend and celebrate with us on Saturday."

In the release, Grant added, "Drag is an ancient art form, and I have seen how it can help build community, hold space, and connect people. I joined this lawsuit to ensure

that I can continue performing in TN, because I have seen how drag speaks to people who simply want to belong and be loved, making them feel safe and supported. That's all I want my art to do."

Grant also posted a statement to Instagram saying, "It continues to astonish me the lengths some Americans will ... go to oppress their neighbors."

The suit also names as defendants Blount County Sheriff James Berrong, Alcoa Police Chief David Carswell, Maryville Police Chief Tony Crisp and Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti.

William Gill, a law professor at Lincoln Memorial University, told Knoxville TV station WVLT that Desmond is correct in saying Parker's order applies only in the 30th Judicial District and that the law can be enforced elsewhere in the state. However, he noted that the law's validity is "significantly called into question" because the only ruling on it has found it unconstitutional. Prosecutors

have the right to exercise discretion about enforcing it, he said.

Maryville College Pres Bryan Coker released a statement to WVLT saying college officials have received the letter but believe the event can be held without legal complications. Blount County Pride is renting the college's art center, and "given the contract specification that the event will be conducted in compliance with all applicable laws, we believe the Pride Festival can move forward successfully," he said.

The college is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA), an LGBTQ-affirming denomination. The school's relationship with the church, plus its mission and history, "call for us to love and support those of all identities, and especially those who are marginalized in society," Coker continued. "We strongly support the mission and work of Blount Pride and stand with our LGBTQ+ community members."

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OUT & HEALTH

HIV Activist Raif Derrazi Is Striking Back At Stigma

By Maggie Johnson



When Raif Derrazi was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS in 2012 on his 27th birthday, he was shocked.

“I was in a three and a half year relationship that I considered to be monogamous,” he recalls. “It was shocking to me that I would get this diagnosis. I shortly realized the person I was with wasn’t being faithful.”

Raif says his learning curve about his new diagnosis was steep. “At first I thought I’d be dead in a couple of years. Little did I know how much medicine had advanced.”

Not long after he was diagnosed with AIDS, Raif broke his ankle, which caused him to be bedridden for nearly six months. Although his circumstances were less than ideal, the solitude gave Raif time to reflect. “I realized that up until that point I had been living with the mindset of a victim.” He recalled abusive home situations and relentless bullying as he was growing up. “I learned [as a young person] how to get what I needed, but I came to realize that this skill was actually a detriment that was holding me back from reaching my true potential.

Moving forward, I had to rewire who I was and how I operated.”

Raif found the personal empowerment he needed to thrive through two sources. One was bodybuilding. The other was in serving as a source of information and support to other people living with HIV.

“One of the first places I turned to [after receiving my diagnosis] was social media, specifically YouTube. Most of the content was pretty dry. I realized there was a gap and a need for information about HIV.”

Having studied musical theatre at UCLA, Raif thought something performative could prove cathartic and also help other people at the same time.

Raif soon became a familiar presence on social media, using his skills to raise awareness about living with HIV. “The response was immediate,” he says. “People saw my content and expressed gratitude and appreciation. It was plainly obvious I needed to keep doing this. People needed it, and it was healing for me as well. The whole thing snowballed and took on a life of its own.” Having started on

YouTube, Raif branched out to Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

After surveying the social media landscape, Raif says he found that online HIV-related information can be divided into two categories – complex studies in scientific journals, or “uber-simplistic” talking points. “There is not a whole lot in between,” he said.

Raif has tried to take an approach somewhere in the middle, having more in-depth conversations about issues people living with HIV care about. “We need to have more in-depth conversation about the risks of getting cancer or addressing people’s questions about whether HIV reservoirs in the brain might increase the



risk of dementia. In the past we might have said this was too much to unload on someone who has been diagnosed, but I firmly believe there is a hunger and desire [for more in-depth information, especially as people age with HIV.] “

Although Raif’s is a story of personal growth and leadership, he acknowledges that everything isn’t always rosy. As he became more visible on social media, some posters vilified him, calling him a sinner. Raif’s approach is to block out the extremes on both the positive and negative end of social media responses.

Raif also says HIV stigma remains alive and well, but he says campaigns around U=U have helped. “U=U definitely helps by making it much easier to explain what undetectable viral load means.”

Ultimately, Raif believes, each person retains an important degree of control in minimizing the negative effects of social influences. “It’s not helpful to compare yourself to another person. In your own personal life, you can be accountable to yourself, whatever that means – with your spouse or with your best friend. That is what matters. Everyone is different, with different strengths.”

HIV prevention is everyone’s responsibility. To find out more about HIV prevention and how to access free home HIV tests, visit the CDC’s “Let’s Stop HIV Together” website at cdc.gov/stophivtogether/index.html.



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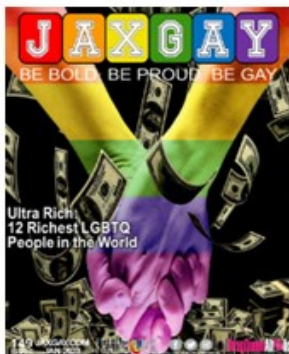
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Schitt's Creek Reboot Is Possible, Says Producer Andrew Barnsley

By Drew Williams



For those who learned how to “fold in the cheese” and swooned over Patrick’s rendition of the late Tina Turner’s hit “Simply the Best,” it will come as welcome news that the creators and executive producers of the award-winning Canadian comedy series Schitt’s Creek are open to bringing the Rose family back.

As producer Andrew Barnsley revealed exclusively to The Messenger, more antics could come within Schitt’s Creek.

“It’s something that we know there’s demand and interest for it, really,” said, the outlet reports. “It’s something that I know Dan and Eugene [Levy] are considering all the time, and I think it’s going to be a timing thing.”

Even though he did not have any updates on plans for whether, how, or when a project would proceed, he pointed out that the creators “love the world” in which the town and characters are set and that, for that reason, it would be a shame to see it be tarnished with a rushed undertaking.

Upon its debut in 2015, Schitt’s Creek quickly gained a cult following. By the end of its sixth season, producers wanted to go out on a high note with Emmys and GLAAD awards.

The global pandemic caused people to retreat inside and seek new things to watch, so the show became a mainstream hit. A Netflix pickup

of the show boosted its popularity even more.

Siblings David and Alexis and their parents, Moira and Johnny Rose, are a wealthy family who lose everything except ownership of a small town that Johnny bought for his son as a joke at some point called Schitt’s Creek. The family moves to a motel in the village, and shenanigans ensue as they settle into their new home in more humble surroundings.

The show was praised for its honest and authentic portrayal of gay people by telling the story of David and Patrick, who start as business partners but end up falling in love and eventually getting married.

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OUT & HEALTH

Nearly 1 In 3 Men Has Some Kind Of HPV
By Diana Massengill



Human papillomavirus (HPV) infections are the most common sexually transmitted infection in the U.S., with the virus typically spreading through vaginal, anal or oral sex as well as close skin-to-skin contact during sex, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About 80% of women will have HPV at some point in their lives.

But they're not the only ones who get infected. A new study published in the *Lancet Global Health* found that nearly 1 in 3 men has at least one type of HPV, and 1 in 5 is carrying at least one high-risk type, which can cause several types of cancer in women, including cervical cancer.

Yet, only women are routinely screened for HPV. Why is that the case? Experts explain.

First, What You Need To Know About HPV

In most cases, HPV has no noticeable symptoms and clears up on its own within two years, thanks to the body's immune system. So it can be tempting to think that HPV is not a big deal. However, there are more than 200 types of HPV, according to the National

Cancer Institute (NCI).

Dr. G. Thomas Ruiz, ob-gyn at Memorial Care Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, Calif., tells *Yahoo Life* that some types of HPV are quite dangerous, while others are not.

Most low-risk types of HPV don't cause disease, but some can cause warts on or around the genitals, anus, mouth or throat, per the NCI. High-risk types of HPV that persist can cause cancer, including cervical cancer, cancer that develops in the back of the throat, and cancer of the anus, penis, vagina and vulva. (The HPV vaccine Gardasil 9 protects against several cancer-causing strains of HPV, as well as the ones that cause genital warts.)

"The body can 'cure' the HPV," Fosnight says. "However, with it taking up to two years to clear the virus, this can be too long, and those high-risk types are more susceptible to turning into cancer."

According to the CDC, about 11,500 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed every year in the U.S., and about 4,000 women die of this cancer annually.

However, thanks to HPV vaccines and cervical cancer screenings, it's one of the most preventable cancers, the CDC reports.

So Why Isn't There Routine Screening For HPV In Men?

In a nutshell, it's hard to get reliable test results in men. Aleece Fosnight, a medical adviser at Aeroflow Urology and a physician assistant specializing in sexual medicine and urology, tells *Yahoo Life* that "research has shown that results in testing for HPV have been inconsistent in men. Getting a sample from the penile skin can be difficult."

In addition, the area where the virus would "set up shop" is much less permeable in men than in women. Fosnight explains the cervix is the perfect place for the virus to infiltrate, but the glans of the penis thickens and becomes callused in those who have been circumcised, making it less permeable.

A portion of proceeds from the sale of *Everyday Investing* prior to August 31 will be donated to GLAAD.

Fosnight also notes that "there are several medical research studies that look at removal of

the foreskin decreasing the risk against HPV and HIV transmission, along with decreasing risk of urinary tract infections, penile infections and penile cancers.”

According to the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA), men are typically screened visually by a doctor to check for lesions, which include genital warts. Fosnight explains that “symptoms, such as a lesion on the genitals, can be removed and tested for the presence of HPV. However, there is no official ‘Pap’ [test] of the penis that has been FDA-approved.”

The ASHA concurs, stating: “There is no specific way to test directly for HPV in men that is approved for clinical use. Researchers are looking at ways to better screen men, but the current lack of testing options for males can be very

frustrating.”

The Burden Of Testing Is On Women

Both Ruiz and Fosnight say the onus of getting screened for HPV regularly is on women and that they typically carry the emotional and physical toll of an HPV infection.

“The ramifications to men are nowhere near the ramifications to women,” Ruiz says.

According to the CDC, cancers from HPV aren’t common in men. However, HPV infections may play a role in male infertility. Dr. Alex Robles, a reproductive endocrinologist and fertility specialist at Columbia University Fertility Center, tells Yahoo Life that some evidence suggests that HPV infections in men “may alter semen quality.”

He explains that, “in laboratory testing, HPV may cause DNA

damage in sperm, which can lead to sperm degradation. Other studies looking at overall associations have also consistently seen a relationship with HPV infection and lower sperm quality. The most common findings are decreased sperm motility and concentration. It is important to note that other factors may also be involved, and HPV is just a risk factor.”

So what can men do to help prevent the spread of HPV? Ruiz says it’s important for boys and men — not just girls and women — to get the HPV vaccine if they’re eligible, since it protects against 90% of HPV-related cancers. He also recommends wearing a condom. Although it doesn’t completely eliminate the risk of HPV, since the virus can be passed from skin-to-skin contact, he says this “diminishes” the probability.



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Life and Style



Is Grindr the Sexy New LinkedIn?

By Tina Bennett

A surprising number of men are using the gay dating and hookup app Grindr to find something other than sex.

While the app remains primarily used for locating a suitable partner for a hook-up, Grindr revealed approximately a quarter of users are online to network. A spokesperson for Grindr told Business Insider the app is an effective tool for folks looking to connect with other gay men for personal and professional relationships.

“According to data from a survey of Grindr users, approximately 25 percent of our users say that one of their key activities on Grindr is to network,” a Grindr spokesperson told Insider in an email. “We know people use our app to meet new people in their area and in new towns, and we also have plenty of anecdotal evidence of people making connections that lead to professional opportunities like jobs.”

Grindr CEO George Arison revealed to The Wall Street Journal he had “hired or had a professional relationship with several people” he met on the app adding, “We encourage people to network on Grindr.”

Consultant and content creator Omaralexis Ochoa, 26, told Insider that while “hookups and dates” are probably the first associations that come to mind with Grindr, he found it to be a great way to meet people and advance his career despite the stigma with the practice.

“I think it’s always been kind of a joke in the gay community about, quote-unquote, networking on Grindr,” Ochoa told Insider.

Ochoa spoke about that association and the opportunities to network available on Grindr in a video posted to YouTube.

“I do think there are other more effective ways to leverage

untraditional social media platforms like Grindr and Tinder to build a network and gain professional opportunities,” Ochoa says in the three-year-old video. “So believe it or not can use Grindr to make friends. It’s actually how I’ve made most of my gay friends.”

Ochoa told Insider he is no longer on the app, but that it remains an effective way for gay men to connect for something other than sex.

“Grindr is one of the ways that I’ve made a lot of friends in LA,” he said. “I feel like a lot of gay men make friends through Grindr in that way and to some degree, ‘network’ with the app without really the intention of networking.”

Earlier this month, Grindr was accused of using union-busting techniques to prevent employees from organizing a union, ordering them to move across country or lose their jobs.



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

Indeed Supports Transgender Employees With \$10K Relocation Incentive

By Rachel Joshlin

Online job-hunting company Indeed is offering \$10,000 to transgender employees for moving expenses if they need care or support and can't access it in the state they live.

As conservatives target transgender rights and gender-affirming health care, some businesses are looking for ways to support transgender employees. Indeed is the latest company to show support for its trans workers by helping them relocate

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, Republican legislators nationwide have introduced 495 LGBTQ-related bills since January. All of them restrict the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

Indeed told Axios that its gender-affirming care relocation benefit went into effect in July, the outlet reports.

It is available to employees who live in U.S. jurisdictions where gender-affirming medical care is outlawed or limited. The support is also provided to employees with gender non-conforming, transgender, or nonbinary kids to relocate to a

place their children can access gender-affirming care. The employees will receive a \$10,000 one-time payment to ease that relocation cost.

The company implemented the program to deliver vital care to employees and their families, said Indeed's vice president of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, Misty Gaither.

"Our transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming colleagues are integral to our business and culture at Indeed," Gaither told Axios. "We know employees thrive and do their best work when they can bring their authentic selves to work."

Among trans workers, nearly two-thirds feel pressured to manage their identities at work, while 38 percent are forced to conceal their identities, according to a survey released by Indeed. The same survey found that only eight percent of LGBTQ+ workers knew their employers offered transgender-specific benefits, while 50 percent said theirs didn't, and 42 percent didn't know.

Some major U.S. corporations have accepted employee insurance benefits for transgender people. Among the

companies that provide health insurance plans that include access to gender-affirming care, Intuit, Netflix, and Starbucks offer plans that cover medications and surgical interventions.

In addition, Intuit, the company that makes accounting and tax software like QuickBooks and TurboTax, offers benefits that comply with the standards of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. In addition, the company provides moving assistance for transgender employees.



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Canada Alerts LGBTQ+ Citizens Of Potential Dangers Of U.S. Travel

By Brenda Campbell



In light of the hundreds of anti-LGBTQ+ laws being introduced and passed targeting LGBTQ+ people in the United States, the Canadian government is urging its citizens to consider their safety when traveling to their southern neighbor.

Canadians looking to travel to the U.S. are warned on Canada's official webpage for travelers that places where LGBTQ+ laws have recently been enacted could pose dangers.

Across the United States, there were nearly triple as many anti-LGBTQ+ protests as in 2017, and Republicans are doing their best to restrict LGBTQ+ rights.

In an advisory titled "2SLGBTQI+ travelers," Canadians are warned that their rights may be restricted depending on where in the U.S. they travel as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex people.

"Some states have enacted laws and policies that may affect 2SLGBTQI+ persons," the advisory warns. "Check relevant state and local laws."

Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said experts recommended adding the alert. Their responsibility is "to look carefully around the world and to monitor whether there are particular dangers to particular groups of Canadians," she said, according to Reuters.

No details were provided on whether the U.S. State Department was consulted on the change to the travel site.

The overall risk profile of the United States remains unchanged, indicating regular security precautions when traveling.

As a result of proximity, the U.S. remains the top destination for Canadian travelers. Official data suggested last year that 4 percent of Canadians aged 15 and older identified as LGBTQ+, Reuters reports.

Also on the site are warnings about gun violence in the U.S. "Incidences of mass shootings occur, resulting most often in casualties. Although tourists are rarely involved, there is a risk of being in the wrong place at the wrong time," the Canadian government warns. "Familiarize yourself on how to respond to an active shooter

situation."

The Human Rights Campaign has declared a state of emergency because of the expansion of laws that restrain queer lives in state capitols. Equality Florida recently issued a travel warning for LGBTQ+ people to stay away from the state because of Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is running for president in 2024 with an extreme agenda that targets LGBTQ+ and Black communities, which he has implemented in the state.

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Barbie Overthrows Harry Potter As Highest-Grossing Warner Bros. Film

By Jennifer Davis



Unless you've been living under a rock, you already know that Greta Gerwig's inclusive AF Barbie movie has been dominating the box office and generating a lot of buzz in conversation since its release back in July!

Although it's been smashing records left and right, it also just took on a new title as the highest-grossing movie ever for longtime film studio Warner Bros/Warner Bros.

The win dethrones a 12-year run from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2 as the top spot, a move that makes many in the LGBTQ+ communities happy since Barbie is trans-inclusive and original Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling has had a recent few

years disappointing us all and ruining the Harry Potter legacy by displaying herself as transphobic.

While surpassing the record, Barbie has gone on to gross \$1.342 billion thus far over the previously held \$1.315 billion held by Deathly Hallows. Barbie is also only one of the few movies in Warner Bros.' Top 25 earners list that is not part of a series/media franchise, alongside Inception, Twister, and Gravity.

The conversation around Barbie is also just beginning, seeing as how the film is still in its cinema run and has yet to be released to any streaming services, which are likely to set some more records once that happens. The win for Barbie

comes after a slew of recent disappointments for the studio and proves why the stereotypical blonde doll always finds her way to the top.

When the movie crossed over the \$1 billion mark at the worldwide box office, Gerwig said that, although she didn't have any ideas yet for a Barbie sequel, she would be more than on board to continue.

"There's a tone and a humor and a joy, and obviously the world is so beautiful," she told Variety. "I want to go back to Barbie Land."

Catch Barbie in theaters while you can! And keep your eyes and ears peeled for release dates for streaming and home release!

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Life and Style

Incarcerated Individuals Have A Voice & It's Time Politicians Listen Up

By Glenda Rutherford



Many politicians only visit Black and Brown communities during an election cycle. Perhaps they are there to “remind” themselves the value of votes from people of color. Yet every time, we are handed the same laundry list of promises recycled from the last election’s did-not-achieve-pile: affordable housing, access to better schools, and (oh, my favorite) safer communities.

Additionally, most of those making policies about prisons have never seen what the inside of a prison looks like. When they vote, they are voting on behalf of a people with whom they have had little to no contact or connection. Yes, New York state prisons are not outwardly considered Black and Brown communities, at least not within earshot of society.

It may surprise many, but incarcerated citizens quite frequently have conversations about the lack of political engagement from our state’s officials. Frankly, many politicians understand we are not allowed to vote while incarcerated and as such there is no incentive to represent our ideas, even if those ideas are meritorious.

Some politicians don’t have the experience of discovering, on their own, that we incarcerated individuals have some answers for many of society’s complicated issues.

More politicians should be invested in coming into the prison system to look for solutions to many of the very problems some of us have caused in our communities. Our civic engagement begins right here and now, while we are incarcerated.

If those of us who are in prison are mandated to take anger management before leaving in hopes of becoming less reactive and more critically aware of our emotional triggers, how much more would our civic engagement be enhanced by our political leaders showing up and engaging with us? We are the nation’s most marginalized members, and we will be returning back to society. Politicians’ engagement would prepare us to be more socially educated and participatory in our democracy.

One such politician did show up: Shéar Avory. By having the moxie to walk into the carceral space, Avory is essentially saying that every New Yorker has a stake in democracy and

a civic duty to help foster safer communities in New York state.

38 percent of Black people in the United States are incarcerated, which is disproportionate given that the Black population in the United States hovers around 13.5 percent. In New York, Black and Brown incarcerated individuals do make up more than the national average, but no incarcerated individual can vote. Avory could not have come to garner the vote; she came into prison to look for solutions.

Avory is running for incumbent Jonathan Jacobson’s seat in the Hudson Valley. She came to find solutions for how to create “safer communities” and also to discuss “criminal justice” initiatives. Because to her, the two are not mutually exclusive.

Avory leads with her background. Her mother had an overdose when she was young. Her father believed she could be “cured” through conversion therapy. She survived the foster care system, and when she aged out she found herself homeless. But, when she concluded her bio, I noticed that she did not look downtrodden, broken, or

resolved. She looked like a fighter.

She identifies as Black and indigenous nonbinary trans/femm. Her vision is to turn vacant buildings into small business ventures and dilapidated houses and blighted neighborhoods into safe communities with affordable housing. She wants to bring resources into communities so that youth are not left to activities that will lead them into the carceral system.

Avory's platform transcends gender, and it is why I believe she is the change maker the 104th District needs. "We may think differently, but I can imagine we usually feel hunger, homelessness, community

violence, and the overdoses of loved ones the same," she said during her visit, "As abandonment by our politicians." For Avory, policies ought to lift people up, not keep them down. She articulates, substantively, on the how.

Gone are the days of believing that our politicians must be the person you would want to have a beer with. Deceptive campaign malarkey is watching how many politicians put on their best face while courting the voting constituency.

Avory, a hopeful politician, came into the "belly of the beast" to learn from some who have caused disastrous harm in their communities, but who may now be the cultivators on

how to heal the same communities. It is said that "a man's strength flows from the same well as his weaknesses."

Being incarcerated does not relieve us of our civic duty as U.S. citizens, and the U.S. Constitution supports that sentiment. It reads, "No State shall make or enforce any law which abridges or immunities of citizens of the United States."

Avory did not come to offer any promises or hand me the same laundry list of promises recycled from the last election's did-not-achieve-pile. Over a shared bag of vending-machine chips, we talked about solutions, ones that politicians seldom, if ever, think incarcerated citizens have.

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'Drag Race All Stars' Season 8 Guest Judges Revealed

By Greg David



It's All Stars, so you had to know a twist was comin'.

RuPaul's Drag Race Season 15 might have just come to a close, but don't worry, the drag drought won't last too long with All Stars Season 8 premiering in just a few weeks, on May 12.

In the gag-worthy All Stars Season 8 trailer, we get glimpses of some of the guest judges who will be sitting alongside Ru, Michelle Visage, Carson Kressley, Ross

Mathews, and Ts Madison at the judges' table. The extra special guest judges sashaying onto Season 8 are Maude Apatow, Brandon Boyd, Zooey Deschanel, Thom Filicia, Javicia Leslie, Idina Menzel, Ego Nwodim, Matt Rogers, Adam Shankman, JoJo Siwa, Robin Thede, and Bowen Yang.

We already know the dynamic dozen returning to compete for a spot in the Drag Race Hall of Fame —

along with a \$200,000 prize, but the trailer reveals a new twist to the competition.

In the preview, All Stars introduces the first-ever

Fame Games, which gives the eliminated queens a chance to win \$50,000. Each week on Untucked and online, the eliminated queens will show off their runway looks and appeal for fan votes. Drag Race fans will then ultimately decide who is crowned "Queen of the Fame Games."

In case you need a RuFresher, the 12 glamazons who will be stomping back into the workroom are Alexis Michelle, Darienne Lake, Heidi N Closet, Jaymes Mansfield, Jessica Wild, Jimbo, Kahanna Montrese, Kandy Muse, LaLa Ri, Monica Beverly Hillz, Mrs. Kasha Davis, and Naysha Lopez.

All Stars Season 8 premieres Friday, May 12 on Paramount+ with two all-new episodes. Untucked is also back for a new season on the streamer.



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News & Politics

Mississippi Poised to Elect First Gay Legislator Ever

By Nathan Whithead



Fabian Nelson, a gay Black man, is on track to become Mississippi's first out state legislator.

Nelson won Tuesday's runoff in his district's Democratic primary for Mississippi House of Representatives, and the Republicans have no candidate running in the general election, so Nelson is assured of winning the seat in November.

"I still think I'm in a dream. I'm still trying to process it and take it in," Nelson told the Associated Press Wednesday. "It's still shocking to me, I have to be honest."

Nelson, a 38-year-old real estate professional, ran in House District 66, located in the Jackson metro area. In the primary, held August 8, he and Roshunda Harris-Allen, a college professor, were the top two finishers, but neither won a majority. In the runoff, Nelson easily bested Harris-Allen, 69 percent to 31 percent.

The district's incumbent, Democrat De'Keither Stamps, did not seek reelection, as he is running for the Mississippi Public Service Commission. Nelson had run unsuccessfully

against Stamps for the District 66 House seat in 2020.

Nelson's priorities as a state representative will include better funding for education, supporting small businesses, and expanding Medicaid. He plans to be a voice for marginalized people in the deeply conservative state as well.

Mississippi and Louisiana are the only states that have never elected an out state legislator. Nelson has been endorsed by LGBTQ+ groups, including the LGBTQ+ Victory Fund and the Human Rights Campaign.

"Representation matters — especially in Mississippi, which is one of the last two states to achieve the milestone of electing an out LGBTQ+ lawmaker," said a statement from Victory Fund President and CEO Annise Parker. "Voters in Mississippi should be proud of the history they've made but also proud to know they'll be well-represented by Fabian. Fabian's victory is a testament to his dedication to his community and the thoughtful, diligent work he put into winning this campaign. LGBTQ+ Victory Fund proudly

went all-in for Fabian — and for effective leadership in Mississippi — providing training, consulting and on-the-ground support. We look forward to seeing him take his seat in the legislature and champion a better Mississippi for all."

Nelson's victory "sends a real message in a time when we are seeing attacks legislatively and through violence against the LGBTQ+ community that the majority of people reject that kind of animus," Rob Hill, state director of HRC's Mississippi chapter, told the AP. "I think a lot of youth around the state who have felt like their leaders are rejecting them or targeting them won't feel as lonely today."

Nelson vowed to fight legislative attacks on LGBTQ+ people and other oppressed groups in Mississippi. "At the end of the day, I put my suit on the same way every other person who walks in that statehouse does," he told the AP. "I'm going to walk in there, and I'm going to be a sound voice as to why things like this can't continue to go on in the state of Mississippi."



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BUSINESS & TRAVEL

What To Expect At Las Vegas' First LGBTQ+ Hotel

By Grant Neilson

Queen Las Vegas, the first LGBTQ+ property on the Vegas Strip, is now opening its doors to the public.

RuPaul's Drag Race alum Shangela & Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman will attend the hotel's opening this Friday along with many notable faces in the community.

The mid-century modern style space will have a little bit of everything. At Queen Las Vegas, visitors can check out the hotel, restaurant, gaming lounge, and nightclub.

As the only LGBTQ+ property on the iconic Strip, Queen Las Vegas will roll out in phases with the restaurant and nightclub opening first.

Eduardo Cordova is the visionary behind Queen Las Vegas and he's putting all of his energy into building a proper gayborhood in Sin City. The CEO caught up with Out Traveler ahead of Queen's opening day and teased everything in store.

JaxGayMag: Your vision of creating a proper gayborhood in Las Vegas is coming together. How excited are

you that Queen Las Vegas is about to open?

Eduardo Cordova: I'm over the moon excited. It's been years in the making for me and to create a new destination for LGBTQIA+ front and center on the Las Vegas Strip. We deserve this because it's going to be a beautiful space.

What should people expect when they come visit Queen?

At this time, I'm opening the restaurant and the nightclub. I'm not touching the hotel at this time. For the restaurant, I call it business in the front and party in the back. The restaurant will be open daily and we'll have drag brunches every day filled with RuPaul's Drag Race queens. Every weekend, it turns into a party once the nightclub opens at 10 p.m.

Las Vegas is known for its club scene. How would you describe the nightclub on the property?

The restaurant is connected through an LED tunnel that'll take you to the nightclub that's in the back. It has 25 foot ceilings and 50,000 LED screens. The entire room turns into this massive LED screen.



We have lasers, stage performances, aerial acts. We're giving the gays truly a Vegas nightclub experience.

You've really made it your mission to elevate the LGBTQ+ experience in Vegas. You opened the gay bar The Garden and you're currently hosting Temptation Sundays at Luxor on The Strip, so what is the end goal for you?

It has always been my mission to create something really unique that we can have here in Las Vegas, not only for tourists, but for our beautiful local community. For me, creating spaces front and center and having visibility is the most important thing for me. With this property, it's really a step forward. This property will be the catalyst for this area. We can make our own West Hollywood of Las Vegas!

The hotel portion of Queen Las Vegas, with 28 themed rooms from the current Thunderbird Hotel, is scheduled to open later this year.

Queen Las Vegas is located at 1215 S. Las Vegas Blvd and more information can be found www.QueenLV.com

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