



Photo by G. Michael Beigay

Finally, a Queer Late-Night Hangout in the South Hills

Inspired by the beloved **Beehive**, **Nightshade Lounge** in Dormont offers queer Pittsburghers an alcohol-free late-night space.

By Chrissy Costa

Photo courtesy of Nightshade Lounge

There's a new queer, alcohol-free late-night hangout space in the South Hills!

On July 18, **Nightshade Lounge** officially opened its doors to the public.

Nightshade Lounge is a non-profit community center located at 3019 West Liberty Avenue in Dormont, with the goal of bringing people together and providing support and resources for those in need. They offer a food pantry,

continue reading on pg. 3

Welcome Back, Students!!!

By Michelangelo Pellis

Moving to a brand new city can be just as overwhelming as it is exciting. Whether you're unpacking in a dorm room at Pitt, starting graduate school at Carnegie Mellon, or heading to Point Park University from across the country, one thing is certain: you don't have to figure Pittsburgh out alone.

Here's how to stay informed, find community, and make the most of queer Pittsburgh.

I'm new here. Where do I start?

Rest assured, you do not need to know anyone before arriving. Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ community is welcoming, and not confined to one specific "gayborhood." Instead, it's spread across neighborhoods, each with their own unique offerings.

The best way to get involved is to start with recurring events and following community calendars. The QBurgh community calendar and our weekly "What's Queer & Going On" newsletter are good first stops for finding what's happening each week.

Where do people hang out?

If you're looking for a place to start, check out the QMNTY Center. The QMNTY Center

offers everything from support groups and workshops to fitness classes, social events, and even a thrift shop, making it an easy way to meet new people outside of your campus setting.

College students are always in need of caffeine, and I can't recommend **The Soft Spot Coffee** enough. This sapphic, sober spot in Garfield is lesbian-owned and has quickly become one of the most popular gathering spots for the Pittsburgh queer community. Along with serving coffee and pastries, the café regularly hosts pop-up events, workshops, and community gatherings.

If you're a sporty type, **Stonewall Sports** is the place for you. The national organization is an LGBTQ & Ally community-based, non-profit sports organization. Here in Pittsburgh, they offer kickball, dodgeball, bocce, bowling, sand volleyball, yoga, ultimate frisbee, and pickleball. Even if you've never played a sport in your life but just want to find a community of other LGBTQ+ folks while getting some exercise, **Stonewall Sports** is the place for you!

Looking to support local LGBTQ+ shops? The city has many worth checking out. Browse books at **White Whale Bookstore** in Bloomfield, which regularly hosts LGBTQ+ *continue reading on pg. 2*

Finding Queer Joy in the Woods at Ray of Sunshine Campground

Kat St. Pierre has created a campground where LGBTQ+ travelers can unplug, connect with nature, and experience rural Pennsylvania on their own terms.

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Blue Moon Bar Mourns the Loss of Co-Founder Geraldine "Geri" Lupin

Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ community mourns the loss of Geraldine "Geri" Lupin, one of the original founders of **Blue Moon Bar**.

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Faces & Places A sunny Sunday in the 'Burgh!

Did QBurgh photographer **Jaye Frances Imagery** capture you enjoying the Sunday sun?

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(Welcome Back Students! cont'd)

authors and events. Hunt for unique treasures at Collarbone Jewelry’s shop on Butler Street in Lawrenceville and Maude’s Paperwing Gallery in Millvale.

For those 21+, the city offers almost every slice of nightlife you could ask for. Dance the night away at 5801 Video Lounge and Bar, see amazing drag performances at Blue Moon or P Town Bar, or visit Harold’s Haunt, a queer-owned “they-bar” known for its inclusive atmosphere and creative cocktails and events. And don’t miss long-time LGBTQ Pittsburgh staples the Real Luck Cafe (call it Lucky’s and bring cash) and Brewers, Pittsburgh’s oldest gay bar. For the adventurous, check out Club Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh’s bath house with amazing late-night and afters parties.

For a directory of LGBTQ+ businesses and organizations, check out QBurgh’s Pittsburgh Pink Pages. *(visit pages 6 & 18 for more!)*

I don’t drink. Can I still meet people?

Absolutely. While Pittsburgh has a vibrant LGBTQ+ nightlife scene, some of the strongest queer communities are built around shared hobbies, volunteerism, and recurring social events.

Keep an eye out for coffee meetups, book clubs, game nights, crafting events, hiking groups, and community picnics. Groups like Pittsburgh LesbiYinz host a variety of alcohol-free events throughout the year, and many local organizations organize gatherings that are open to anyone looking to meet new people. For volunteer opportunities, check out Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, which is focused on improving the Health of the LGBTQ+ and HIV Communities. They host a variety of events throughout the year that can help you get involved and have volunteer opportunities throughout the week.

Similarly, Shepherd Wellness Community is a HIV/AIDS community. They have been serving the Pittsburgh community for over 35 years and offer a variety of volunteer opportunities from cooking dinner to bingo nights.

Gay for Good Pittsburgh partners with a non-LGBTQ organization every month on a volunteer project; a great way to switch it up. One of the easiest ways to find activities and events that are not centered around drinking is by checking the QBurgh Community Calendar.

Whether you’re interested in trivia, yoga, live music, art markets, or film screenings, chances are there’s an LGBTQ+ event happening somewhere in the city.

Are you a fine art lover? Look no further.

Pittsburgh is often known for its wide variety of museums. Of course, we have your classic natural history, children’s, and art museums. To highlight a couple of especially LGBTQ+ friendly museums, look no further than The Warhol and The Mattress Factory. As some of you may know, Pittsburgh is the birthplace of Andy Warhol. Located on Pittsburgh’s North Shore, the Warhol features work from Warhol and is one of the most comprehensive single-artist museums in the world and the largest in North America. While some of your universities already offer a student discount to The Warhol, the museum itself offers half-priced admission on Fridays after 5 pm.

The Mattress Factory offers a very unique experience to visitors. The museum features installations, video, and performance art. The philosophy of the museum allows the artists to design site-specific art that is often one of a kind by nature.

If you attend Carnegie Mellon University, Point Park University, CCAC Allegheny Campus, or the University of Pittsburgh Main Campus, you are lucky enough to get free admission to the museum!

Want to get involved in arts and entertainment? True T PGH celebrates Queer People of Color through Creative Art, Entertainment, Community Resource Sharing, and Activism. The Pittsburgh Pride Choir is Western Pennsylvania’s premier LGBTQIA+ and allies choral group, celebrating diversity and fostering inclusivity through the power of music.

As the region’s only choir dedicated to uplifting the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies, Pittsburgh Pride Choir brings together individuals from all walks of life to perform a wide range of music that resonates with the spirit of equality, love, and community. You can learn about auditioning at PittsburghPrideChoir.org.

I’m nervous about going to events alone. Is that normal?

Yes, that’s normal. Most people at these events are also looking to meet new people, so don’t be afraid to say hello; you never know where it may take you.

Attending alone is also a great way to get to know yourself better. If you aren’t feeling like staying, it’s okay to leave after 30 minutes; you’re the one calling the shots.

Also, following the organization first on Instagram beforehand may help the event feel more familiar before you go.

Where can I find LGBTQ+ affirming healthcare?

Your physical and mental health and wellbeing are vitally important. Your campus student health center offers a variety of services. For LGBTQ+ focused and competent care, check in with Central Outreach Wellness Center, Allies for Health + Wellbeing, and Metro Community Health Center.

They all offer a range of services including free STI testing, HIV testing and treatment, PrEP, Hep C testing, transgender care, mental health, the vaccine and treatment for mpox, and more. They’ll get you fixed up and back out there. AIDS Free Pittsburgh also offers a resource finder.

Good Luck!

There’s no doubt that once you move to the city and get settled in, you will pave your own way and find your own community in the most unexpected ways.

There is a great, big, diverse, inviting, friendly, strong community waiting for you in Pittsburgh, and we can’t wait to meet you!

Queer Student First Semester Checklist:

1. Attend one community event.
2. Visit a local LGBTQ+ organization.
3. Explore a neighborhood outside your campus.
4. Ask a health care provider about PrEP and STI testing.
5. Acquire condoms, dental dams and lube.
6. See a drag show or another queer performance.
7. Find one recurring group you’d like to return to.



(Nightshade Lounge cont'd)



clothing closet, and harm reduction and reproductive health supplies. It's a place for queer folks to safely gather and hang late at night outside of traditional bars. The hours are 8 PM-1 AM daily, and it's closed Tuesdays.

"It's a relaxing, cozy spot to be in and to access resources after most resource hubs are closed," says Blake, who opened the Lounge with his partner.

Blake's decision to open Nightshade Lounge was based on a culmination of ideas he's had over the years. The resource closet and food pantry were projects he was already working on with another non-profit, and when he left, he expanded upon those ideas. As for the late-night lounge, Blake attributes that to he and his partner's affinity for the famed Beehive, an alternative coffeehouse and cultural hub in the South Side that closed in 2018.

"My partner and I have spent many, many nights over the past years moping over the fact that the Beehive isn't around anymore and that there wasn't really anywhere for us to go that wasn't a bar late at night. So as soon as I had the time and the energy to do it, I was like, screw it, I will create it myself!"

It can be very lonely and isolating for sober queer folks who don't have other options at night.

"If you go to a bar, that can be triggering as someone who's sober. Or you stay home, and you don't have the community. I wanted there to be another option," says Blake.

Blake chose to open Nightshade Lounge in Dormont because it's a very queer-friendly neighborhood. "I wanted it to be in the South Hills because overall there's not much here as far as queer spaces. There are a lot of queer-friendly businesses, but there aren't many queer-friendly/queer-owned spaces."

When scouting the Dormont neighborhood, Blake spent a lot of time walking around talking to local business owners whom he described as extremely supportive, and he noted all of the Pride flags displayed throughout the area, making it an ideal home for Nightshade Lounge.

According to Nightshade's website, as of April 2026, a local resource guide on LGBTQIA+ friendly businesses has over a hundred entries, only five of which are in the South Hills. All five offer specialty services like salons and personal training. None act as a location where people can gather and build community without the expectation of spending money. In addition to this, there isn't a single sober meeting place or resource hub in Pittsburgh, queer-friendly or not, that's open after 10 PM.

Nightshade Lounge is operated by volunteers consisting of queer and trans folks living across Pittsburgh's South Hills.

Expect to find a cozy atmosphere filled with soft music, dim lighting, comfy furniture, and a chill vibe. Folks can read quietly or create art alone or in a small group. Others may choose to work on their laptops while sipping tea in a corner. There's a bookshelf full of donated books as well as a smaller bookshelf of owner recommendations. Books may also be borrowed if requested. The decor is reminiscent of a Victorian library combined with a Boomer's childhood game room.

I was personally enchanted with the vintage hair dryer chair, sans dryer hood, rotary phone, and Blake's handmade leg lamp.

All of the snacks are individually packaged, GF/Vegan, and most are top 9 allergy-friendly. The snacks, teas, and beverages are free for those who may not be able to afford them, with a "suggested donation" for those who can afford to pay it forward.

Along with the food pantry and clothing closet, there is a Resource Desk with Post-Op Care Packages, HRT Supplies, earplugs for those in need of a little extra quiet time, and a guide that includes info for other queer/trans friendly businesses, social groups, and resources. Nightshade Lounge is also wheelchair accessible and neurodivergent friendly. The doors are open, and the staff is ready to serve your late-night needs.

Visit nightshadepg.org for more information.

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Finding Queer Joy in the Woods at Ray of Sunshine Campground

On 123 secluded acres in Mercer County, queer owner Kat St. Pierre has created a campground where LGBTQ+ travelers can unplug, connect with nature, and experience rural Pennsylvania on their own terms.

By Josie Byzek
Photos by Ava Grace

Eventually, I pass a few tent sites. Each has a fire ring, picnic table and platform, and is surrounded by a generous amount of space. That's a luxury, as on too many campgrounds, tent sites are cramped or too close to one another.

By the time I reach the first cabin and see Kat St. Pierre, I am relaxed and ready to book a week for myself.



"I could camp in one of these spots and potentially not even see the next tent," I say to Kat. She runs the campground, along with her parents, Rick and Luon.

That's by design, says Kat. And there's enough space that you won't hear the next site too much, either. "Although we were here building a tent platform and we heard a family giggling and having fun. It was just really nice."

The 123-acre campground itself is rural enough that the only sounds I hear are nature. She and her dad cut and mill their own wood, which is used for everything from tent platforms to glamping cabins.

Being Queer in the Country

Kat is the seventh generation to work the land. She recognizes how precious this legacy is and wants to share it with as many people as possible, especially in the LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities. But I must ask, are queer campers safe in Mercer County?

"Of course, we are safe for LGBTQ and for marginalized people in general," she responds. "I am queer, and my campground is woman-owned, family-operated, and welcoming to everyone." All the surrounding neighbors in her area are very supportive of her and her business, and most of them have known her since she was a kid.

There are a few spots in the county that are full-blown MAGA, but the queer-owned businesses and many other welcoming spots more than make up for them. "I have a guidebook of them, and maybe I should put it on the website," she says.

Plus, she is a force for good in her area, creating something special that people want to be part of. "We just had a queer fireside chat for people
continue reading on pg. 5



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(Finding Queer Joy in the Woods... cont'd)



in a rural area. It was great. We met people from Oil City, and people from essentially the backyard over in Clark, from Pittsburgh, and then my dad, and my best friend from elementary school was leading it.”

You Can See the Stars

In addition to the tent sites with platforms, Ray of Sunshine offers cabins with queen-sized mattresses on the first floor and a loft with a trundle bed on the second, plus backpacking sites for those who want to go fully off grid. Each cabin has cheery paint, cozy comforters, its own compost outhouse, and enough space around it that you won’t see your neighbor. They’re named for influential people in Kat’s life, such as grandparents.

There’s no water or electricity on site. Kat has containers to rent if you don’t want to haul your own, and a Dollar General is three minutes away for anything you forget.

“I do have pop-up tents and an outdoor solar shower if people want to rent that,” she says.

“One day I’d love to do little solar showers, and I have so many dreams of having a little bathtub in the woods. It comes down to actually building it, and that takes time, and I’m still building.”

She and her dad are busy polishing the sites. You can still see tire tracks from a construction vehicle near one of the cabins.

Do you know what else you can see? Stars at night.

“Lots of stars,” she says. “Lots and lots of stars. And fireflies, wildlife, so much.”

Ray of Sunshine Camping and Glamping is now open. For more information, visit their website at rayofsunshinecamping.com.



Wendi Miller’s life and legacy honored through East Liberty exhibit

A July exhibition celebrated the artist, activist, and community leader who helped expand transgender rights in Pittsburgh.

By Michael Buzzelli
Photo courtesy of Cooper Miller

The life and work of the late Wendi Miller, a transgender woman and prominent figure in Pittsburgh’s queer history, were celebrated during July’s Wendi’s Birthday Exhibit at Miller Frame in East Liberty.

Sponsored by the Wendi Miller Legacy Project, the exhibition highlighted Miller’s legacy as an artist, activist, and community leader while showcasing archival materials from her five decades operating the frame shop.

The project seeks to archive, contextualize, and celebrate Wendi Miller’s life and work as an artist and activist who ran the frame shop for 50 years.

Miller turned her shop into a safe and supportive space for herself and for the Rust Belt transgender diaspora in the 1990s, housing many trans women in the space above her shop.

Wendi Miller was the president of a support group for local trans people, TransPitt, where she amplified discussions about gender and identity across the Pittsburgh community in the 1990s, and was a co-founder of the Pittsburgh Transsexual Support Group in 1995.

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She advocated for trans and genderqueer inclusion in nondiscrimination policies on both federal and local levels.

In 1995, she collaborated with an ad hoc committee of the Pittsburgh Human Relations Commission to modify legislation to protect transgender and gender variant persons from discrimination in housing and employment. It was in the frame shop that the wording was created to expand protections in discrimination law, written as “the gender of a person, as perceived, presumed or assumed by others, including those who are changing or have changed their gender identification.”

Cooper Miller, Wendi’s son and the creative director and administrator of the Wendi Miller Legacy Project, said, “In trying to solve her own problems, she helped solve problems for others. She was creating her own precedent.”
continue reading on pg. 6





PITTSBURGH PINK PAGES

LGBTQ Sports Clubs

Pittsburgh Front Runners

Running Group

pittsburgh-frontrunners.org

Pittsburgh Tigers & Tigersharks

Hockey

pittsburghlgbtq.hockey

Queer Scouts Climb

Climbing Club

[instagram.com/queerscoutsclimb](https://www.instagram.com/queerscoutsclimb)

Qrew Pittsburgh

Crew Rowing Club

[Facebook.com/LGBTQrew](https://www.facebook.com/LGBTQrew)

Steel City Bowling

Bowling league

steelcitybowling.com

Steel City Softball League

Softball league

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Steel City Volleyball League

Volleyball league

steelcitysoftball.org

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stonewallsportspgh.org

For more information about community centers, health, testing, LGBTQ+ Bars & Clubs, and other business resources please visit:

PittsburghPinkPages.com

(Wendi Miller... cont'd)

After the ordinance was enacted, Miller appeared on The Ricki Lake Show to discuss transgender rights. Miller also ran an international hotline on transgender rights from her frame shop.

While Wendi earned a BFA in Sculpture from Carnegie Mellon University in 1972, Cooper Miller said, "Wendi was an autodidact who taught herself deep-sea photography, cave diving, blacksmithing, and hang gliding. She was also an avid poker player."

Wendi Miller helped found Poker Night at 5801, which is still going strong.

While researching Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ history, Al Preston, a public historian and scholar of queer history, became aware of the Wendi Miller Legacy Project. Preston said, "I have been documenting oral histories and

ran into so many people who knew Wendi." Preston now serves as the exhibit curator on the project.

Preston said, "Wendi Miller has made a significant impact on the trans community in Pittsburgh and beyond. There is magic in telling the story of someone who wouldn't want to tell the story themselves."

Cooper Miller said, "The Wendi Miller Legacy Project is about creating a space that rejects the rise of authoritarianism that marginalizes transgender people. Transgender people aren't the enemies. We don't want them to hide, but to share their history."

The project has had many helping hands. Claire Moclock is serving as lead archivist on the project, and includes academic supporters such as Harrison Apple, Dr. Susan Stryker, Cameron Lucas, Carly T. Lough, Chelsea

Morning Gunn, and Dr. Irene Frieze. In society's current climate, Cooper Miller wanted to shine a light on Wendi's work. Cooper Miller said, "I was raised around the trans community. I was a kid when people were coming to the shop, staying at the shop. A lot of them lost their family when they got kicked out of their homes and had to come to Wendi. I became a surrogate son, nephew, or little brother to a lot of these people. The trans community has been particularly important to me."

Visitors to the exhibit had the opportunity to explore archival materials Miller collected over decades in her frame shop while sharing stories about her life and impact on Pittsburgh's transgender community.

Cooper Miller said of the Wendi Miller Legacy Project, "It's a way to keep Wendi with us."

Pennsylvania Makes \$10 Million Available to Help LGBTQ+ Nonprofits Strengthen Security



The latest round of Pennsylvania's Nonprofit Security Grant Fund will help eligible LGBTQ+ organizations invest in safety upgrades

As LGBTQ+ organizations continue to face threats and acts of intimidation across the country, Pennsylvania is opening another round of funding to help nonprofits improve the safety and security of their spaces.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) has announced a new \$10 million round of its Nonprofit Security Grant Fund, which provides funding for security upgrades at organizations that serve communities targeted by hate crimes, including LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians.

Eligible nonprofits can request between \$5,000 and \$150,000 to help pay for security improvements ranging from surveillance cameras and exterior lighting to electronic locks, emergency communications equipment, trauma kits, staff training, and building upgrades designed to better protect staff, volunteers, and visitors.

Organizations do not need to have experienced a hate crime to qualify. However, PCCD says priority will be given to nonprofits that can demonstrate they have been the target of a previous hate crime or have received credible threats against their organization or the communities they serve.

The grants are open to Pennsylvania-based 501(c)(3) organizations whose primary mission serves communities protected under the FBI's hate crime bias categories, including

sexual orientation and gender identity.

During the program's previous funding cycle, Pittsburgh organizations SisTers PGH and TransYOUning were recommended to receive security grants to strengthen protections for their facilities and the communities they serve.

Grant requests of \$25,000 or less do not require matching funds. Larger awards require applicants to provide a non-state cash match, though those matching funds may come from fundraising, federal grants, local governments, or other non-state sources.

The grant program reimburses approved expenses after projects are completed, rather than providing funding upfront.



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Pittsburgh Equality Center Town Hall Focuses on Civil Rights, Trans Protections, and Political Power

By Michael Buzzelli

On Thursday, July 16, 2026, the Pittsburgh Equality Center hosted a town hall at CO-Hatch South Side Works. Ray Sidney-Smith, President and Chair of the organization, moderated a panel that consisted of Chris Soult, Deputy Director, Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations; Ian Price, Presidennt of the Steel City Stonewall Democrats and newly elected Chair, Democratic State Committee LGBTQ+ Caucus; Barb Warwick, Pittsburgh City Councilmember, District 5; and Julian McClain, Gender Equity Commission, member of the Pittsburgh LGBTQIA+ Commission,

and director of Partners & Relations at True T Pittsburgh.

Soult said, “The Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations has over 100 open civil rights investigations.”

He mentioned the massive attack against queer and trans folx on the federal level but reiterated that the City of Pittsburgh has protections for those who live, work, and visit the city. He brought a one-sheet flyer outlining protected-class statuses in Pittsburgh.

Price, who is newly elected to his position as Chair of the Democratic State Committee LGBTQ+ Caucus, mentioned that he has been a long-time member of the Steel City Stonewall Democrats. The organization advances equal rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, and supports public policies that advance that mission in the United States, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the greater Pittsburgh region. The organization helps elect qualified Democratic candidates who support equal rights for LGBTQ people.

Warwick spoke about legislation to preemptively strike against anti-trans bills and working with TransYOUning, a local nonprofit providing resources for Pittsburgh’s Transgender, LGBTQIA+, and HIV+ communities. Her recent accomplishments include working with Theresa Nightingale, executive director of For Safer Sex Work Pittsburgh, and passing an ordinance that would reduce the minimum penalty for individuals convicted of engaging in sex work, downgrading the offense from a misdemeanor to a summary offense, which passed on July 8, 2026.

She said, “The ordinance would protect sex workers, who are often marginalized because of their race, gender, and/or immigration status, from further criminalization and vulnerability to state violence by reducing their contact with the criminal legal system.”

Warwick reiterated her accessibility by announcing that she has office hours at the Hazelwood branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh on every Friday.

McClain talked about viewing the services

“from the bottom up, and making sure the system is fair for everyone.” He is an advocate for people who don’t have a voice, as he hopes to change minds and change policy.

Price reminded the audience at the CO-Hatch and online, “Elections have consequences.” He spoke of working to keep Josh Shapiro as Governor of Pennsylvania in the upcoming election, to keep Pennsylvania House members, and to change the balance of power in the State Senate. Price is dedicated to fighting anti-trans legislation. He quipped, “There are currently four sports-centric anti-trans bills. I mean, how many do you need?”

Price also mentioned a bill that would ban the Gay Panic/Trans Panic Defense, making it illegal for defendant s accused of violent crimes against members of the LGBTQ+ community to use the so-called LGBTQ+ panic or gay-trans panic defense, which claims that a victim’s gender identification or sexual orientation provoked an emotional state in the defendant that led them to attack the victim.

continue reading on pg. 8

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(Town hall... cont'd)

McClain spoke about working on OUTfest, an event scheduled for October 11, 2026, National Coming Out Day. OUTfest invites residents and visitors alike to embrace authenticity and celebrate diversity within Pittsburgh. He also talked about SOGIE (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression) training, technical assistance, and creating culturally responsive systems for LGBTQ+ children, youth, and their families.

Soult spoke more about representation and visibility. Soult said, "Make it so they can't ignore you. To build protections, you have to get together, organize, and agitate."

Warwick said, "We must build solidarity with others who are doing the work. We are stronger together."

Price said, "You want to change things, run for office. The community needs more leadership, especially among young people."

Sidney-Smith took a few handwritten questions from the audience, but the event was scheduled from 7 PM to 8 PM and ran slightly over, wrapping up at 8:15 PM. Refreshments and cookies were provided.

For more information about the Pittsburgh Equality Center, please visit their website at pghequalitycenter.org.

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International Attack Near Berlin Pride Leaves One Dead, 29 Injured

A person was killed, and 29 others were injured on the night of Saturday, July 25, after a van drove into pedestrians near Berlin's Tiergarten park, close to the Brandenburg Gate, shortly after the city's annual Christopher Street Day (Pride) celebration concluded.

German authorities said the suspect then continued the assault with a bladed weapon before fleeing the scene. Several victims suffered stab wounds. Eight people sustained serious injuries.

Officials have identified the suspect as 21-year-old Abdul Ballout, a German citizen from Berlin who was previously known to law enforcement. Authorities said the investigation led them to classify the attack as a terrorist attack. The suspect was located by police during a manhunt on Sunday, July 26, and was fatally shot during an operation to arrest him. The attack came just hours after a peaceful Pride march that drew hundreds of thousands of participants through central Berlin. Organizers canceled the remainder of the evening's events following the violence.

German leaders condemned the attack and pledged continued support for Berlin's LGBTQ+ community as investigators worked to determine the full circumstances surrounding the assault.

.....
Our hearts are with Berlin's LGBTQ+ community.

We stand in solidarity with everyone mourning, healing, and refusing to let violence diminish the joy, resilience, and visibility of queer people.

Pride has always been an act of courage. Across oceans and across borders, our communities are connected by our commitment to live openly, care for one another, and keep showing up.

To the LGBTQ+ community of Berlin, Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ community stands with you.

- The QBurgh team

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The New Castle Prism Initiative marks first anniversary with block party

The New Castle Prism Initiative celebrated its first anniversary on Sunday, July 19, with a block party and vendor fair bringing together LGBTQ+ people, families, local businesses, and community supporters in New Castle.

Held outside the organization's center at Third Independent Presbyterian Church, the five-hour celebration featured local vendors, food trucks, crafts, games, music, educational programming, and opportunities for visitors to tour the center and learn more about its services.

Free on-site HIV and STI testing was provided by Central Outreach Wellness Center. Proceeds from the event supported the Prism Initiative's continuing operations and future programming. The anniversary marked more than a year since the organization opened its doors.

While LGBTQ+ organizations often receive their greatest visibility during Pride Month, the New Castle Prism Initiative works throughout the year to support LGBTQ+

people in Lawrence County and surrounding communities.

Its center offers resources including an in-house food pantry and the Pauly Likens Memorial Sanctuary community closet, which provides gender-affirming clothing, hygiene products, and other care items. The organization also hosts support groups, movie nights, drag shows, and other programming intended to build connection and mutual-aid networks. The block party gave community members an opportunity to celebrate what the organization has built during its first year while helping sustain the services it hopes to expand in the years ahead.

More information about the New Castle Prism Initiative and its programs is available at NewCastlePride.org.



Blue Moon Bar Mourns the Loss of Co-Founder Geraldine “Geri” Lupin



Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ community is mourning the loss of Geraldine “Geri” Lupin, one of the original founders and owners of Blue Moon Bar, who died on Tuesday, July 26, 2026. She was a beloved community member whose generosity, humor, and unwavering support for LGBTQ+ people left an enduring mark on Pittsburgh.

In announcing her passing, Blue Moon remembered Geri as a renowned ballroom dance instructor, a passionate liberal, a

dedicated local business owner, and, in her own words, a legendary Pittsburgh “fag hag.” Friends and patrons knew her for her larger-than-life personality, immaculate bright red hair, and her fierce commitment to the community she helped build.

According to the bar, Geri was the kind of person who quietly stepped up when others needed help, whether paying legal fees, offering a place to stay during difficult times, or supporting employees and friends



through personal hardships. Her compassion and generosity helped make Blue Moon a chosen family for generations of LGBTQ+ Pittsburghers.

Geri was one of the driving forces behind Blue Moon when it opened in 2002, helping establish one of Pittsburgh's longest-running LGBTQ+ gathering spaces.

The bar encouraged the community to celebrate Geri's life the way she would have wanted:

by gathering together, raising a glass, and honoring the family she helped create.

“We love you, Geri! Thank you for all you’ve done to create the family we have at Blue Moon Bar,” the bar wrote in its tribute.

Photos courtesy of Blue Moon Bar



PITTSBURGH'S SAPPHIC SCHEDULE

08/05- White Elephant Bingo @ Mary's 5:30pm

08/06- Steel Carabiner @ Blue Moon 9pm

08/08- Sapphic Pool Club @ Squirrel Hill Sports Bar 6pm

08/08- SZR Club Night @ Club Cafe 9pm

08/09- Sunday Scaries (Dyke Movie Night)
@ Squirrel Hill Sports Bar 6pm

08/10- Late Bloomers @ The Soft Spot 7pm

08/11- Lesbiyinz in Space- Space Bar 6pm

08/11- Sapphic Silent Book Club @ The Soft Spot 7pm

08/12- Sapphic Pool Club @ Dive Bar (Regent Square) 6pm

08/20- The Classics (30+ meet) @Happenstance 6pm

08/20- Steel Carabiner @ Blue Moon 9pm

08/21- Crush Hour @ Hazelwood Brew House 6pm

08/21- Sapphics Play Poker @ Elements Wellness 6pm

08/22- SZR Day Party @ 5801 4pm

08/25- Leather Dyke Sober Meet @ The Soft Spot 6pm

08/26- Sapphos's Playhouse @ Mary's 6pm

08/28- Sapphic Pool Club @ Squirrel Hill Sports Club 7pm

08/31 RADAR- Sapphic Singles Night @ The Soft Spot 6pm

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One year later, 988 still doesn't have a hotline for LGBTQ+ youth

Congress granted funds to restore this critical service months ago. But it may not be back until the end of 2026.

By Orion Rummier

During Pride month last year, almost 70,000 LGBTQ+ young people sought specialized help from 988, the national suicide and crisis hotline.

That was the last time they were able to do so.

As of today, it's been a year since the 988 hotline's LGBTQ+ youth services shut down. The Trump administration says it is working to bring back "Option 3" — the line's former place in the menu — by the end of 2026, but that timeline is not guaranteed.

The 988 cliff for LGBTQ+ youth

From September 2022 to July 2025, LGBTQ+ youth and young adults had specialized help when they reached the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Then that help went away.

— Calls, texts or chats to 988 Option 3



The "Option 3" LGBTQ+ line was discontinued because federal funding for the service ran out, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA. But Congress approved \$33 million to reinstate federal services for LGBTQ+ youth, including this one, months ago. Republicans and Democrats are calling for the Trump administration to restore the line now — not by the end of the year.

"Saving lives should not be a partisan issue," Rep. Seth Moulton, a Massachusetts Democrat,

said at a press conference earlier this week. "988 is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It was built with specialized options for people more at risk."

LGBTQ+ youth are significantly more likely to attempt suicide and have depression than other young adults. Many are rejected by their families or experience additional discrimination and bullying. They may only feel safe talking with someone they know will understand their LGBTQ+ identity; that's why specialized resources matter.

There are still other resources, like the LGBT National Hotline at 888-843-4564 and the LGBT National Youth Talkline at 800-246-7743. There's also the Trans Lifeline, reachable at 877-565-8860. The 988 website still has a resource page for LGBTQ+ people and allies, too.

In response to members of Congress, SAMHSA cites White House policy as a complicating factor in restoring the "Option 3" line. Executive order 14168, issued on the

first day of President Donald Trump's second term, rejects transgender identity and directs federal agencies to fall in line with that belief.

So the agency is trying to reinstate a service for LGBTQ+ youth while still complying with a White House order excluding transgender people from federal policy.

The Trevor Project, a leading LGBTQ+ youth suicide prevention organization that co-piloted the original 988 "Option 3" launch, is deeply concerned about that.



"If these services do not include transgender youth, which is one of the groups at highest risk for suicide in the country, even higher than overall LGBTQ+ youth, then these are not LGBTQ+ youth specialized services, full stop," said Mark Henson, vice president of advocacy and government affairs at the Trevor Project.

The group has its own crisis hotline: call 1-866-488-7386 or text 'START' to 678-678.

SAMHSA is working with Vibrant Emotional Health, the 988 network administrator, to resume specialized services for LGBTQ+ youth by the end of the year, a spokesperson with the Health and Human Services Department said over email. They offered no further comment.

Although specialized service will return eventually, it may not be the same as before. The Trevor Project has been shut out of the rebuilding process, despite the fact that by the time "Option 3" was shut down, the group was handling roughly half of all traffic.

And there was a lot of traffic. Over 1.5 million people used the 988 service for LGBTQ+ youth

and young adults during the three years it was active, according to data from SAMHSA. Year after year, more people reached out for help. That escalation shows the dire need for LGBTQ+ mental health services, Henson said.

"The mental health crisis among LGBTQ+ youth in the country is continuing to worsen," he said; and politics is making it worse. Anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and debates over transgender rights across the country are causing anxiety among young people, research by the Trevor Project shows.

The president and his administration are also a recurrent source of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. That often translates into crisis among LGBTQ+ youth: when the 2024 presidential race was called for Trump, the Trevor Project saw an overnight 700 percent increase in calls, texts and chats on its own hotlines, compared to prior weeks.

The Trevor Project has applied to provide services for the restored "Option 3," but has not yet gotten confirmation if it will be eligible to do so. The problem is that the organization is not a current member of the 988 network after the Trump administration shut down the

"Option 3" LGBTQ+ line last year. Regardless, Henson said, their experts are ready to help.

This story was originally reported by Orion Rummel of The 19th.

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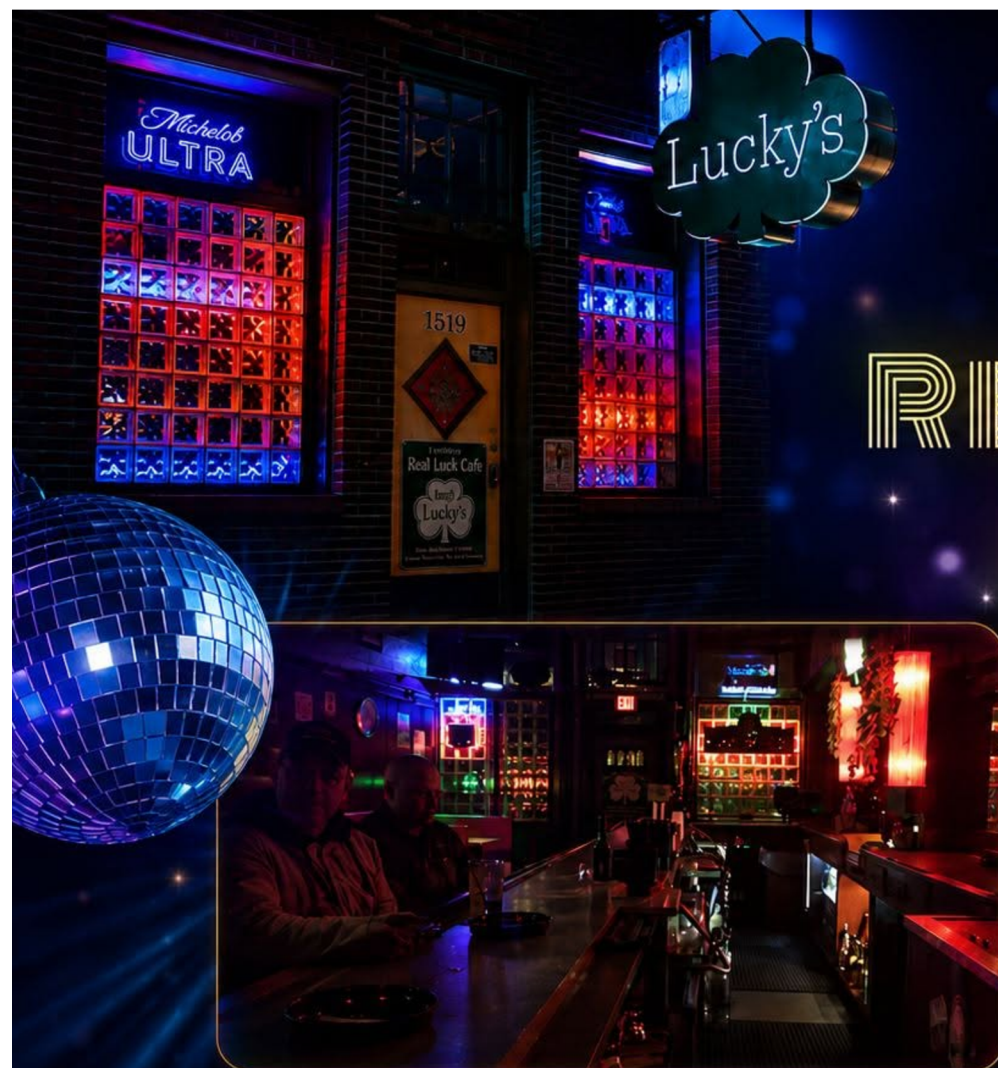
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No, PrEP Isn't Giving People a 'PrEP Belly'

Clinicians say fears about a "PrEP belly" are fueled by social media misinformation, not medical evidence.

By Michelangelo Pellis

The term "PrEP belly" appeared this spring when one X user commented on a picture of DJ John Summit shirtless on stage, saying he looked like he had "PrEP belly," implying that one can develop a visibly enlarged gut from taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

For clinicians who prescribe PrEP, conversations about side effects are common, but they say concerns fueled by social media have created new barriers, particularly ones that touch on body image.

When Damian Roman, an adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner and HIV specialist at Central Outreach, first heard the term "PrEP belly," it was brought to him by a patient who had seen it on social media.

At first, Roman thought people might be confusing PrEP with a much older class of HIV treatment medications that caused a condition called lipodystrophy, basically visceral fat in the abdomen.

"That did happen with older drugs, but PrEP is not even in the same drug class," Roman said. "It's a harmful, damaging piece of misinformation."

Others may be referring to short-term gastrointestinal symptoms that can occur when starting the medication, he said. However, less than 10% of people experience nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, and if it does occur, it usually subsides within the first two weeks of taking a new medication.

Misinformation about appearance-related side effects can be especially influential in

communities where body image concerns are already prevalent.

"Among gay men specifically, I see a lot of body dysmorphia within the community," Roman said. "We tend to be a bit harder on ourselves about how we look."

"Research supports those observations. A 2022 study published in PLOS ONE found that gay men reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction, body dysmorphic symptoms, and appearance-related anxiety than heterosexual men, suggesting that social comparison and internalized appearance ideals may contribute to heightened concerns about physical appearance."

"We have that culture that can play into very dangerous ways of thinking," Roman said. While PrEP has been available since 2014, awareness and familiarity with the medication still vary widely, according to providers at Central Outreach.

PrEP has transformed HIV prevention over the past decade. The medication, available as a daily pill or long-acting injection, is highly effective at preventing HIV when taken as directed.

Anybody who is at risk for HIV is a candidate for PrEP, which is nearly everyone, but there are some people who are more vulnerable due to lifestyle.

Khavitha Ramakrishnan, an infectious disease physician at Central Outreach, said patients seeking PrEP span all demographics. "We see young people, older people, people who align with the LGBTQ community," Ramakrishnan said. "I see a lot of college students."

Some patients arrive knowing exactly which medication they want, she said, while others are simply "PrEP-curious."

"Some folks have heard the term PrEP, but are not sure it's for them," Ramakrishnan said. "I think that's a great starting point for conversation. There is no option that fits all." The conversations Ramakrishnan has daily with patients often include addressing fears about side effects.

"PrEP is completely safe, it's highly effective, and we don't see a lot of long-term side effects, especially with newer drugs and with better kidney-friendly and bone-friendly drugs that

have come out," Ramakrishnan said.

Ramakrishnan says that for PrEP-curious people, she tends to try to meet them where they are, whether that means telemedicine, where patients can ask questions from the comfort of their own homes, or even shipping medications to their homes.

Ramakrishnan says that there may be some gastrointestinal issues at first, or the feeling of being bloated, but most of the time it gets better within a few weeks of consistently taking a new medication.

"From real-world, anecdotal experience, I can't even think of a single patient who has come back and complained of persistent nausea and bloating beyond a month, or that side effects have prevented them from taking the medication."

For Sarah Miller, a nurse practitioner and vice president of clinical operations in Pennsylvania, and the lead provider at Central Outreach's North Shore clinic, combating misinformation has become an increasingly important part of patient care.

"A lot of our population are young, healthy individuals who are not on any medication we are trying to convince a young healthy person to take daily medication for something they might think they aren't at risk for, so it sometimes can already be a hard sell," Miller said. "So if we have this extra social media misinformation on top of that that we are fighting, it makes it really hard to convince someone that yes this really is important for you, and it is something that you need."

"These medications are safe," Miller said. "They are safer than taking an aspirin a day." Miller said patients should not hesitate to bring questions about information they encounter online into the clinic.

"We can see so much online now," Miller said. "Some of it's true, and it's great information. It's where a lot of people are getting their information these days. But we do need to fact-check."

"Fact checking can include calling your provider," Miller said. "Call, email, show up in the clinic, and ask us. We are happy to talk through these things; we are happy to address any needs, questions, concerns, or anything that somebody sees online and wonders, 'Is this true?' We want to talk about it."

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North Park
- Aug. 8 | **3rd Annual Big Bear Pool Party**
West Penn Rec Center
- Aug. 9 | **PFLAG Pittsburgh In Person Meeting**
RSVP
- Aug. 11 | **Lesbiyinz in Space**
Space Bar
- Aug. 13 | **Eddieoke**
P Town Bar
- Aug. 14 | **Bear Weekend**
Camp Davis Campground
- Aug. 14 | **Obsidian**
Club Pittsburgh
- Aug. 15 | **The Rocky Horror Picture Show**
Row House Hollywood
- Aug. 16 | **PFLAG Greensburg Potluck**
Hempfield Park
- Aug. 17 | **Monday Night Fever**
*P*Town Bar*
- Aug. 21 | **Friendship is Magic**
Harold's Haunt
- Aug. 22 | **SZR: Sapphic Day Party**
5801
- Aug. 22 | **Darlene Mitchell**
Babylon Morgantown

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- Sept. 4 | **Kori King: Black Barbie Tour**
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- Sept. 5 | **Gayer Than a Picnic Basket**
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Opinion

Seth Grove's appointment to the PA Human Relations Commission is a contradiction Pennsylvania can't ignore

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission exists to protect people from discrimination. Seth Grove's legislative record raises serious questions about whether he belongs on it.

By Jim Sheppard

Pennsylvania Human Relations commissioners are entrusted with safeguarding the civil rights of Pennsylvanians. They help oversee the agency responsible for investigating discrimination complaints, enforcing the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, and promoting equal opportunity in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations.

Every year, the Commission investigates hundreds of complaints alleging discrimination in employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. For many Pennsylvanians, it is the first and sometimes only place they can turn when they believe they have been denied equal treatment under state law.

That is precisely why Governor Josh Shapiro's appointment of former State Representative Seth Grove to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is so troubling.

Appointments to independent commissions should inspire confidence that commissioners will faithfully carry out the mission of the agencies they oversee. In Grove's case, however, his legislative record raises serious questions about whether he is the right person to help guide Pennsylvania's premier civil rights agency.

Throughout his tenure in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Grove consistently found himself on the opposite side of efforts to expand protections for LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians.

As chair of the House State Government Committee, Grove controlled the fate of the Fairness Act, legislation that would have explicitly added sexual orientation and gender identity to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act's nondiscrimination protections. The bill, first introduced decades ago and reintroduced repeatedly, never received a committee vote during his leadership.

Committee chairs possess enormous influence in Harrisburg. Bills can remain in committee indefinitely without hearings or votes, regardless of public support or the number of cosponsors. For LGBTQ+ advocates, the Fairness Act became emblematic of that reality.

Grove's opposition extended beyond committee procedure.

In 2018, he signed onto a letter urging then-Governor Tom Wolf to reverse the Department of Health's decision to modernize Pennsylvania birth certificates by replacing "mother" and "father" with gender-neutral parental designations. The change recognized the legal reality of same-sex parent families following marriage equality. Equality Pennsylvania argued at the time that the effort targeted LGBTQ+ families under the guise of administrative concerns.

That same year, Grove introduced House Bill 861, legislation that opponents warned would invalidate many municipal employment protections adopted after 2015, including numerous LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination ordinances. Many advocates viewed it as an attempt to strip local governments of their ability to protect residents where the state had failed to act.

Years later, Grove again appeared alongside legislation criticized by LGBTQ+ organizations when he cosponsored House Bill 581, the "Parental Rights in Education Act." The proposal



On Heavy Rotation

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...was described as Pennsylvania's version of Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law because it restricted classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity while requiring parental notification in circumstances critics argued could endanger vulnerable LGBTQ+ students.

Taken individually, any one of these actions might be dismissed as a policy disagreement. Taken together, they form a consistent legislative record.

This isn't about demanding ideological purity. People with differing political philosophies

can, and should, serve in public office. But appointments should make sense in light of an agency's mission.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission exists to combat discrimination, expand equal opportunity, and build public confidence that civil rights laws will be fairly enforced. LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians have spent decades fighting to secure explicit protections under those very laws. Many of those efforts encountered resistance from lawmakers, including Grove.

For LGBTQ+ Pennsylvanians who watched the Fairness Act languish year after year, who have relied on local nondiscrimination ordinances because statewide protections never materialized, and who have repeatedly seen their rights become political bargaining chips, this appointment sends a confusing and discouraging message.

Governor Shapiro has built much of his public

reputation on supporting LGBTQ+ equality. His administration has defended transgender Pennsylvanians, celebrated Pride Month, and consistently spoken about inclusion. Those commitments make this appointment all the more difficult to reconcile.

Reasonable people can disagree about taxes, budgets, or transportation policy. Civil rights are different.

The question isn't whether Seth Grove is entitled to his political beliefs. He is. The question is whether someone whose legislative career repeatedly placed him in opposition to expanding LGBTQ+ civil rights is the person who should help oversee Pennsylvania's civil rights enforcement agency.

As of publication, Seth Grove has not yet been sworn in. His confirmation may be complete, but public scrutiny of this appointment should not end there.

Opinion

Transgender Rights Are Not a 'Purity Test' for Democrats

By D'Anne Witkowski

I have always voted for Democrats. This means that for much of my voting life, I've been voting for people who did not support my right to marry or adopt a child or to be protected from discrimination.

Granted, I was voting against people who were very vocal about seeing me as a pervert hellbent on destroying the "traditional family." So the choice wasn't hard. But it sure wasn't gratifying. I believed that Democrats would eventually come around and start supporting my civil rights. Because I had to. There was no chance that the Republicans were going to. But I also didn't feel like Democrats were really fighting for me. Tolerating me, perhaps. But even Democrats who supported, say, my right to marry did so privately, lest saying it aloud would lose them votes.

Former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm

comes to mind. In 2004, there was a ballot measure to amend the Michigan constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Granholm barely said a word about it. Voters ultimately passed it by a wide margin. Now, I know that voters didn't vote against me, personally. But that's what it felt like. It hurt a lot to know that millions of people (2,698,077 to be exact) chose hurting people like me over not hurting people like me — and that was the choice. It's not like voting against the amendment would have bestowed upon me any kind of rights or benefits. It would have simply left things as they were.

At that time, I interviewed a couple for a story about second-parent adoption. At least I think that's what it was. It was a long time ago.

The women knew Granholm personally. They considered her a friend. They said something about how she had to be politically strategic about the marriage amendment, but they knew where she stood.

I later interviewed Dan Savage. When the subject of the marriage amendments came up (Michigan was not the only state with a ballot measure regarding marriage in 2004), he made a comment about how quiet Granholm was on the issue.

I, an idiot in my 20s, came to Granholm's defense, assuring him that she opposed the

measure. She had gay friends, after all.

His response was, basically, "Who gives a shit?" Who gives a shit what an elected official personally believes if she doesn't use the power she has to speak out against something like the marriage amendment?

I realized he was right. I then saw Granholm as a coward. I still do.

And now here we are in 2026. Marriage equality isn't on the ballot (the Supreme Court hasn't overturned *Obergefell v. Hodges* yet, though they want to) and most Democrats fully and openly support marriage equality.

But when it comes to the rights of transgender people — not to marry, but just to exist — it feels like 2004 again.

The Republicans have been hammering away at trans rights for years and the Trump administration is the most vocally anti-trans in history. Trump is issuing executive orders with titles like, "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" and telling people that kids are having gender-related surgeries while at school.

The list of trans rights that have been taken away or threatened include the right to use public restrooms, the right to serve in the

military, the right to be around children (often framed as being anti-drag, but the root of the fight against drag is trans people), the right to play school sports, the right to gender-affirming healthcare and the right to read books that include transgender storylines and characters. In case you haven't noticed, all of these things are incredibly personal. These are the kinds of rights you take away when you don't want a group of people to exist.

And not only are many Democratic candidates and elected officials silent on the issue (aside from a small number who are very vocal in their support of trans people), but they've decided that it isn't wise politically to support trans rights. In fact, they think it's wise politically to be vocal about how they don't support trans rights.

And yet there are still people who will tell transgender people that they must vote for Democratic candidates no matter that candidate's position on trans rights because the alternative is undoubtedly worse. And, yeah, the Republican alternative is worse. But no Democrat deserves a vote from a single trans person if that candidate sides with Trump and the Republicans on trans issues. Trans people don't owe Democrats anything. Saying, "If you support measures designed to hurt me and help to dehumanize me, I will not vote for you" isn't a "purity test." **It's self-respect.**



Tori Amos Is Still Fighting for Love

The singer-songwriter on documenting a traumatizing era, Provincetown bears and microdosing

By Chris Azzopardi

Courtesy photo

I've talked to Tori Amos enough times now that I no longer blink when the conversation drifts to witches, demons, fairies or the slow-motion collapse of democracy — often within the same sentence. Her 18th album, "In Times of Dragons," is no exception to how her mind meanders through her own particular cosmology: a record where menopause becomes a dragon, an alternate version of her life becomes a confession and a gay man from Brooklyn exists as a witch.

There's a "lizard demon" on this album — Amos's amalgamation of several real, powerful men, built from information offered to her by political journalists in her orbit. There are bears, from Provincetown, one of whom texted her a photo the night before we spoke. And there's Amos doing what she's always done better than almost anyone: taking in everything — letters given to her by strangers on a book tour, hot flashes, tyranny, queer history, her own near-misses with a different kind of life — and turning it into something only she could have written.

We got into all of it: the imagined version of Tori who might have chosen to be "yacht rock dangerous," why Provincetown earned its own song, microdosing mushrooms with someone who "has her scales out," and why she finally felt called to document this moment instead of escaping into it.

For Amos, the answer to the moment's cruelty is surprisingly simple. It's love. "Why would you even put your head above the parapet unless it's for love?" she asks.

The album feels healing, and "23 Peaks" left me feeling very emotional.

This one was a tough one to wrangle. There were times when it was challenging on how to move forward. I knew we needed to get to "23 Peaks," but how to get there? There were endless possibilities, so it was just drilling down on weaving it very tight.

Are you talking about the process, or are you talking about mentally?

Well, maybe both are involved, because the process was a lot of listening to the team around me. And I'd just come off the book tour, where I'd seen

hundreds of people in March of 2025 that had so many concerns at the time and were voicing those concerns. They would leave letters with me, because, you know, you don't have a lot of time in a book signing line, right? But what I was hearing about at the time was [everything from] DOGE, to the fires, to people just dealing with trauma. Their concern of tyranny, which was a valid concern, of course, at the time.

Would you say that you're like a sponge? You just seem to take everything that people give to you, and it comes out through a musical catharsis of sorts.

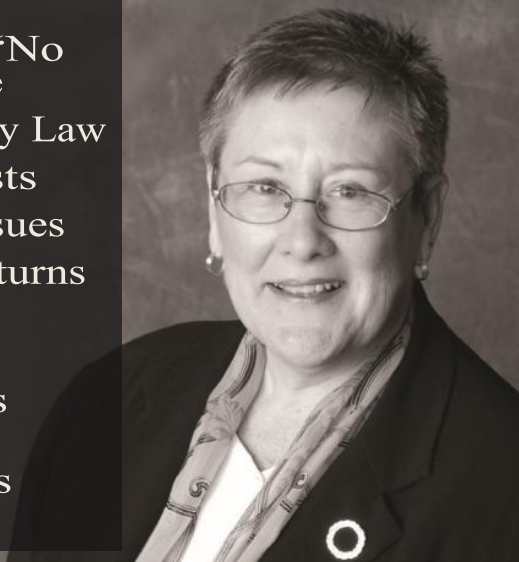
Yeah, I think that's fair to say. The strongest thing a songwriter and musician can do is listen. Once you have the skill set, then it comes down to really listening intently to information and perspectives coming in, and I did have people who have their ear to the ground with different subjects. Some are very politically driven, some are more culturally driven and some of those cross certain issues of rights, for women, for the LGBTQ+ community, for immigrants.

Writing something that would document our time now and yet personalize it — to you, me, people who are still having to deal with their lives. How do we live through this? Create through this? And not completely freeze through this? And become debilitated? That was something I was seeing, that people didn't necessarily know how to respond in their art. And, honestly, I believe people are called in different ways. Not everybody is called to address or document a traumatizing time. Sometimes they're being called to give us levity.

You obviously seem to feel a responsibility to address it. Why?

Right now, yeah. Nobody really needed me during the Obama years. I created work that was more personal. I still stand by that work. "Night of Hunters" was, well, answering [music label] Deutsche Grammophon's challenge for a modern song cycle, so that was a narrative as well but not based on documenting our time. Then, in 2014, when "Unrepentant Geraldines" came out, I had just turned 50. So, 50 is sort of a moniker. You're past midlife, if you're lucky to live enough to 100, or unlucky enough to live to 100. [Laughs.] That record was more of a personal record and then "Native Invader" was very much about taking that road trip down South. The gauge that people had in the spring of 2016 wasn't far off from what we were seeing on bumper stickers going through the South. There was a whole other — oh, what do you call it? Perspective. One that those of us in some of the bigger cities were

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not seeing, and when I saw that, the wake-up call came, and I recognized, “Oh dear. There is a whole political tsunami coming in here.”

On this album, you imagine a version of your life where you made different choices. What did that alternate version of yourself allow you to explore that the real Tori Amos couldn't?

Well, look, let's be honest with each other: I did have options in the '90s. I had all kinds of options, for whatever reason, but I did. Not all were rock 'n' roll-based, whether it was roadies or artists. There were others. Whether I would have been an accessory to them and their Hamptons lifestyle and their yachts and all that, it's possible. There can be a very trophy mentality and I did get a whiff of that in the mid-'90s, that sort of possession of an artist. I kind of considered it. I didn't date; it's not like that. You know, you meet people, they're acquaintances, but there's nothing to talk about because there's nothing I can contribute to finance. [Laughs.] There's nothing that I understand about that world. And very few really understood the creative process and muses and fairies. During a conversation [with me], the eyes would start to go a little bit dart; they're looking around, and it's like, “Oh my god, they need a safe word.” [Laughs.]

I can only imagine how many people think that you've actually had an edible, but no.

[Laughs.] I know. And no, no, no. I mean, I like to microdose mushrooms, but only with a mushroom aficionado who's got their scales out and she knows what she's doing. But it's not like in the '90s, where I would dream of dancing elephants and flying pigs, which ended up in “Girl.”

But there are witches on “In Times of Dragons,” including the “gay witch from Brooklyn,” which is HuffPost director Noah Michelson. He shows up on “Provincetown,” along with bears. Why did those characters become the people capable of seeing through this illusion when so many others couldn't?

OK, so everything is based on truth. The only suspended question parallel to the Tori world is that I married an amalgamation of real men that I'm writing about. So, the lizard demon is based on an amalgamation of several men that are alive today, mostly all behind the scenes, pretty much, that people that are very informed about that world were making sure that I was getting information about well before this

time last year. It was streams of information, and I am not denigrating this. I don't mean a subreddit. I don't mean they're getting their info. Not that there isn't information on a subreddit that isn't valid. OK, I'm very careful, don't worry about me going on Reddit. If you're me, you really shouldn't be going on a subreddit. [Laughs.] I know this, and I want the subreddits to know they're safe. It's like, “Subreddits, you better talk about me when my ass is gone! You better!” Or I'm not doing something right.

And I don't want to digress down that rabbit hole. So, I was getting information from proper political journalists that these people were sending me. Not just notions, right? Not just opinion-spouting stuff. But well-researched and quotes, so the move that became clear for me to make was to base everybody on pretty much real people. It might be a variation on the theme, so the High Priestess is a variation on the theme of a different high priestess that I know.

How about the bears?

The bears are real. Oh, yeah, they're real. I just got a picture from two of them from P-town last night.

Do you vacation there often?

I don't. I would love to go.

If you don't really have a relationship with Provincetown, how did that song come to you?

I know so many people who do have a relationship with it. And John Evans, the bass player I work with, grew up on the Cape and we've worked together for 28 years, and he's talked to me in depth about Provincetown. He has a different perspective as a musician that plays there and is not queer. Identifies, I guess, as whatever you call them... hetero.

Whatever you call them!

[Laughs.] Cavemen. But he has a very deep tie to Provincetown and its long history. So I had been hearing about that, and again, the premise being, I had to stay as close to Tori, my reality, as I possibly could. Not all singer-songwriters that I know would make this kind of luxurious, salacious choice, but there is a side to me that's a little bit... I don't know. Yacht rock dangerous. You know, a pool boy serving me a really good rum neat with a side of ice, but it's about the ice tong that I'm interested in. Like, what is it encrusted with? And is it a scallop

with an emerald? I don't know if this would have been like a study, where I would have lived this life and written two records about it and then broken up and had a divorce and then ended up where I ended up anyway, with a rock 'n' roll somebody. I could have seen myself doing an investigation of this other type of man. Because, look, I adore men. I mean, some I find really terrifying and evil.

Me too, and we should.

Yeah, and we should. I feel a bit like a mad scientist who wants to put them under a microscope.

It could be dark and dangerous underneath.

Yeah, but you know I like dark and dangerous.

How has your understanding of what a song can do for someone changed over time?

Well, this record really pulled me out of some worrying stuff that I was going through — health issues — and that's kind of the dragon metaphor. My truth was coming out of menopause and dealing with that and the physical challenges that come with that. And,

look, as I've told the gals, lovingly, if you make it to this age, if you make it this far, you will experience the motherfucking load of menopause, which is a tough teacher. Harsh. So I guess I was recognizing what the songs were doing for me. How they were giving me, as Lugh [the Celtic god central to the album] says, a sharpened spear to go in there. But he would keep reminding me as well as dealing with documenting the issues of the time, “Why are you fighting if not for the love, the love, the love, the love?” Whoever those are that you love. Or have yet to love. The idea of: Why would you even put your head above the parapet unless it's for love? Recognizing that woke me the fuck up out of my oom, ouch, my C4, L4, whatever we all deal with as we get older, and you twist like an octopus for 35 years at the piano in high heels. I mean, come on! Something's gonna happen back there.

But when you ask about the songs, I experienced myself having to wake up. Them pushing me to see maybe past lives, choices, sides to myself that I needed to face. And then release. Because unless we face them, those shadow parts of self, they can begin to, even unknowingly, become self-destructive.

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Deep Inside Hollywood

By Romeo San Vicente

Scissor Sister Jake Shears producing 'Tinderbox'

Queer history is a mix of stories both triumphant and tragic, and it's vital that we know about all of them, even when they're painful to revisit. That's the case with the UpStairs Lounge, a gay bar in New Orleans that was the site of a horrific 1973 arson attack, one that trapped and killed 32 people. Until the mass shooting at Pulse nightclub, it was the deadliest attack on queer people in U.S. history. It was the subject of a book, "Tinderbox: The Untold Story of the Up Stairs Lounge Fire and the Rise of Gay Liberation," as well as two documentaries. Now a narrative film is being readied, with the working title, "Tinderbox." Jake Shears of Scissor Sisters and the film "Pillion" has signed on as producer, as have filmmakers Colby Holt and Sam Probst ("Ganymede"). Shears' involvement should help push this along, and we'll report back on its progress.

'Unzipped' zips back into theaters this fall

Cindy Crawford shooing away a close-up shot with, "Hello, my pores are not that small" is just one of the memorable moments contained in the effervescent 1994 fashion documentary "Unzipped." That's the one where fashion photographer turned documentary filmmaker Douglas Kieve aimed his camera at then-boyfriend Isaac Mizrahi, a designer who came into his own that decade and who runway-dressed not just Crawford but Naomi, Christy, Linda and the up-and-comer Kate Moss. If you were too young or too unfashionable in 1994, you have a second chance to see this upbeat, charming slice of that decade's pop culture in all its glory, as Janus Films re-releases it theatrically this fall. All of the "Supers" are here, and many more, including legends like Eartha Kitt and Faye Dunaway, as the film follows a Mizrahi collection from start to glorious finish, the creative process happily laid out for non-industry watchers to enjoy. It hits theaters in late September with a nationwide expansion to follow. Plan your outfits.

'Test' takes queer Christian bodybuilding into the spotlight

Go back in time 35 years: ACT UP and Queer Nation were making LGBTQ+ history. Meanwhile, the straights were fascinated by a

couple of gay bodybuilders in love: Bob Paris and Rod Jackson were becoming famous for being exactly who they were, on the covers of magazines, on talk shows, everywhere. They were blowing people's minds and upsetting the bodybuilding status quo, which has always skewed hetero and which at the time did not want to hear from them. Add religion to the mix and you've got the atmosphere of for this 2026 drama: "Test." From producer/director Sam McConnell ("The Trans List") and actor Brock Yurich ("The Haves and The Have Nots"), it's the quasi-autobiographical story (Yurich wrote the screenplay) of a Christian bodybuilder who finds himself falling for his coach. Yurich's co-stars are "Glee" alum Matthew Morrison and Tony nominee Tammy Blanchard ("American Sport Story: Aaron Hernandez"). Sure, it's another coming-out story, but every generation and every subculture has queer stories to be told, so what if it involves creatine? The film had its premiere in June at SXSW London, so look for it to hit queer fests before its proper release.

'Carrie' comes back from the grave



Photo: Summer H. Howell in "Carrie." Photo by Robert Falconer, courtesy of Prime Video.

"Carrie" is queer canon even though it's not officially a queer story. The 1974 novel from Stephen King led to the 1976 film from Brian De Palma, starring Sissy Spacek, which led to remakes, reboots and an enduring love from LGBTQ+ audiences, who saw themselves in Carrie's "other" status — and perhaps a little vicarious thrill over her ability to enact revenge. We already reported on the upcoming limited series, but now it's ready to take its bow this fall on Prime, with a first-look teaser trailer online. The eight episodes from Mike Flanagan ("The Haunting of Hill House") will deepen and expand the story in ways the original film could not, with new star Summer Howell ("Cult of Chucky") as Carrie White in 2026, experiencing the kind of bullying that a social-media-free 1976 couldn't even imagine. Samantha Sloyan ("The Pitt") will play her abusive mother and trans actress Josie Totah will co-star as one of the villainous "mean girls." Are you ready? Halloween and a blood-soaked prom night will be here sooner than you think, but the marketing department will let you know when that drop date arrives.

Romeo San Vicente was also a prom queen.

PITTSBURGH PINK PAGES

LGBTQ Pittsburgh Community Directory

RESOURCES

Hugh Lane Wellness

Foundation
925 Brighton Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
(412) 626-3812
hughlane.org

Proud Haven

525 E. Ohio Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 346-1234
proudhaven.com

Shepherd Wellness Community

4800 Sciota Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15224
(412) 683-4477
swconline.org

SisTers Pittsburgh

211 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 297-0548
sisterspgh.org

TransYOUning

525 East Ohio Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 346-1324
transyouningpgh.org

For more information about community centers, health, testing, LGBTQ+ Bars & Clubs, and other business resources please visit:

PittsburghPinkPages.com

LGBTQ+ BARS & CLUBS

5801 Video Lounge

5801 Ellsworth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15232
(412) 661-5600
5801pgh.com

Babylon (Morgantown, WV)

335 High Street, rear
Morgantown, WV 26505
(304) 292-2010
babylonmorgantown.com

Blue Moon

5115 Butler Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
(412) 781-1119
bluemoononbutler.com

Brewers & Underground

3315 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
(412) 904-2821

Club Pittsburgh

1139 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 471-6790
clubpittsburgh.com

Harold's Haunt

142 Grant Avenue
Millvale, PA 15209
(412) 283-6023
queerwitches.com

Lucky's / Real Luck Cafe

1519 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 471-7832

Lucy's Place (Johnstown, PA)

520 Washington Street
Johnstown, PA 15901
(814) 539-4448
facebook.com/lucillesjohnstown

Mary's

5128 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15225
maryspgh.com

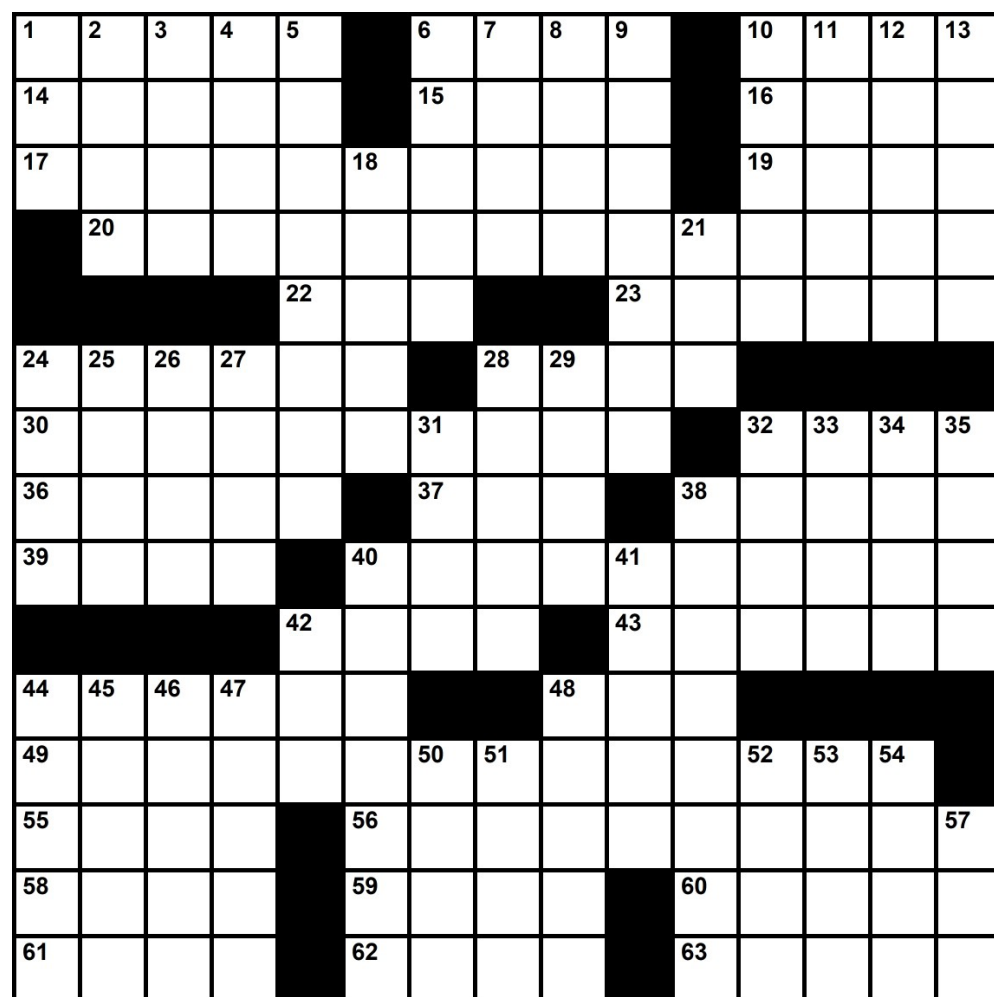
P*Town Bar & Baum Shelter

4740 Baum Blvd
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 621-0111
ptownbarpgh.com



Crossword!

Songs of MADONNA



ACROSS

- 1 Joe who married Marilyn, slangily
- 6 "Hi" to Lorca
- 10 Cuban coin
- 14 Bridge bid, briefly
- 15 Chemical compound
- 16 Stink up the place
- 17 Like the work of John Boswell
- 19 Large earthenware jar
- 20 With 30-Across, Madonna song written for "A League of Their Own"
- 22 One trained in CPR
- 23 Britten's "Billy Budd" and others
- 24 Soft seat
- 28 Good buds
- 30 See 20-Across
- 32 Cattle collection
- 36 "Of Thee ____"
- 37 Newt, to Candace
- 38 Big Hollywood star in a small part
- 39 Maupin story
- 40 Madonna's first top 10 hit in the US
- 42 Flaky favorites
- 43 Bates' job in "Gosford Park"
- 44 Pirate
- 48 Brit. word bk.
- 49 Madonna song addressing teen pregnancy
- 55 Composer Stravinsky
- 56 Words on many Warhol canvases
- 58 Woods of "Legally Blonde"
- 59 It serves Tel Aviv
- 60 "C'est Moi," in English
- 61 Many August people
- 62 Director Roos and others
- 63 Loads of

DOWN

- 1 "Oops!" and then some
- 2 "Put a sock ____!"

- 3 Sheer material for a drag queen
- 4 "No" voter
- 5 Zip
- 6 Bank robber's job
- 7 "____ Upon a Mattress"
- 8 Special delivery?
- 9 Everything considered
- 10 Really get into somebody
- 11 Specialist in fishing
- 12 Gellar kisser Blair in "Cruel Intentions"
- 13 Gives the thumbs-up to
- 18 Daughter of Bruce Willis
- 21 Photo ____ (media events)
- 24 Swallow alternative
- 25 "Frozen" character
- 26 Some eagle feathers
- 27 Sharon's "Cagney & Lacey" co-star
- 28 Contented cat sounds
- 29 "____ is as good as..."
- 31 Sweet-toned musical instrument
- 32 "Hold your horses!"
- 33 Jannings of old films
- 34 Artist Capone
- 35 Active one
- 38 Black gold
- 40 Like Fred Phelps
- 41 Film critic Roger
- 42 Sci-fi escape vehicle
- 44 Hard sell, maybe
- 45 Name of many a gay bar
- 46 Ohno of speedskating
- 47 Looks straight in the eye, say
- 48 Lustrous gems
- 50 Publisher of same-sex couples' legal guide
- 51 Counterfeiters' nemesis
- 52 Memo start
- 53 The bottom line
- 54 Runs smoothly
- 57 "Once Upon a Mattress" legume

July's solution: C'est Moi — Queer Autobiographies



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