



BURGH

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Spring / Summer '24 FREE

FREEDOM!

Pittsburgh Pride Guide '24

+ Allies' "Bright
Young People"
Shine Like Stars

& All Hail The
KINGS

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1

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PrEP

PrEP

2

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3

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4

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5

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(Powered by Lense)

Snap pics at Pittsburgh Pride
events from May 31 through June 2.

Community photo album
revealed June 4!





DAILY UPDATES ON QBURGH.COM



ON THE COVER

LGBTQ+ community members recreate Norman Rockwell's "Freedom of Worship" painting from the "Four Freedoms" series. Unobstructed version on page 20. Photos and art composition by Chad Isaiah.



For the forgotten,
the unwanted, the
abandoned and
alone. For all outsiders.

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Long May They Reign! Drag kings shaking up the drag scene



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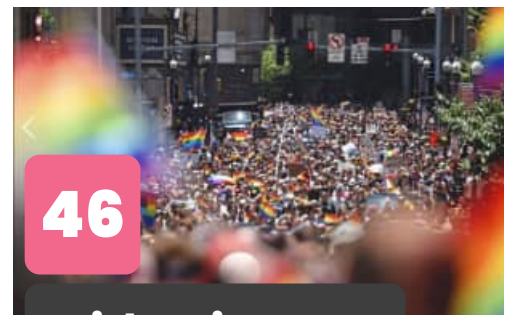
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I Am American



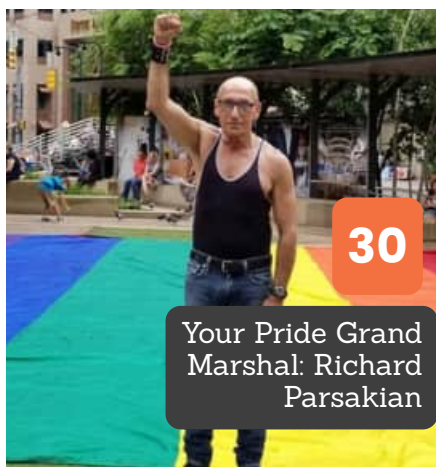
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The Bright Young People Shine



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Pride Itinerary



30

Your Pride Grand Marshal: Richard Parsakian



25

Tracking the Bans



FROM THE CO-CREATORS

Pride is Here! Pride is Here! I say this every year. June is my most favorite month of the year. Being old(er) I have been fortunate to have seen the evolution of Pride. I can remember the few dozen people showing up for a Pride March, to hundreds, to thousands, and now hundreds of thousands for a Pittsburgh Pride Day Celebration. This growth and visibility is something that we've fought hard to achieve. I can sometimes get lost in the energy of Pride. You can't deny that participating in Pride is a life experience. I like to refer to it as "Feel the Rainbow"! We've grown into this celebration and we deserve it. It's our day to celebrate! I hope to see you there! #FeelThePride

In this Pride Guide edition, the category is "Americana." We chose this for a reason. We must remember that this is an election year. PLEASE not only get out and vote but help get your friends out to vote as well. I don't have to remind anyone that we are in a battleground state. Each and every vote counts here in Pennsylvania. Please don't forget to check your voter registration. Many times, people move and don't update their address. Make sure that your voter registration matches your current address. Easier still, you can sign up to vote by mail. Once again, please check to see that you are signed up for a mail-in ballot. Don't be like me and sit and wait for the ballot to arrive only to find out that even though you thought you signed up for it you didn't (but you swear you did). These are simple things that you can do to ensure that our voices are heard. Together we can do this. Together we HAVE to do this. VOTE ON November 5! #VoteVoteVote

A HUGE thank you to the Pittsburgh Pride Group for making Pride happen. Pittsburgh Pride remains a free event. In my opinion, every Pride celebration should be an admission free event.

We should never force anyone to pay to celebrate ourselves. How horrible is it to be turned away from Pride because you "couldn't afford it." On a day that we are there to feel good about ourselves why turn it into a day of rejection? We here in Pittsburgh are committed to keeping it a free event but we also have to be realistic and remember that Pride isn't free to produce. I would like to ask everyone out there to please visit PittsburghPride.com and donate what you can. Donate for yourself and more importantly donate for the someone else out there that could really benefit from not only seeing but participating in their first Pride. How about becoming a sponsor of Pride? Activate your company or your organization to partner with Pride if not this year then next. Let's make this happen Pittsburgh! Let's keep this incredible event free to the public. #KeepPrideFree

Pride Month also starts a new chapter in my life. I'm pleased to announce that I've left the corporate world. For those of us that have built our lives on that corporateladderandachievements it's sad to end that journey. Let's not call this a retirement though. I still have my community service part of my life to devote more time to which includes QBurgh. Stay tuned to QBurgh for further updates. #CommuntiyWins
Lastly, did I mention that this was an election year and to VOTE?!!

Together in Pride,

Jeff Freedman
Co-Creator
QBurgh



OUR LIBERATION IS BOUND TOGETHER

As we step into this year's Pittsburgh Pride season, we do so not only in celebration but in solemn acknowledgment of the turbulent times our community continues to face. This year, more than ever, our unity, our resilience, and our shared commitment to justice are crucial.

In the past several years, the LGBTQ community—particularly our transgender brothers and sisters — has been subjected to a relentless barrage of harmful rhetoric and physical violence, fueled by influential voices in the media and politics and the rise of fascist sentiments. These attacks are not just words; they are acts of stochastic terrorism aimed at undermining our existence and dignity. These attacks have not just been words and legislation but also physical violence and threats. Vilifying and sexualizing the LGBTQ community has real-world consequences. Libs of TikTok tweeted lies and dehumanizing language about our community and the LGBTQ community center in Philadelphia lost funding as a result.

Yet, in the face of these adversities, we stand unwavering and united. Even in our darkest times, we are stronger together. Our response to violence and hatred is not retreat but solidarity.

In this spirit, I call upon each of you to engage more deeply with our community and our allies. Let us use our anger and our grief as fuel for action. Fascists want to drive us away from each other. We must not let the narrative of fear isolate us or dim the vibrancy of our community. Let us show up for each other, stand together, and fight back against any attempt to push us to the margins.

As Marsha P. Johnson, mother of the queer liberation movement said, "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us." Our struggles are interconnected, and our liberation is bound together. This Pride season, let us commit to being more visible, more vocal, and more united than ever. Let us transform our pain into power and our solidarity into action.

Together, we can overcome the forces of hate and build a world where love, in all its forms, triumphs.

With pride and solidarity,

Jim Sheppard
Co-Creator
QBurgh

**"No pride
for some
of us
without
liberation
for all of
us."**

- Marsha P. Johnson



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MAY 30

JUNE 27

JULY 25

AUGUST 22

SEPTEMBER 26

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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WHAT'S QUEER & GOING ON?

MAY

3
**Night of A
Thousand Divas:
2024
Allies Free for All**
*@ Children's
Museum*

5
**Stonewall
Yoga**
*@ Hugh Lane
Wellness East
Liberty*

7
**Itty Bitty Pins -
Duckpin Bowling
with Stonewall
Alliance**
@ Pins Mechanical

11
**Flying Colors
Bicycle Group**
@ Point State Park

11
**Ultimate Mothers
Day Weekend
Drag Brunch
Extravaganza**
*@ Velum
Fermentation*

11
SZR
@ The Underground

12
**Pride Outside
Hike with Venture
Outdoors**
*@ Duff Park,
Murrysville*

15
**No H8 Photoshoot
with True T Pgh**
@ True T Studios

17
Bear Happy Hour
@ Brewer's

25
**Pride on the Links
Golf Outting**
*@ Pheasant Ridge
Golf Club*

25
**Calypso's
Birthday: Warm
Weather Version**
@ Harold's Haunt

26
Bigger Gayer Picnic
*@ Allegheny
Commons Park
West, Lake
Elizabeth*

26
**P Town Pride
Pageant**
@ P Town

30
**Too Hot For July
2024**
*@ Allegheny
Commons Park
East, Cedar Ave at
E Ohio*

31
**Pittsburgh Pride
Festival Day 1**
*@ Allegheny
Commons Park
West, Lake
Elizabeth*

31
**Pride on the Shore
Day 1**
@ Stage AE

HAVE YOUR EVENTS LISTED!

[QBURGH.COM/SUBMIT-EVENT](https://qburgh.com/submit-event)

MORE PRIDE EVENT DETAILS **PAGE 46**

JUNE

Pittsburgh Pride Weekend

May 31 – June 2
See Page 46

2

**Honcho Pride Boat
Party**

@ Gateway Clipper

6

**Fox Chapel Pride in
the Park**

*@ Allegheny River
Trail Park*

7

Pirates Pride Night

@ PNC Park

7

SZR

@ The Underground

8

**Diversity Exhibition
Opening Reception**

@ Manos Gallery

8

Most Beautifulest

@ Hot Mass

9

**Pride Variety Show
Brunch & Market**

*@ Hotel Monaco
with QBurgh*

15

**Washington PA
Pride**

@ Wild Things Park

15

Mt Lebanon Pride

*@ Mt Lebanon Main
Park*

15

**True Colors
Fashion Show**

@ Franklin on Penn

21

**Pride AF: A Toast to
Equality**

*@ Sunken Bus
Studios*

22

Millvale Pride

@ Grant Avenue

28

**Love,
Pride**

@ Love, Katie

29

**Hugh Lane Chosen
Family Picnic**

*@ Hugh Lane
Wellness
Foundation*

29

SZR Day Party

*@ 5801 Video
Lounge*

29

**Be Gay (Do Crime)
End of Pride
Spectacular**

@ Mr. Smalls

30

Wilkinsburg Pride

*@ Turner
Elementary School*

30

**Dormont Pride in
the Park**

@ Dormont Park

JULY

7

**Ladies Who Drag
Brunch**

@ 5801 Video
Lounge

13

**Christmas in July
Drag Brunch**

@ Castle Consortia

13

**Another Party
Pittsburgh with
SASHA COLBY!**

@ P Town

13

SZR

@ The Underground

14

**Pride Outside with
Venture Outdoors**

@ Duff Park,
Murrysville

27

**Pride & Play
Gala: A Decade of
Stonewall Sports in
Pittsburgh**
@ Union Project

28

**2nd Annual Big Gay
River Float**

@ Smithton Beach

**EVEN MORE
EVENTS
& ALL
DETAILS @**

QBURGH.COM/EVENTS



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info@hughlane.org
412-626-3812**



PURSUE YOUR HAPPINESS

It is my pleasure to join with QBurgh to welcome everyone gathered for the 2023 Pittsburgh Pride Month celebration.

William Penn founded our Commonwealth on the principles of fairness and tolerance, and I believe we must continue to be a place that pays faithful tribute to those core values. Together, we are creating a Pennsylvania that is committed to being an

environment that supports greater diversity and inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community and beyond. My record on LGBTQ+ rights and nondiscrimination has been clear; as long as I am Governor, Pennsylvanians will have the right to marry who they love and be who they are. I applaud QBurgh for advocating for LGBTQ+ acceptance and non-discrimination through education, social involvement, and outreach endeavors. This organization and its partners have touched the lives of countless people and we must be committed to continue working together to get further LGBTQ+ protections passed. For those attending various events throughout the month, I am proud to recognize your determination to face and overcome adversity, your commitment to breaking

down barriers, and celebrating who we are as Pennsylvanians.

As Governor, and on behalf of all the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I am honored to celebrate Pride Month. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable event and continued success.

Governor Josh Shapiro



PITTSBURGH IS FOR EVERYONE

feel safe and welcome and has opportunities to thrive.

Pride celebrations that will occur over the next month embody the spirit of a city that is welcoming, diverse, and accepting of all people. Pittsburgh is home to LGBTQIA+ history makers, artists, and entrepreneurs.

We're also home to 15,000 acres of public parks and green spaces and world-class architecture. And with more than 32 museums, 30 concert venues, and 19 public libraries, our arts community rivals any other major American city. Throughout Pride Month, I encourage everyone to join in the festivities and enjoy all that Pittsburgh has to offer – from our beautiful rivers to our diverse neighborhoods.

I would like to commend QBurgh for organizing the annual Pride Guide magazine that lifts up and celebrates all that the community has to offer as well as recognitions of our local LGBTQIA+ history, and spotlights on many of the incredible accomplishments of Pittsburgh's LGBTQIA+ Community.

Happy Pride Pittsburgh,

Ed Gainey
Mayor
City of Pittsburgh
he / him / his

On behalf of the residents of our great city, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Pittsburgh in celebration of LGBTQIA+ Pride Month!

Pittsburgh is a place where every member of the LGBTQIA+ community is valued for who they are, and we honor and celebrate everyone in our great city. We are working hard to make Pittsburgh be a city where every member of the LGBTQIA+ community can

If you're reading this *please know you are **valued**.*

We are committed to building a prosperous and equitable economy for all of Pittsburgh - where every member of the LGBTQIA+ community feels valued, welcomed, supported, and equipped to thrive.

Scan the code to explore our services for City of Pittsburgh residents.

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- financial assistance for home buyers
- free housing legal assistance



@urapgh



I AM AMERICAN

by Tia Bailey

What does the American Dream look like for the LGBTQ Community?



Miss Demeanor

QUEER FREEDOM

Norman Rockwell's series of paintings entitled the "Four Freedoms" capture quintessential American concepts of freedom. Inspired by these paintings, we have recreated two through a queer lens to represent the ideals of LGBTQ freedom. Find them through out this issue.

Queer people of Pittsburgh are taking back the American dream. While participating in a photoshoot reimagining Americana, people in the LGBTQIA+ community shared their interpretations of the concept of Americana and the American Dream.

Themes of acceptance, inclusivity, and happiness ring throughout their answers.

"[Americana] is sort of aestheticizing the ideal America," drag king Land Shark says. "I think it's also very rooted in the 50's, so it's sometimes a little outdated, but also representative of the American Dream that we also have, whether we want to have it or not."

His American Dream for himself is "only having to work a set amount of hours and being able to pay your bills and raise a family if you want," as well as being able to make a comfortable living.

To Arla, Americana has a specific aesthetic — "denim, Western, motorcycle jackets, baseball."

Arla's interpretation of the American Dream is to get out of debt and live a long, happy life.

"My grandma lived to be 95," Arla says. "I know a lot of people don't want to live that long, but I do."

Additionally, the American Dream to Arla consists of not being in another form of slavery or being married, and to just be happy.

"Whether that means we're not in Pittsburgh, or we're traveling the world and performing and living out my dreams," Arla says. "Just my own form of happiness."

Michael Tikili shares that the American Dream is about anything being possible.

"As a child of immigrants, to me, Americana sort of signifies endless possibilities," Tikili says. "When people talk about the American Dream, that looks different for everyone."

Continuing, Tikili says, "I think the American Dream for yourself is knowing who you are and embracing that to the fullest extent. Once you're living your truth and pursuing what makes you happy in life, to me, that is the American Dream — the pursuit of happiness."

"My Americana is nostalgia for a patchwork of longed-for experiences that didn't happen: a Christmas Eve where my family sang carols around the piano, picnics, parades and fireworks," shares Trae McCarthy. "It was a world I was told to expect but didn't exist for me—or maybe for

anyone."

McCarthy's American Dream is "one where promises are kept and values are practiced with integrity and respect for Earth and all those on it." Moira Flowers has a special point of view as both an immigrant and a queer person on what the concept of Americana is.

"Americana means having the opportunity to pursue whatever dream you want," Moira says. "As an immigrant, I came here to this country doing the same thing, and I'm doing that every day. And also, rock and roll."

Moira shares that a need for space is what brought her to the United States. "And America was that space for me, and I'm pursuing that dream every day."

Drag king Max Starvania's view of Americana features aesthetics: rolling American hillsides, apple pie, American flags, the works.

"I no longer think that the American Dream is pulling yourself up by your bootstraps," Max says. "I don't think that ever really was the American Dream. It was an idyllic concept that was fed to us as Americans for a long time." ➡



Moira Flowers

Pup Chaser

Sean

"Once you're
living your truth
and pursuing
what makes
you happy in
life, to me, that
is the American
Dream."



Corey Dunbar



"Being able to accept everyone for who they really are."



Trae McCarthy

"Promises are kept and values are practiced with integrity and respect for Earth and all those on it."



Slyder Pup



Arla



Danbear



Michael

For himself, the American Dream is about acceptance.

"[It's about] allowing people to live pretty much however they want without a lot of the restrictions that are being imposed upon us these current times," he says.

Mitch Please, Pittsburgh-based drag king, shares similar thoughts on the idea.

"To me, Americana means essentially that anyone can do whatever the fuck they want and be whoever the fuck they want to be, and love who they want to love — whatever religion, cultural background, whatever," he shares.

Local Bear Corey Dunbar wants to see people focus more on being a community together, rather than staying apart.

"Americana means to me coming together as a whole nation and

essentially being proud to live where you live," he says. "We live in the great country of America, and we should be proud and support everyone in it."

Dunbar's American Dream is "being able to accept everyone for who they really are."

Michael Jones shares this idea of community and acceptance, saying, "It's about building community and making sure everyone gets the same acceptance, especially as a trans person."

Local pup Kit Zelph shares that the theme of Americana is complex and contains lots of historical context.

"There's a new emerging context of the world now and our position and our responsibility to other people," Kit says. For himself, the American Dream is focusing on helping the communities they care about.

Sarah Hansen shares that their view of Americana focuses on the cultural

work of people here.

"Also, the queer community has a long and glorious history of playing and making fun with concepts that our society has made rigid but that actually are fluid; this tribute to queer Americana fits right in that tradition," they say.

Sarah's partner, Sean Hansen, says that to them, Americana takes many forms. His version of the American Dream coincides with others — a want for freedom to be who they want to be.

"My 'American dream' is for everyone to have the resources and tools available to live a life of choice with freedom from oppression and without infringing on the freedom of fellow Americans," Sean says. 🍷



Brianna Serenity



Kit Zelph



Sarah Hansen



Pup Voltzy

BUILD WITH US



HUGH LANE
WELLNESS FOUNDATION

**SCAN FOR OUR
NEWSLETTER**



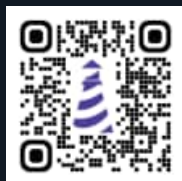
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Timeline of Laws Affecting the LGBTQ Community

1960 - 1970

1961: Pennsylvania becomes one of the earliest states to criminalize same-sex sexual activity.

1973: Pittsburgh's first gay pride week and community march was held June 12th - 17th. The parade attracted a crowd of about 150.

1975: Pennsylvania Governor Milton Shapp signed Executive Order 1975-5 to prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation under the state government's jurisdiction.

1980 - 1990

1982: Pittsburgh becomes one of the first cities in Pennsylvania to pass a discrimination ordinance protecting individuals based on sexual orientation in public employment.

1987: Upper Darby, PA Anti-obscenity Ordinance defines "sexual conduct" as including "acts of masturbation, homosexuality, sexual intercourse," and other sexual conduct.

1990: Pennsylvania amends its hate crime laws to include sexual orientation as a protected category.

NONPROFIT LEGAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE LGBTQIA COMMUNITY IN PITTSBURGH:

In Pittsburgh, there are several organizations and resources that offer nonprofit legal assistance and support to the LGBTQIA community. The following list showcases several of the most popular resources:

1. HUGH LANE WELLNESS FOUNDATION Phone: (412)-626-3812 Email: info@hughlane.org

Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation's legal aid program was created to provide free, need-based civil legal aid services for LGBTQ+ and HIV community members in Southwestern Pennsylvania. They provide in-house assistance for cases involving identity document support, public benefits counseling, housing support, and civil expungement of criminal records.

2. ACLU OF PENNSYLVANIA: Phone: (215)-592-1513 Email: info@aclupa.org

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Pennsylvania works on various civil rights issues, including LGBTQ+ rights. They may offer legal assistance or refer individuals to lawyers who specialize in LGBTQ+ issues.

3. LAMBDA LEGAL: Email: lambdalegal.org/helpdesk

Lambda Legal is a national organization that focuses on LGBTQ+ civil rights. While not based in Pittsburgh, they have resources and information available online and may provide assistance in certain cases.

4. TRANSGENDER LEGAL DEFENSE & EDUCATION FUND (TLDEF): Phone: (646)-862-9396 Email: info@transgenderlegal.org

TLDEF is dedicated to ending discrimination against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. While they may not have a specific presence in Pittsburgh, their website provides resources and information about legal issues affecting transgender people.

6. EQUALITY PENNSYLVANIA: Website: equalitypa.org

Equality Pennsylvania is an advocacy organization that works on LGBTQ+ issues in the state. While they may not provide direct legal assistance, they can offer support, resources, and referrals to legal organizations or lawyers who specialize in LGBTQ+ law.

7. PITT LAW OUTLAW: Website: law.pitt.edu/student-resources/student-organizations/pitt-law-outlaw

If you're affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, their OUTLaw organization may provide resources or support for LGBTQ+ legal issues.

It's essential to reach out directly to these organizations to inquire about the specific services they offer and whether they can assist with your particular legal needs. Some law firms or individual lawyers in Pittsburgh may offer pro bono services or reduced rates for LGBTQ+ clients. Wakefield Law Group determines availability of pro bono or discounted legal services to prospective private clients on a case by case basis.

2002: City of Pittsburgh extends its nondiscrimination ordinance to include protections based on gender identity and expression.

2015: The U.S. Supreme Court in Obergefell v. Hodges legalizes same-sex marriage nationwide, further solidifying marriage equality in Pennsylvania.

2020: U.S. Supreme Court rules in Bostock v. Clayton, that Title VII (Civil Rights Act of 1964) protects employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, providing federal employment protections for LGBTQ individuals.

2000s

2020s

2009: Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act is signed into law at the federal level, expanding hate crime protections to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual (or perceived) gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

2017: Pittsburgh introduces legislation to ban conversion therapy for minors, aiming to protect LGBTQ youth from harmful and discredited practices.







Freedom From Want

a queer dream of freedom and existence

by Miracle Jones

At the end of March, Pennsylvania observed Trans Day of Visibility in Harrisburg. But what made this year's commemoration different was the fact that for the first time in Pennsylvania history, there were publicly queer and gender non-conforming elected officials who were there to observe the day and discuss legislation to protect and support LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Commonwealth. Many of the LGBTQIA caucus hail from right here in Pittsburgh such as Representatives Mayes, Benham, and Salisbury. They have used their positions of power to not only fight for our communities but also live openly and proudly as representatives of the LGBTQIA+ community.

I distinctly remember the tension in the air when the legislature was talking about passing gender nondiscrimination (Fairness Act) in the Pennsylvania House. Hearing Representative Mayes talk about the need for the legislation by sharing her story and imploring people to stop demonizing the community was a much-needed moment of moral clarity and leadership amidst a dehumanizing process to beg for legal protections against housing and employment discrimination.

Soon and very soon you will not be a second-class citizen anymore.

I think often of how despite her

impassioned plea, the Pennsylvania Senate still refuses to approve the measure. It is a heartbreaking reminder that as more things change, the more they stay the same.

It seems that for so many of us, there is just a want to exist, to be without being a cause, a photo op, or a rallying cry. There is a hope that one day we will have the opportunity to live full lives without having to worry about an election or if a vote will drastically change the ways in which we are able to live our lives, express our love, and share our experiences. As such, there is a need for us to showcase who we are and what we believe in by pursuing opportunities that afford us front-facing positions of power to defend our communities and to share our stories.

As we advance representation, there has been an intense pushback on how our communities are perceived, supported, and able to exist. Unfortunately, the ACLU has tracked over 400 bills that are legislative attacks used to target the LGBTQIA community including proposals from right here in southwestern Pennsylvania. This legislative attack on the existence of queer people to work, to live, to retire, and to engage in commerce, reflects the hidden truth that representation and visibility have yet to bring us full liberation. Despite queer actors such as Billy Porter creating and

filming movies and shows here that highlight the LGBTQIA talent, both of our Senators refused to sponsor an LGBTQIA+ center when a homophobic social media account accused the center of allowing adult-focused programming for consenting adults to happen at its space.

Yet, we are still fighting for freedom from want as we are still working toward a queer dream of freedom and existence. Being queer in Pittsburgh comes with some of the best legal protections in the country and elected officials are working to make sure that Pittsburgh is seen as a safe haven city for the community. With robust legal protections that prevent workplace and housing discrimination as well as healthcare support, this has become a safe environment to exist and raise a family. We have our own gayborhoods and affirming spaces, gay business owners who are expanding, and a growing elderly population who have reduced fears of being discriminated against in retirement communities. We have won so much, but we are still fighting for more.

Our youth are still being harmed in schools, our trans siblings still have not gained equality, our communities are often fractured along racial lines, and we still do not have equal protections across the Commonwealth. With drones and gentrification, treks to the fruit loop are less common. We have to



create yard signs to say our trans youth are welcome here. Many of our favorite queer owned bars have shuttered their doors causing us to find new ways to connect with others in our communities. There are folks who are still struggling to find safe, sober spaces to expresee themselves and explore their identities without becoming a target. There are brilliant queer artists and creatives who are brimming with talent but need places to showcase their abilities and develop their skills in nonexploitative fashion.

Over the past few decades, the fight for queer acceptance has moved from one of survival to one of existence. We no longer have to worry about literal gay bashings when we exit our houses or fear medical discrimination because those who we love as practitioners are themselves members of the LGBTQIA+ community. It is no short feat that there are actually medical centers and

foundations created by and led by out and positive community members themselves to ensure our community has the best care. This comes after Pittsburgh had to deal with predatory and discriminatory healthcare options despite having a robust medical infrastructure within the region. Now our local medical community is not only breaking barriers but also leading the nation in community-based medical care and treatment options. Our trans siblings can proudly walk into medical facilities and receive gender-affirming care without having to risk getting medicines from an unknown online vendor or basement practitioners.

We have lesbian judges on the bench who help people change their names, get married, start businesses, and build better lives. We have a gay chief of police who shows up to local programs to be a part of the community and not to harass or arrest individuals for being queer, dressed scantily, or

engaging in adult activities. We have extended legal protections beyond gay marriage here in the city and are working to ensure these rights are codified at the commonwealth level with gender nondiscrimination. We have elected officials who seek out our community's input for policy decisions and who invited us to participate in programming not as an afterthought but as featured attendees.

Our communities are here to stay but are still fighting to substantially exist in person and online. We are still here. Still Queer. Never Going Anywhere. 🌈



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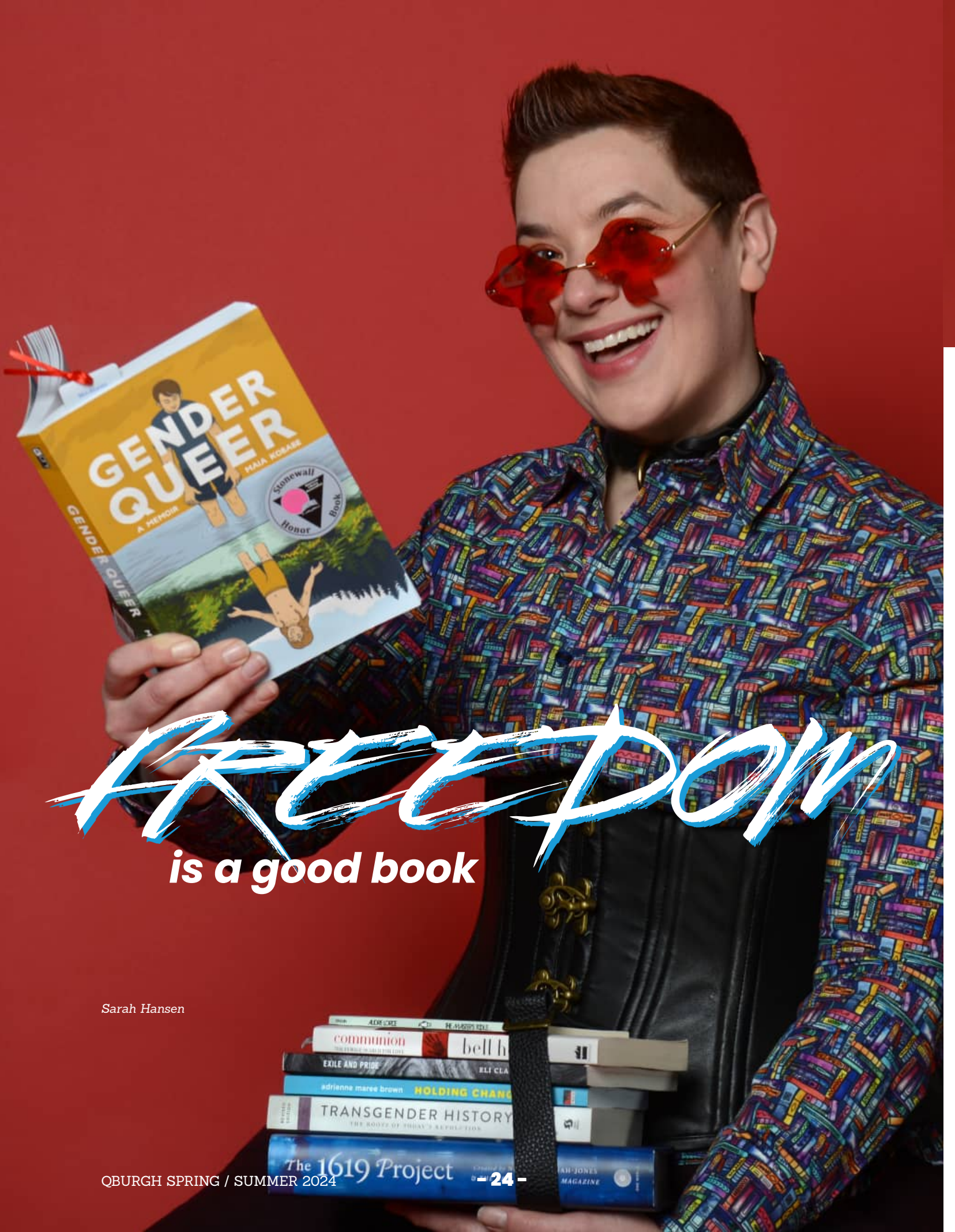




2024

May 26 *Bigger Gayer Picnic* - Allegheny Commons Park West
May 31 *Pittsburgh Pride Day 1* - Allegheny Commons Park West
June 1 *Pittsburgh Pride March & Parade* - Liberty Avenue
June 1 *Pittsburgh Pride Day 2* - Allegheny Commons Park West
June 2 *Pittsburgh Pride Day 3* - Main Street, Bloomfield

PittsburghPride.com



Freedom

is a good book

Sarah Hansen



TRACKING THE BANS

by Alasdair Blackwell

More LGBTQ+ people have been fleeing their states as their governments clamp down on their freedoms, expression, education, healthcare, or legal recognition, especially for transgender folk. Queer and trans émigrés are moving to states they deem safer for them, including Pennsylvania, and becoming our new neighbors in the Pittsburgh region.

But how safe is Pennsylvania? The Movement Advancement Project's Equality Index scores Pennsylvania as 16.5/44.0 or fair, which, compared to other states, is very mid-ground. Erin Reed's anti-trans legislative risk assessment map ranks Pennsylvania as low risk, citing the lack of anti-trans legislation but also the dearth of protections for transgender people at a state level. So, arguably, Pennsylvania is safer than the most egregious states, yet could do more for its LGBTQ+ populace.

That relative safety should not beget complacency nor ignorance though. Culture war zeitgeists are attacking queerness at the state and local level, waging fear and power in any way they can to suppress us. After the Moon Township Public Library featured a book written by a drag queen on their Facebook page, librarians faced a deluge of violent threats, doxing, and harassment. Township supervisors have been hesitant to provide queer material since despite the undaunted librarians. Drag shows

throughout Southwestern PA have been canceled or had to relocate after bigoted intimidation.

From sex-segregation, anti-drag discourses, book bans, and the "parental rights" movement, the LGBTQ+ community here needs to be aware of the attacks in our neighborhoods and schools to truly keep Pennsylvania safe.

State Legislation

With a Democratic governor and a Democratic-controlled State House, the Pennsylvania General Assembly is relatively secure for the LGBTQ+ community this year. Governor Josh Shapiro vowed to sign any LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination bills that made its way to his desk. None have come to pass.

Pennsylvania's anti-discrimination law does not cover LGBTQ+ people — it is still legal to deny someone employment, housing, or public accommodations because of their gender or sexuality. HB 300 aka The Fairness Act would amend Pennsylvania's anti-discrimination law to include sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression.

In the meantime, 74 municipalities and counties have passed LGBTQ+ nondiscrimination ordinances, including Allegheny County. Pittsburgh recently became a sanctuary city for gender-affirming care patients and providers.

That has not stopped Republican lawmakers from introducing anti-LGBTQ+ bills similar to those that have passed in other states, notably directed at the trans populace:

HB 216 would classify public school activities as male or female, forcing transgender student-athletes to compete in sports by their assigned sex. This is a reboot of the "Fairness in Women's Sports" bill then-governor Tom Wolf vetoed in June 2022.

HB 138 would extend the statute of limitations for suing gender-affirming care providers. As seen in other states, if passed, health insurance companies operating in Pennsylvania would increase premiums or refuse to cover gender-affirming treatments, especially for anyone under 18.

HB 319, SB 7, and SB 340 are "parental rights" bills intended to enable parents further controls over their children in school and restrict LGBTQ+ materials. They would make instruction on LGBTQ+ topics illegal from kindergarten to fifth grade; require faculty to out a student's gender identity or sexual orientation to their parents; notify parents if a student requested health care services; force school libraries to label books as "sexually explicit," ban such books from kindergarten to eighth grade, and require opt-in parental permission for high school students to read; and mandate schools post curricula



online for parents to view and object to. These bills are incriminatory for queer youth and students overall, impeding their privacy, safety, and access to information.

SB 643 would classify drag shows as an “adult-oriented business.” This would ban drag performances from public spaces or anywhere someone under the age of 18 could be present, such as schools, libraries, and parks.

Many of these bills have carried over from the previous year but haven’t progressed far in the legislature. However, because they haven’t been overtly defeated and Republicans control the Pennsylvania Senate, they still pose a risk.

School Policies

For the LGBTQ+ youth who spend the majority of their day in school, keeping the academic environment safe and accepting of them is paramount. Pittsburgh Public Schools have covered transgender students under their nondiscrimination policy since 2016, as do the Southmoreland and Wilkinsburg school districts

Right-wing activists and organizations have been cracking down on Pennsylvania schools to overturn trans-affirming policies

and implement anti-trans rules. Back in 2016, the conservative Christian group Alliance Defending Freedom penned a letter decrying Pine-Richland School District’s trans-supportive practices. School board candidates may belong to local Moms for Liberty chapters or were endorsed by the self-described “anti-woke” 1776 Project PAC. The Independence Law Center has been working to establish prejudiced “religious liberty” in fifty Pennsylvania schools, including the South Side Area School District in Beaver County.

A board member of the Highlands School District in Natrona Heights wanted to reject an education equity policy because it stated there were more than two genders. In Westmoreland County, a school director of Norwin School District went on a racist and homophobic tangent about a book showcasing diverse families, where school board meetings are already uncivil.

According to PEN America, Pennsylvania had 457 book challenges in the 2021-2022 academic year and 186 during the 2022-2023 school year, ranking third and fifth in the nation respectively. Most of these books feature queerness and race. Community residents often contest

books simply because they were listed as “sexually explicit” or “anti-American” with out-of-context passages on right-wing book rating websites.

Our youth deserve a learning environment that welcomes and embraces them as well as access to literature that accurately informs and represents them. This right-wing takeover is doing the opposite — creating a suffocating atmosphere, especially for students from marginalized racial, sexual, and gender backgrounds.

South Side Area School District of Beaver County

Trouble started when the South Side Area School District tried to do the right thing. In late 2022, the superintendent requested that faculty address transgender students by their proper pronouns. One teacher, Daren Cusato, refused, stating that it went against his religious beliefs to respect transgender people’s identities. He was then suspended.

Fierce community backlash followed — over 400 people flooded the next school board meeting to defend Cusato and spout transphobic rhetoric. Conceding to demands, Cusato’s suspension



was lifted and the policy to respect students' pronouns was rescinded.

The school board throughout 2023 attempted to mediate trans students' rights and cis people's prejudiced comforts. That February, the board formed a pronoun committee, hearing from pastors, legal counsel, and families of trans youth in tense meetings. Cusato in one meeting argued transgender identities were "blasphemous." The school board dissolved the committee in May 2023.

Whatever balance South Side Area School District tried to navigate in this controversy collapsed when conservative candidates, including one Moms for Liberty member, swept the school board following the November elections.

Which comes to 2024. The school board established transphobic policies that are devastating to the queer student body. Now transgender students have to use public facilities correlating to their assigned sex, are being misgendered and addressed by their legal names to save the "conscience" of cis folk, require parental permission to be referred to by another name or pronouns, and cannot participate in school sports with their gender identity.

Cusato, whose flagrant bigotry started this mess, is glad he can practice his religious beliefs over the wellbeing of his students.

Pine-Richland School District (Allegheny County)

The debate around LGBTQ+ inclusion at Pine-Richland School District has been ongoing for eight years.

In 2016, during the initial culture war panic over transgender people using public bathrooms, parents swarmed school board meetings to fearmonger. Pine-Richland's school board voted 5-4 to require students to use public facilities in accordance to assigned sex, forcing trans students into bathrooms that conflicted with their gender identity and risk their safety.

Aided by Lambda Legal and Kline & Specter law firm, three transgender students of Pine-Richland High School sued their school district, arguing the bathroom policy violated their Title IX protections. *Evancho v. Pine-Richland School District* settled in July 2017 to end the discriminatory policy. In its place, gender identity would be added to the school district's nondiscrimination clause, formally

allowing trans students to use restrooms that align with their gender, requiring staff to respect trans students' identities, and protecting student privacy by allowing students to express themselves however they wanted without notifying their parents.

Now these hard-won protections are under threat. This January, American First Legal sued Pine-Richland School District on behalf of an anonymous mother to end these transgender protections, specifically in regards to student confidentiality.

Under Pine-Richland's policy, parents or guardians will not be notified about changes to a student's gender identity or expression without explicit permission from the student. The lawsuit claims that the district would interfere with the client's parental rights by affirming her child's gender identity without informing her.

The student privacy provision is intended to protect students from transphobic parents. Were faculty required to out trans students and their parents or guardians not supportive of their gender identity, that student could face abuse or be kicked out of the home. It should be up to the student to decide when



to come out to their family. The AFL lawsuit basically asserts that “parental rights” trumps student safety and privacy.

The book-banning wave has also struck Pine-Richland. Last October, residents accompanied by a pastor from North Carolina approached the school board to remove twelve titles from the middle and high school libraries, most of which concern queerness or race. The challengers complained the books were “pornographic,” “age-inappropriate,” or “had an agenda,” citing out-of-context passages and relying on the bigoted view that LGBTQ+ topics are always sexual or racial themes are anti-patriotic.

Because these were the first book challenges in Pine-Richland, there was no established protocol to handle them. The superintendent and the school board have been seeking legal advice on how to proceed.

For now, the books remain available and none of the nondiscrimination policies have been overturned. But after the last election, the Pine-Richland school board swung 8-1 to

the right, making the future of these books and transgender students at the school district uncertain.

Mt. Lebanon School District (Allegheny County)

In June 2022, three mothers sued Mt. Lebanon School District over a lesson about gender identity and trans people to first graders. They argue they should have been given the choice to opt-out their children from the lesson beforehand.

Court filings for Tantel et al v. Mt Lebanon et al. are brimming with transphobic rhetoric and dogwhistles. They regard the children’s books read to the class — When Aiden Became a Brother, Introducing Teddy, and Jacob’s New Dress all aimed at discussing gender identity to young kids — as not age appropriate and “indoctrination.” They claim the first-grade teacher had a “transgender agenda” simply for mentioning her own trans child and had been “grooming” one of the students for supporting them as they questioned their gender.

In the wake of this lawsuit, the Mt. Lebanon community has been rising up to support its LGBTQ+

community members. Queer students have been attending school board meetings to provide testimony about the bigoted environment and demand the strengthening of the nondiscrimination policy. Lebo Pride filed an amicus brief this February, pointing out that opt-out policies stigmatize trans students and reduce the efficacy of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum. In March, the judge presiding over the case rejected the amicus brief.

This June marks two years since the start of the suit.

Hempfield Area School District (Westmoreland County)

Each election cycle only amplified the right’s power over Hempfield Area School District. Last November added three more Republican school directors as opposed to two Democrat incumbents. Paula Cinti, the vice chair of the Westmoreland County chapter of Mom’s For Liberty, dominates the school board. Cinti first challenged All Boys Aren’t Blue, George M. Johnson’s memoir on growing up Black and queer, in March 2022. She referred

God Created You.
God Loves You.
Be Yourself.



Wil Forrest, Coordinator of LGBTQIA+ Ministry
116 South Highland Avenue ■ Pittsburgh 15206 ■ 412.441.3800

to the book as “obscene criminal material.” This ignited an eighteen-month battle over school book policies.

The school board finally settled in August 2023 to make it easier for community members to review school material. Before adding a book to a school library, it must be subject to a thirty-day public review period, during which anyone can raise potentially racist, transphobic, or homophobic concerns. Librarians must curate selections to exclude literature with “ethnic intimidation,” “offensive representations,” or “sexual content,” which can exclude books that discuss race or queerness.

Books weren't the only target. In July 2022, the school board overturned a previous policy permitting transgender students to play on sports aligning with their gender. The new policy states that gender identity was an “irrelevant classification” and officially segregates sports teams by assigned sex. Transgender student-athletes were left with two choices: participate based on their assigned sex or stop competing.

These rules send a clear message to queer students at Hempfield — their existence is better censored and restricted.

Pennsylvania may not garner as much national media attention as the more egregious states do, but that doesn't mean nothing is happening. We have politicians trying to legislate away our existence. Individuals and organizations are interfering with local politics. Without explicit legal protections, the anti-LGBTQ+ lobby is free to try and repress queer Pennsylvanians.

In this hostile political climate, what LGBTQ+ folk, especially trans people, need right now is not passive tolerance but active acceptance.

The Pennsylvania House Democratic Caucus has worked with a coalition of trans organizations to introduce a package of bills aimed at protecting transgender students. If passed, they will protect students on the basis of gender identity while ensuring schools provide LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula and accommodations. You can contact your representatives to show

support for this legislation as well as the Fairness Act to enshrine transgender nondiscrimination protections into state law.

Students whose access to the school library may be monitored or restricted can check out physical or digital books at public libraries. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh encourages browsing its collection of LGBTQ+ literature. This pride month, the Brookline and Woods Run branches will host 30 Books in 30 Minutes to discuss banned books. Guests can take free copies home with them. Meanwhile, you can attend local school board meetings voicing opposition to book challenges and anti-trans policies.

It is terrifying to witness these attacks occurring in our own backyards, though we have the power to prevent this hatred from poisoning our communities. Passing through neighborhoods with pride flags and #ProtectTransKids signs, an afraid trans kid can remember that they are welcomed here in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 🌈

GOD LOVES US ALL



Envisioning a Pittsburgh where all LGBTQIA+ people are nurtured, connected and KNOW they are loved by God.

Look for us at Pride on June 1 and 30, 2024.

Connect with us at: <https://tinyurl.com/LAMPittsburgh>



RICHARD PARSAKIAN TO GRAND MARSHAL PRIDE PARADE

Richard Parsakian moved to Pittsburgh from Upstate New York in 1971 as a VISTA volunteer with the Pittsburgh Architect's Workshop, which provided free design services to low-income families and non-profits. His specialty of creating playgrounds from recycled materials was a feature for the children's experience at the Three Rivers Arts Festivals in 1972, '73, and '74. Richard and his roommate, Tim Hare, published the first LGBTQ newspaper in Pittsburgh, "The Pittsburgh Gay Times," in 1972, where he photographed Pittsburgh's LGBTQ community.

It was here that he began his many years of activism and service within the LGBTQ Community.

He was a member of the organizing committee with the Gay and Lesbian Community Center (now the Pittsburgh Equality Center) that helped bring Pridefest to its first urban space on Ellsworth Avenue. He's also the creator and caretaker of the historic 30' x 60' Pride Flag that has made an appearance at most every Pride March and important political event for over 25 years. Parsakian constructed the flag from fabric he purchased and had a friend who was a fiber artist fabricate it at his studio. He financed it by getting donations from every merchant on Ellsworth.

Parsakian's Pride flag would be right behind the Dykes on Bikes at the beginning of every Pride March, however, in the 2010s, the flag was removed by the corporate Pride organizers. With the new organizers of Pittsburgh Pride, Richard and his flag were restored to the parade in 2021. "I think the power of that flag is that I never made any judgement of who could hold it," said Parsakian. "It was always an 'anybody's flag.' It was our community flag, and I was very proud in that way."

For his years of dedication and service to the LGBTQ Community of Pittsburgh, Richard will serve as Grand Marshal of the 2024 Pittsburgh Pride March & Parade on Saturday, June 1 at 12:00 pm as the parade marches down Liberty Avenue and the Andy Warhol Bridge to the Pride festival on the North Side.



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Queer code 101

Like the colors of the rainbow, the LGBTQ+ lexicon is just as colorful from A to Z. This queer glossary for newbies is your crash course in all things slang, history, and pop culture that have defined and shaped our community. Each generation and decade brings us more ways to speak and connect as a culture. Here are some of the essentials we think you should know if this world still feels brand new to you and your journey.

by Drew Praskovich

ACT UP

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, a direct action activism group formed in New York City in 1987 to bring awareness and justice to those impacted by the AIDS epidemic.

Ballroom

An underground subculture formed by the Black and Latino community where contestants walk and perform in certain categories that frequently involve gender and social class pageantry. Categories include femme queen, voguing, and face

Billy Porter

Tony, Grammy, and the first openly gay black lead actor Emmy award winner born and raised in Pittsburgh. Most known for his work as Lola in Kinky Boots the musical and Pray Tell in Pose. 2022 Pittsburgh Pride Parade Grand Marshal.

Andy Warhol

The King of Pop Art. Soup cans, Marilyn Monroe, superstars. One of the most recognizable artists in human history, born and raised in Pittsburgh.

Bear

Typically a large, hairy gay man. "It's bear night at the bar, do you want to come with me?"

Blue Moon

A famed gay bar on Butler Street in Lawrenceville known for its drag performances.

Angels in America

A landmark work of theater written by Tony Kushner. This Pulitzer Prize winner for Drama depicts gay life and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

Anita Bryant

An anti-gay activist, beauty queen, and orange juice promoter who endorsed Florida's "Save Our Children" campaign. She was iconically pied in the face on television by a gay man, Thom L. Higgins, in 1977.

Audre Lorde

A self-described "black, lesbian, feminist, socialist, mother, warrior, poet". Wrote amazing works such as Zami: A New Spelling of My Name and Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches



Butch

Typically a lesbian who expresses gender in a more masculine way. Popular butch characters in media include Lea Delaria as Big Boo from *Orange Is the New Black*, Queen Latifah as Cleo in *Set It Off*, and Gina Gershon as Corky in *Bound*.

Drag Queens / Drag Kings

Artists who subvert and perform gender through the use of makeup, costume, lip sync performances, theatricality, dance, and more.

Dykes on Bikes

A legendary lesbian motorcycle club whose first chapter was originally formed in 1976 in San Francisco. They are most known for frequently leading Pride parades.

Fruit Loop

A hallowed cruising spot within Schenley Park. "I hooked up with this total hottie who was driving a red truck at the Fruit Loop."

Golden Girls

A sitcom starring Betty White, Bea Arthur, Rue McClanahan, and Estelle Getty. The lives of these four iconic women living in Miami, Florida casually and openly depicted LGBTQ characters on primetime NBC from 1985-1992.

Harvey Milk

The first openly gay man elected to public office in California. He served as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He was assassinated by fellow supervisor, Dan White. His story has been depicted in the Academy Award-winning documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* and Academy Award-winning film *Milk*.

"I Will Survive"

A gay disco anthem by Gloria Gaynor released in 1978. A song about perseverance, determination, and exuberant theatricality.

James Baldwin

Vital gay writer and civil rights activist. Some of his most notable works include *The Fire Next Time*, *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

Keith Haring

Pop Artist born in Pennsylvania whose signature line drawing characters were used as activism in campaigns for safer sex, AIDS, and the crack epidemic.

Lucky's

A true Pittsburgh gay institution. This bar and dance club, known for its stripper boys on the bar, has stood resolute on Penn Ave for over 30 years in the face of the rapidly changing Strip District.

Marsha P. Johnson

A hero of the gay liberation movement and key figure during the Stonewall Uprising. She was known as the "mayor of Christopher Street". Along with Sylvia Rivera, she formed STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us."

Mother

Judy Garland. Cher. Diana Ross. An iconic diva who transcends this realm and speaks directly to one's soul. A megawatt star worthy of worship, who has "raised" you. "I have Lady Gaga's new single on repeat. She's mother."

My Good Judy

A term of endearment used to describe a trusted friend, safe space, or good ally. It's a reference to Judy Garland, a well-known supporter of the LGBTQ community in her time. In the 1950s and 1960s, Garland acted as an unofficial mascot for a generation of gay men, who referred to themselves as "friends of Dorothy".



Pegasus

Formerly one of the most popular gay nightlife venues in Pittsburgh. Located downtown on Liberty Avenue, it operated from 1980 through 2012.

Pink Triangle

A reclaimed symbol for the LGBTQ community that was originally used by the Nazis to signify and exterminate queer individuals.

Read

A sharp-tongued comeback that is equal parts insulting and clever. Originates from Ballroom culture.

RENT

A groundbreaking rock musical written by Jonathon Larson that depicted the lives of queer people, HIV-positive individuals, and bohemians in 1990s New York City. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Musical.



Rocky Horror Picture Show

A unabashedly queer and gender-bending horror musical film that spawned legendary late-night screenings known for their rowdy audience participation and live-shadow cast.

RuPaul Charles

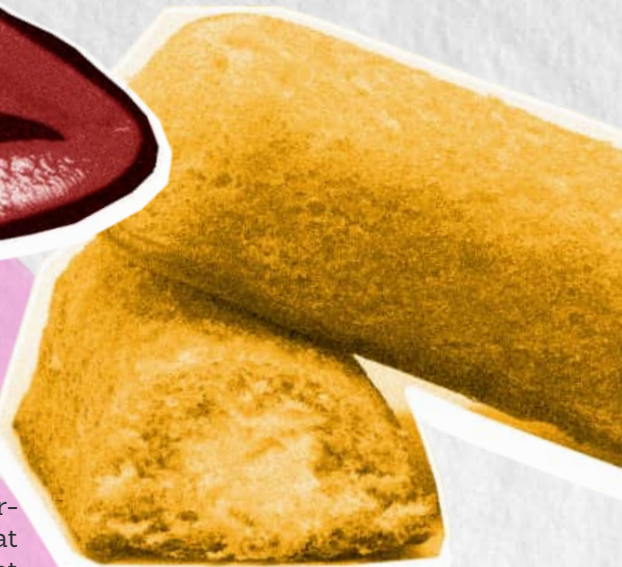
The Queen of Drag. From Atlanta, Georgia to New York City night clubs, RuPaul built a hard-earned empire that has included hosting a talk show on VH1 in the late 1990s and of course hosting RuPaul's Drag Race currently on its 16th American season with legions of international franchises. RuPaul holds the record for most Emmy wins for a person of color and is overall the most awarded host in television history.

Stonewall Uprising

A pivotal turning point in the gay liberation movement that took place at the Stonewall Bar in New York City in June 1969 after police raids led by trans activists.

Sylvia Rivera

An outspoken activist for transgender people, people of color, and gay liberation at-large primarily in New York City during the 1960s and 70s. Along with Marsha P. Johnson, she formed STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries). "We have to be visible. We are not ashamed of who we are."



Twink

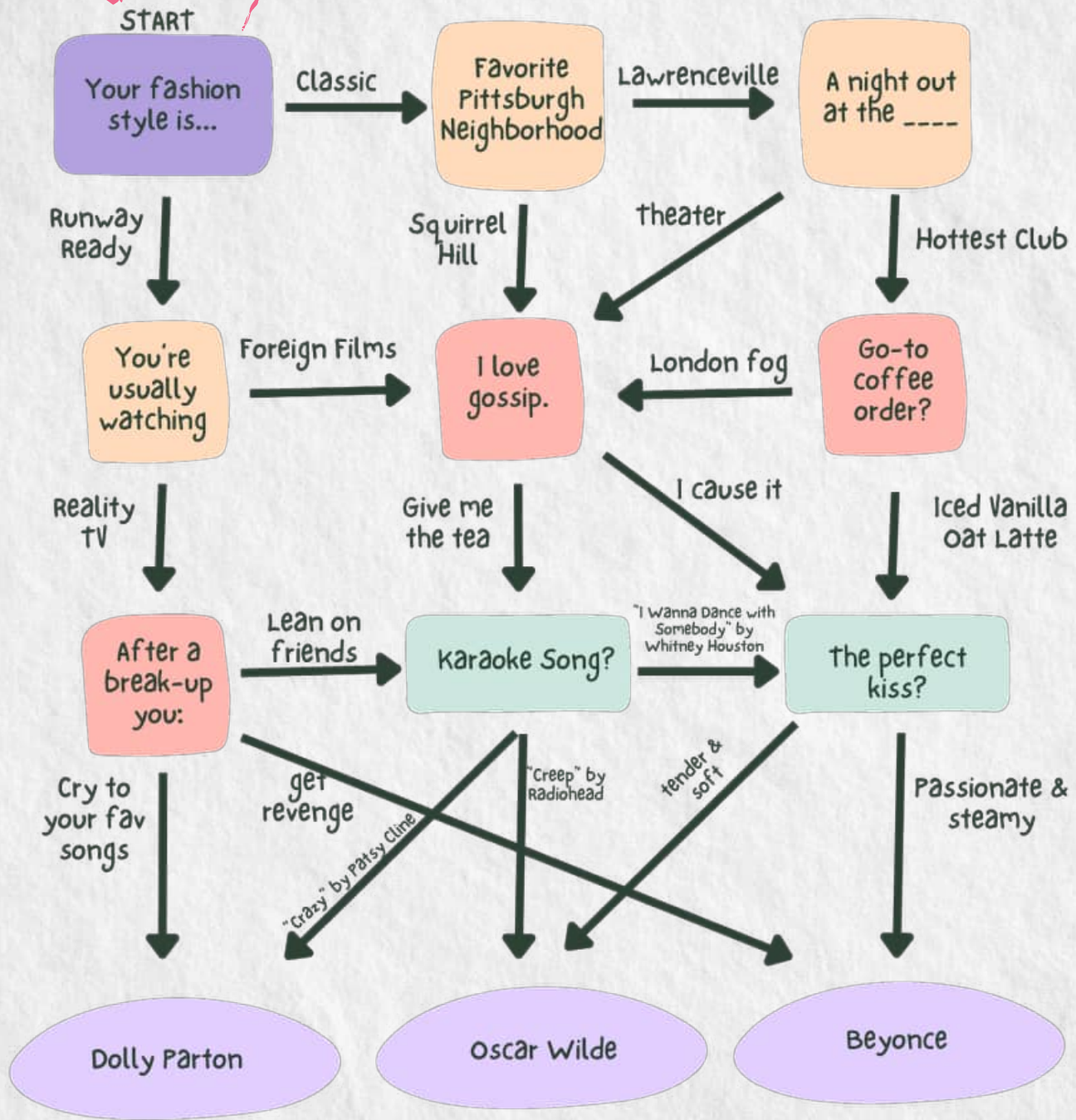
A slim, young gay. "I seriously have to stop falling in love with all of these twinkins."

The Village People

A music group with hits like, "YMCA" and "In The Navy", featuring characters that subverted stereotypical American macho, male masculinity from the cop and cowboy to the construction worker and biker.



WHO'S YOUR GAY ICON?



The universally beloved songstress. You think life is better with big hair and fringe.

The posh, aesthetic playwright. You think life is better with wit and intellect.

The triple threat global superstar. You believe life is better with ferocious vision.



FREEDOM

The "Four Freedoms" were goals articulated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Monday, January 6, 1941. In an address known as the Four Freedoms speech, he proposed four fundamental freedoms that people everywhere in the world ought to enjoy: Freedom of speech and expression, Freedom of worship, Freedom from want, Freedom from fear. We still fight for these freedoms in 2024.

Museums. **Bridges**. Live Music.
Hiking. **Art**. **Craft Beer**. Sports.
Whiskey. **Foodies**. Festivals.
Steelers. **Andy Warhol**. Trails.
Mister Rogers. Inclines. **Pirates**.
Pierogies. **Phipps Conservatory**.
Rivers. Art. **Penguins**. Views.
Heinz History Center. Ballet.
French Fries. **Drag Shows**.
Mattress Factory. **Kayaking**.
Acrisure Stadium. Carrie Furnace.
National Aviary. Murals. **Tech**.
Reinvention. **Diversity**.
Carnegie Museums. **Symphony**.
Adventure. **Love**.



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City of Bridges,
City of Pride!





THE BRIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE

by Tia Bailey

When Pittsburgh-based nonprofit Allies for Health + Wellbeing was planning for their 2022 Free for All event, they decided to honor ten “Bright Young People” in Pittsburgh. They are now going into their third year of nominating and honoring Bright Young People.

Allies for Health + Wellbeing “empowers individuals and communities through high-quality integrated medical care and supportive human services.” Allies offers services ranging from primary care to holistic HIV treatment.

Mary Beth Wyko, Allies’ Marketing and Communications Manager, explains that the idea to celebrate young people came from a brainstorming session a few years back for their Allies Ball.

“Our event architect Thommy Conroy always comes up with some kind of over-the-top, extravagant theme so that we can go all out,” Wyko says. “We are really trying to make our event the MET Gala of Pittsburgh. So for our 2022 event, the theme that he chose was Bright Young People.”

The theme was inspired by the photography of the Bright Young Things, or Bright Young People, which was a young group of

socialites and aristocrats in Great Britain in the 1920s. However, a more modern, inclusive spin was put on the idea for the 2022 Allies Ball.

“One of the things about the Bright Young People at that time is that while they were progressive for that time, it was still a really privileged group,” Wyko explains. “It was a very white group. So we had this theme, and we wanted to take it and turn it on its head and look at what Bright Young People means in the 21st century in a more inclusive light.”

So the Bright Young People were chosen from those who work primarily in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“We thought it was important to recognize people who weren’t already being recognized and to shine a light on some of the incredible work that’s being done by young people in our community that people just might not be aware of,” Wyko says.

Many of those chosen to be Bright Young People are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and many work at organizations that “mesh well” with Allies and align with their mission.

The Bright Young People are chosen

by community nomination. Wyko sends emails to media outlets, colleges, partner organizations, and more sharing that they are seeking nominees. If someone thinks they have someone who is a good fit, they can submit their name for consideration. From there, a selection committee chooses who this year’s honorees will be.

This year, a change was made to the selection committee – previous Bright Young People honorees were invited to join the committee. They were brought in because after the “explosion” of nominees provided during the second year, choosing became a much more difficult task.

“We’ve had several people over the last two years who have been nominated by more than one person,” Wyko says. “When we see that kind of enthusiasm for this person and the work they’re doing, that’s kind of a given.”

Wyko shares that choosing the honorees is a great reminder that they are people making a difference.

“It was really heartening for me to talk to all of the Bright Young People and to be encouraged that so many young people are doing so many great things and have enthusiasm for it,” she says. “And they do believe in a bright future, and they’re helping to build it.”



RIAN-LOUIS MCNEIL

Rian-Louis McNeil is the Outreach Coordinator for Amachi Pittsburgh.

"We are the only nonprofit in Allegheny County that dedicates our mission to youth who are impacted by parental incarceration," McNeil says.

McNeil primarily works in getting out into the streets and spreading the word at events and engagements. He has been with the nonprofit for about a year, joining after previously having had a bad experience with a toxic work environment.

"I kind of lost my vision and focus for about a month or two," McNeil shares. "I wanted to be very intentional about what I did next."

He was heavily inspired in the nonprofit world by his mother, feeling as though she "passed the baton" to him after her retirement last July. He found Amachi through Indeed, did research on them, and "absolutely" wanted to be a part of this mission.

"I've always wanted to be a resource or tool and provide guidance for young people in some form," he says. "I always say that if I leave this earth knowing I impacted one person, I'll be okay."

Amachi offers several programs for impacted youth. One of these is a one-on-one mentoring program called the Amachi Ambassadors.

"We teach our youth, give them a voice of their own, sharpen their leadership skills, teach them advocacy to stand up for themselves, and we teach them that they are not their circumstances," McNeil says.

An important point that the mentors emphasize is that they do not have to always end up like their family member/guardian who is incarcerated because kids in these situations tend to have that mentality.

"That program is a tool to show them and teach them and empower them and give them a voice of their own, which they already have," McNeil shares.

Another program the nonprofit offers is a Family Strengthening Program, which includes mentees, mentors, and caregivers. They attend sports games, go to Kennywood, and do other activities together.

McNeil was familiar with the Bright Young Person program, and was pleasantly surprised to find out he was nominated and being recognized.

"If you had told me last year that I would be nominated as a Bright Young Person, I would have been like, 'What?!'" he shares.

He is very grateful to Amachi for his experience, and for nominating him to be a Bright Young Person this year, sharing that he cried when he found out.

McNeil looks forward to continuing his work with Amachi and having an impact on young people.



DUANE BINION

Duane Binion is one of the founders of True T Pittsburgh.

True T is an organization dedicated to celebrating queer People of Color through creative arts, social activism, and meaningful resource sharing.

Binion specifies that "meaningful" to True T means resources that people can actually use in their day-to-



day lives, such as bus passes, housing assistance, etc.

“We center ourselves between community health and arts and entertainment,” Binion says. “We find creative ways to uplift the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as educate people about HIV, AIDS, STIs, through our art.”

The members of True T find creative ways to implement resources from their places of employment and bring them to the community, Binion shares.

Binion is passionate about this work because of life experience. Those who work at True T are part of the communities that they serve, so they have experienced the exact things that they are trying to change.

“We have struggled to find comfort and safety and to express ourselves as just individuals and humans and finding out how to navigate the world,” Binion says.

The co-founder was familiar with the Bright Young People at Allies before being nominated, having previously emceed the Free for All, and has worked with Allies for many years prior.

“It was like a full-circle moment that they decided to recognize me this year because I definitely was not expecting it at all,” he says. “I’m super humbled. And the fact that they have even been paying attention to the work that I do to consider me for this award is beautiful.”

Binion wants those who may be unfamiliar with True T that the organization is run by a passionate group of individuals.

“The goal here is to level and equalize the playing field so that our community members all have a chance at thriving and not just existing in today’s world,” he says.

STAVI XINOS

Stavi Xinos is a Master of Social Work candidate at the University of Pittsburgh who works with The Open Door, Inc.



QBURGH SPRING / SUMMER 2024

The Open Door, Inc. (TOD) is a “nonprofit that supports people with HIV and chronic homelessness through housing first and harm reduction models.” The nonprofit works to provide low-barrier housing and supportive services for those who are considered high-risk, such as those who are actively using substances.

Stavi was placed with TOD through Pitt and is very passionate about the mission.

“When you prioritize safe housing for people experiencing homelessness, when people have their basic needs met- rather than coercing or forcing people to take care of their (mental health, substance abuse, etc.) challenges first in order to be ‘worthy of’ and eligible for, housing and other necessities - you save lives.”

Stavi is new to Pittsburgh, so was previously unaware of the Bright Young Person program, making the news of being recognized a surprise.

“I felt very honored to learn that I was selected for this honor,” Stavi says. “I am so appreciative of the recognition for my work - and I especially feel proud to be recognized for doing work that is rooted in harm reduction, abolition, and liberation for all people affected by oppression.”

SAINT-OSEI VALENTINO

Saint-Osei Valentino is one of the Co-Founders and the Director of the Black Liberation Autonomous Collective.

“The Black Liberation Autonomous Collective is a predominantly Black and Brown transgender and gender non-conforming-led collective located in Allegheny County,” Valentino says. “We have an intentional focus on relationship building, mutual aid, and social justice issues.”

The collective was formed in 2021 after realizing that Black Trans and queer people’s problems were not being addressed compared to other issues.



40 -

"We formed due to the lack of space for Black trans and queer folks in the organizing scene and saw how our struggles were usually left on the back burner and the lack of inclusivity," they share. "We originally did not focus only on our TGNC siblings in the beginning, yet as said previously, we saw what was lacking and wanted to be a platform for those like us."

For those who may be unfamiliar with the Black Liberation Autonomous Collective, Valentino wants to emphasize the care that the group has for their Trans and gender-nonconforming siblings.

"Our programs and resources come from listening to our sibs," he says. "Whether it's our Trans-aissance(said like Renaissance) Project giving out gender-affirming essentials or our Kiki Project to combat the loneliness we experience, we're here to help our siblings not just get by, but flourish in southwest PA."

Valentino feels very honored that he was nominated to be a Bright Young Person, despite not knowing who submitted their name.

"I feel blessed and grateful as one of the few Black transmasculine people in the organizing scene to get recognized," Valentino says.

The news that they were being recognized couldn't have come at a better time for Valentino, who says prior to finding out the news, he had been doubting himself.

"I questioned if I was doing enough for my siblings, and worried about how we would be able to support them as much as we want to," they say. "BLAC is just a group of young Black and Brown TGNC folks, so the majority of our funding comes from our own pockets and donations, yet we are now in the process of obtaining our 501c3 and have a fiscal sponsor. When I found out I was selected, I finally felt that I was doing something right and that I needed to keep going. And I will keep going."

NAOMI ALLEN

Naomi Allen is the Assistant Coordinator and Vocal Coach at KRUNK.

"KRUNK is an after-school program that focuses on the four elements of hip hop," Allen says.

KRUNK, which stands for Kreating Realistic Universal New school Knowledge, is part of the nonprofit organization Center of Life. The program operates every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and is open to students ages 14 to 18. Allen has been working with Center of Life since November 2023 and initially



got involved due to her genuine care for youth and enjoyment of mentoring.

"I also think it is extremely necessary and vital for students to have an outlet for creative expression especially since many schools are removing these subjects altogether," she says. "I also know that I did not always have positive influences growing up and would prefer to be and model the kind of person I really needed in my youth to these students so they do not have to turn to harmful sources and negative images or figures within media."

While Allen does not know who nominated her to be a Bright Young Person, she is very thankful and extends her thanks.

"Being nominated for this has made me feel seen and has helped me remember that my work is important, is not in vain, and that people are watching you whether you recognize it or not," Allen shares. "I am humbled by this achievement but I am even more grateful to know and be in the presence of the brilliant and talented young minds that I work with everyday."

DAEQUAN ANDINO

Daequan Andino is the Coordinator of the program for Volunteers at Shepherd Wellness Community. He has been with the organization since April 2022, shortly after moving to Pittsburgh from New York. ➡➡



"My job is to engage with community members to see what they like and then also engage with the community in Pittsburgh to see who can fill in those gaps," Andino says.

Prior to moving to Pittsburgh, Andino was a teacher in New York City. He taught students about fashion for several years, where the students experienced hands-on learning and created their own designs.

"I did that for about 18 years before the pandemic, so that's what got me into working with young people," he shares. "Their minds are so fresh in their different approaches to design or just expressing themselves. It was very motivational and inspiring."

Although he was unaware of the Bright Young Person program prior to being nominated, he has worked closely with Allies for Health + Wellbeing before with Shepherd Wellness. Andino was nominated by his boss, whom he is very close with.

Andino would like those who may be unfamiliar with Shepherd Wellness to know that it is not exclusively for LGBTQIA+ people – they will help anyone with HIV.

"And with my art, I want people to feel free to express themselves as often as possible," he shares.



HAZELL AZZER

Hazell Azzer works with both the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and AIDS Free Pittsburgh.

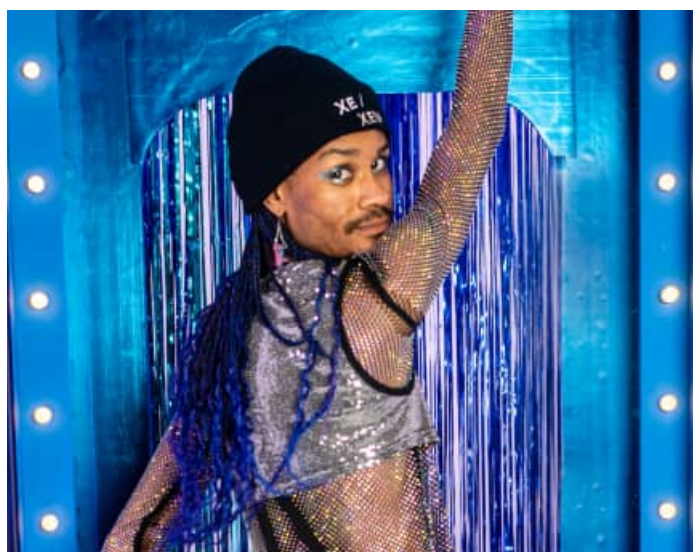
With AIDS Free Pittsburgh, Hazell primarily works in community outreach.

"AIDS Free Pittsburgh (AFP) is a public health movement to end the AIDS epidemic in Allegheny County by 2020," the website reads. "AIDS Free

Pittsburgh is a collaborative initiative comprised of government agencies, healthcare institutions, and community-based organizations that strive to support and improve the care of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as communities most at-risk for HIV. AIDS Free Pittsburgh does not provide services directly, but rather works to raise awareness and build collaboration among community stakeholders."

"I manage a lot of their media outreach and community engagement, and primarily what I do is develop programs for people to participate in to learn about safer sex, HIV, and just general health," Hazell says.

Hazell was familiar with Allies and knew about the Free for All and Allies Ball, but didn't know about Bright Young People until being recognized.



JULE ARNEY

Jule Arney is the Director of Training and Research at Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation.

The Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation is an organization whose mission is "Raising health with LGBTQ+ and HIV communities in Western Pennsylvania by addressing the Center for Disease Control's Social Determinants of Health."

In xyr position, Arney does training and consultation with different organizations and government entities.

"Most of the trainings are centered around providing some guidance around how to best serve the LGBTQ+ community," Arney says. "And to kind of broaden people's concepts around sexuality and gender, especially when we're thinking about the assumptions that we culturally have around the gender binary and breaking that apart and helping people not make assumptions so that they could create more welcoming spaces for LGBTQ+ people."

In working with Hugh Lane, Arney takes pride in being a safe person for those younger than xem.

"I really love my job," they said. "I love especially being able to be that adult that I needed as a youth."

Arney has a funny history with Bright Young People, actually having campaigned xemself last year to be nominated. However, after forgetting to remind people to nominate them this year, it was a bigger surprise when they received the email that xe had been not only nominated but selected to be honored.

"It was unreal," Arney says. "I don't necessarily love to toot my own horn, but who doesn't love to be recognized for their work? That was part of the reason why I did kind of campaign for myself last year, but actually getting it was kind of a moment. Like, wow, I am seen as someone who is committed to doing work that will make the lives and welfare of our community better and I'm humbled to get that recognition."

Arney shares that while the work they do can be difficult at times, that knowing the difference xe is making is worth it.

ELIS O'MAREHEN

Elis O'Marehen is a therapist who works for Open Space Counseling, Consulting, and Wellness (CCW).

Open Space is a LGBTQIA+-affirming and poly/kink-allied mental health practice with offices in Shadyside and Wexford, as well as telehealth throughout the state of Pennsylvania.

"I do a lot of work with people exploring gender and sexuality, processing trauma, and finding ways to accommodate their neurodivergence," O'Marehen says. "I also run two groups: TRANSforming Families and Chronic Illness Support Club. TRANSforming Families is a support group for parents and partners of people going through gender transition and Chronic Illness Support Club is exactly what it sounds like -- a support group for people living with a chronic illness and/or a disability."



O'Marehen has been with Open Space since interning with them back in 2021, then being offered a job after the internship was complete.

"From my days of being a 'really good ally' to finding pride in my own nonbinary lesbian identity, the queer community has been close to my heart," they share. "My co-parent is a Transgender man, and seeing the negative impact of the rejection and isolation he faced throughout his transition is what inspired me to create TRANSforming Families so that parents who find themselves untethered by their child's transition have a space to process and receive quality, factual information about the transgender experience."

O'Marehen's co-parent, Gavin, is actually responsible for nominating them as a Bright Young Person, which they were previously unfamiliar with until they found out they were selected.

"I have so much respect for Allies as an organization and to be recognized by them for the things I've contributed is truly an honor," she says. "Plus, I love an opportunity to get dressed up like a diva and have people say nice things about me!"

O'Marehen wants people to know that Open Space is run by a bunch of "mostly queer, mostly neurodivergent nerds" who are incredibly passionate about the work that they do.

DEV HAYOSTEK

Dev Hayostek is the final Bright Young Person being recognized this year at the Allies Free for All event. Hayostek has a Master's of Social Work from the University of Pittsburgh and works with diversity, equity, and inclusion. They primarily work in preventing sexual violence. 🌈

This year's Bright Young People will be honored and recognized at the Allies Free for All on Friday, May 3. This year's theme is Night of a Thousand Divas.



Happy Pride, Pittsburgh! I'm excited to celebrate Pride this year with so many of you in Pittsburgh and throughout the State. As the first out queer woman in the PA General Assembly, Pride means living my truth every day and fighting for our community, even when it is difficult.

I'm thrilled that the number of Out legislators has grown to include not just Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta and myself, but also Rep. Izzy Smith-Wade-El, Rep. La'Tasha D. Mayes, Rep. Greg Scott, and Rep. Abigail Salisbury.

I currently have the honor of serving as co-chair of the legislature's bicameral, bipartisan LGBTQ+ Equality Caucus alongside Rep. Kenyatta. Our caucus includes not just Out members of the legislature, but many straight allies.

As co-chairs, we have two goals – champion legislation that protects and supports our community and fight back against any anti-LGBTQ+ legislation that our colleagues introduce. As in many states across this country, we are seeing an increasing number of bills targeting our community, especially our Trans siblings, but thankfully because of the Democratic majority in the PA House and Governor Josh Shapiro, those bills will not see the light of day in Pennsylvania. Instead, our caucus is proactively moving legislation forward to protect our community. Last year, we were able to get the Fairness Act passed through the PA House and while our efforts to get it to also pass through the Senate are hitting some roadblocks, we won't be stopping anytime soon. And of course, enshrining non-discrimination provisions into PA law is the absolute floor – it's a foundation on which we will continue to build.

Let's all take the opportunity this Pride season to celebrate our true selves and continue the fight for justice for all of us.

In solidarity,
Jess

State Representative Jessica Benham
House District 36

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PRIDE ITINERARY

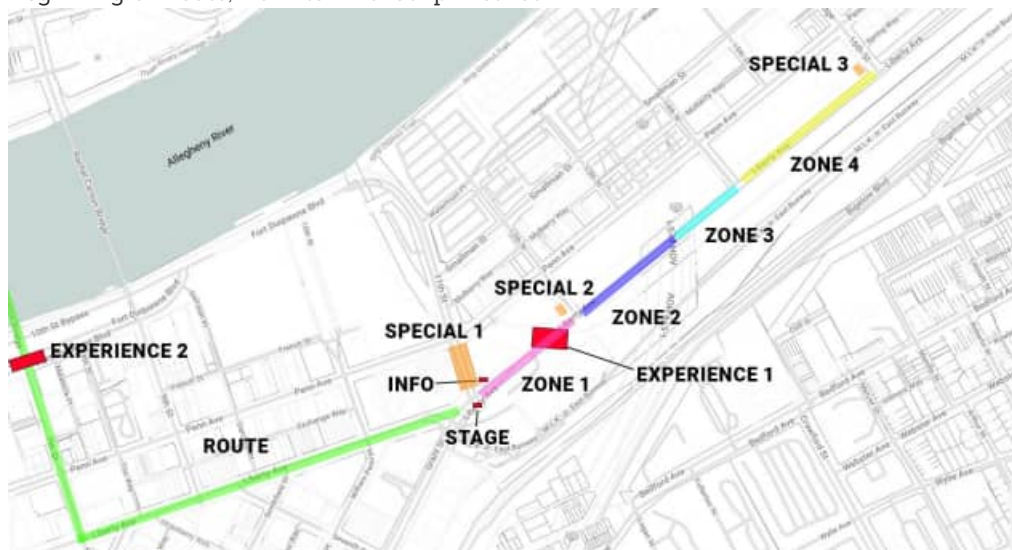
- May 26** *Bigger Gayer Picnic* - Allegheny Commons Park West
- May 30** *Too Hot for July* - Allegheny Commons Park East
- May 31** *Pittsburgh Pride Day 1* - Allegheny Commons Park West
- May 31** *Pride on the Shore Day 1* - Stage AE
- June 1** *Pittsburgh Pride March & Parade* - Liberty Avenue
- June 1** *Pittsburgh Pride Day 2* - Allegheny Commons Park West
- June 2** *Pittsburgh Pride Festival Day 3* - Bloomfield
- June 2** *Pride on the Shore Day 2* - Stage AE
- June 6** *Fox Chapel Pride* - Allegheny River Trail Park
- June 7** *Pirates Pride Night* - PNC Park
- June 9** *Pride Variety Show & Brunch* - Hotel Monaco
- June 15** *Washington PA Pride* - Wild Things Park
- June 15** *Lawrenceville Pride* - Butler Street
- June 15** *Mt. Lebo Pride* - Mt. Lebanon Main Park
- June 21** *Pride AF: Toast to Equality* - Sunken Bus Studios
- June 22** *Millvale Pride* - Grant Avenue
- June 29** *Hugh Lane Family Picnic* - Hugh Lane North Side
- June 30** *Wilkinsburg Pride* - Turner Elementary School
- June 30** *Dormont Pride in the Park* - Dormont Park



PRIDE PARADE ROUTE

*Saturday,
June 1*

Beginning of Route, Downtown & Strip District



End of Route on the North Side



The 2024 Pittsburgh Pride March & Parade will take place on Saturday, June 1.

Lineup will begin at 10:00 AM along Liberty Avenue between 11th Street and 16th Street in the Strip District. There are no assigned spaces, just assigned Zones. Participants are asked to please pay attention to what zone they are assigned and proceed to the assigned area. Participants will be placed in order by volunteers upon arrival.

All vehicles participating in the parade must enter the lineup from Penn Avenue at 16th Street in the Strip District and proceed slowly to their designated zone. No vehicles besides motorcycles and other official Pride support vehicles may line up closer to Downtown than 12th Street along Liberty Avenue. All vehicles must be in the lineup by 11:00 AM, no exceptions.

Parade steps off at 12:00 PM SHARP.

View the parade along Liberty Avenue, the Andy Warhol Bridge, Sandusky Street, and S & W Commons.



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PRIDE Ensuring Everyone Enjoys Pride ETIQUETTE

by Aaron Valentic

In what feels like the blink of an eye, or the turning of a page, Pittsburgh Pride season is upon us! The yearly event, celebrating the love of and for our shared LGBTQIA+ community, returns as the unofficial start of the Summer Season, with an array of events, musical guest appearances, and a never-ending rainbow as far as the eye can see.

Pittsburgh Pride has been around since 1973, with people coming far and wide to see the annual event and share in the celebratory spirit. But what about those who have not yet had the privilege to attend? Or, perhaps this is the first Pride Parade you have ever attended and are anxious to know what to expect?

Have no fear! At QBURGH, we wanted to ensure that guests, both new and old, understand what is to be expected at Pittsburgh Pride 2024, from the events to how to express yourself in an appropriate manner. Below, find our guide for how to navigate Pittsburgh Pride 2024, ensuring both you and the community at large have their best Pride yet!

What to Expect at Pride?

The first-ever Pittsburgh Pride was held on June 17th, 1973. Today, the parade and the events surrounding the main function have grown in scale and splendor.

Visitors can expect a massive parade route downtown along Liberty Avenue, with community groups, organizations, and businesses both large and small both in the parade and at the festival at the Point. Unique among Pride celebrations, Pittsburgh Pride maintains the front of its parade for the community to march in solidarity together, protest-style, in honor of the Stonewall Uprising in 1969 and the first "Pride" parade in 1970 -- the Christopher Street Liberation March.

If this is your first trip to Pittsburgh, the city comes alive in the Summer, as it is a very outdoorsy city. Patrons can expect to see vendors all over town, rainbows on every corner, and musical performances in town and in surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition, many of the local gay bars will be hubs of attraction for all, so it serves as a great meeting place for you and your friends if you all wander off on your own throughout the day.

How to Behave at Pride?

As if this should go without saying - you should have the time of your life at Pittsburgh Pride, but you also need to ensure you are contributing to a safe and welcoming environment for all in attendance. Pittsburgh Pride

is a safe space for all of those celebrating who they truly are and for their loved ones.

Inclusion is the ultimate feeling most have during their stint with Pride. Whether you are coming alone or in a massive group, there is an overwhelming sense of love that reverberates throughout the weekend. Ensure that you are adding to this feeling, and not making anyone feel unwelcomed or worse, not wanted.

This is a time to have as much fun with yourself or your friends, families, or partner(s); just be aware of your surroundings and ensure you are not imposing on someone else's fun.

How to Treat Others at Pride?

It's simple - treat others the way in which you want to be treated. Pride is a hard-won accomplishment for the LGBTQIA+ community, and it is not the time or place to share any unwanted views with the masses.

This is a big day for many in the community, with many not having a safe space for themselves, so these members anxiously await Pride in order to be a part of something larger than themselves. However, Pride is also unfortunately a time when harassment from outside groups could reach an all time high. If



you see a counter-protester spewing their bigotry, ignore them -- do not engage -- they want to steal your attention away from the festivities. Don't give them the pleasure.

It goes without saying (yes, I am talking to you straights) - just don't be a jerk.

Express Yourself

Like Madonna says, express yourself! Pride is a time to celebrate you, and all of the fabulousness that comes with being you; dress however you want, as outlandish or as tame as you'd like - there are no written rules for this.

It should be noted, as in my case I was not aware, that it does get rather hot during Pride weekend, so that should be your only inclination into what you should, or should not wear during the weekend -- and don't forget your sunscreen.

Historically, Pride events center around rainbow colors (as you will see many, many rainbows at Pride); yet, other symbolic colors and flag motifs will also be showcased. From Target's Pride Collection to leather harnesses and Drag, there will be every subgroup within our community on display, with a major sense of Pittsburgh Pride.

The Number 1 Rule

Above everything else, enjoy yourself. Celebrate your authentic self and have pride in who you are, who you love, and who you are meant to be. For more information on Pittsburgh Pride 2024, please be sure to visit

qburch.com and
pittsburghpride.com. 



Happy Pride from 5801

We know that Pride extends beyond just a single month—it embodies an infinite celebration of unity and acceptance. But Pride Month is a time to highlight our solidarity as a unified voice, to lift those who are not yet able to celebrate, and to showcase the vibrant diversity of Pittsburgh's LGBTQ+ community, a diversity that even outshines the colors of our rainbow flag.

We're deeply honored to be a small part of this incredible community and invite you to share some of your Pride celebrations with us.

Follow our socials for a full line-up of events.

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- Beyonce Impersonator Riley Knoxx @rileyknoxx

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FISHY WOO WOO

A NEW PLAY ABOUT QUEER FRIENDSHIP HITS PITTSBURGH THIS PRIDE

by Jason Shavers

Shawn is going through it! He has just broken up with his boyfriend of 9 years and now has to clean his things out of the apartment he loved. The two friends he brought to help him with this heartbreaking activity are too busy passing the Henny bottle and barbs with each other to truly assist. Shawn's ex was supposed to leave him alone in the midst of all this so he could get his stuff out but someone is turning the key in the

door. And if that's not enough, there is a rare Atlanta snowstorm on the horizon.

Intrigued yet? Great! Because that is the premise of Monteze Freeland's brand new play, *Fishy Woo Woo*, premiering at Pittsburgh Playwrights' new Madison Arts Center in the Hill District, May 31st through June 16th!

"It's fluff!," exclaims Monteze as

he tells me about the play. "I don't want anybody coming to this play thinking they're about to walk away with this big lesson. I didn't want to write that because there are enough people doing that right now." He would know. Writer, producer, director, and former Pittsburgh Post Gazette Performer of the Year Monteze Freeland is also currently a Co-Artistic Director of Pittsburgh's City Theatre. He's got his finger on the pulse of what's happening in the American theater today. "I just wanted to write a comedy, something that you could turn on your tv and see. These characters are people that you know, people that you like. And they're in situations that we all have gone through."

"That's a sitcom," I responded back.

"Most of my writing style comes from sitcoms actually," responds Monteze. "I like the setup of it. I like that it's characters that you get to know really quickly. Brains have a familiarity with archetypes so there's a shorthand that you can use inside of that style."

And boy did this statement resonate with me. Growing up, sitcoms were my jam! I developed personal relationships with sitcom characters. I feel a kinship with Darlene Connor. Uncle Phil was also my uncle and I'm still mourning his loss. Khadijah and Max were my girls and let's not get me started on Dorothy Zbornak. We simply do ➡



Monteze Freeland

not have the time to explore my feelings about her. So it's safe to say that the shorthand in sitcom writing that Freeland speaks about is effective.

"Well, what sitcoms inspire your writing," I ask.

"Well, of course, Golden Girls! Some other ones that inspired this play are Hot In Cleveland, Martin, and Living Single. But there's also some Carol Burnett in there. It gets a little wacky!"

There may not be a giant life-changing lesson in Fishy Woo Woo but there is something life-changing in it: Representation. "We're about to do a gay play in the Hill District," exclaims Freeland during our conversation.

An all-Black gay play too! The cast

of Pittsburgh favorites includes Mils "MJ" James as Cordero, Cheryl Bates White as Char, Royce Jones as Kaden, and Jason Shavers as Shawn. Yes, dear QBurgh readers, that's me!

"That makes me happy because there are a lot of gay people in the Hill District. They deserve to feel represented in their neighborhood. What I'm trying to do with this play in my own small way is make people see our similarities in this world. Maybe if straight people saw this, they could see that we go through the same shit they go through. We have gaslighting too. There's f*ck boys on both sides of the aisle. This play is also for people dealing with aging for the first time. When you're in your late thirties and early forties, you start to feel it! When people talk about 'young people', they're not talking

about you anymore. There's a divide now. How does our generation deal with that?"

So what does Fishy Woo Woo mean exactly? "I made it up," laughs Freeland. "It invokes an air of suspicion but it's really this friend group's nickname. It comes from the fact that they like to get revenge!" So basically what we have here is a sitcom-esque play about gay friendships and revenge featuring a ridiculously talented cast, written by an even more ridiculously talented queer playwright during Pride month. Need I say anything else, Pittsburgh? Come see Fishy Woo Woo!

For more information and tickets for Fishy Woo Woo, please visit pghplaywrights.org/season-info/fishy/ 🌈



Royce Jones



Mils James



Jason Shavers



Cheryl Bates



PRIDE 2024 WEEKEND

FRIDAY MAY 31- DANCING QUEEN PARTY
OUTSIDE EVENT 9-12 / INSIDE EVENT - 10-2 WITH DJ WINSTON / SHOT BOYS



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BI THE WAY, DON'T BE A PHOBE

by Travis Barkefelt

We've all dealt with it in some way. A rude comment, a strange look, doubting of the authenticity of our identity. An unfortunately all too common experience for queer folk is facing some form of queerphobia, from microaggressions to outright bigotry. From outside the community this behavior is already as hurtful as it is harmful, but what about when it happens from within the community? After speaking with Nicole, a bisexual woman, and Zach, a bisexual man, both of whom requested I refer to them only be their given names, the answer becomes apparent.

In short, it sucks.

In the realm of dating Nicole considered her brushes with biphobia both within and outside of the community as "frustrating," citing two common tropes that have plagued bisexuals for years, the idea of the promiscuous bisexual just looking for threesomes and the myth that bi people are naturally inclined to cheat. "There's just this assumption that because they're only one person that is not [all] genders that I'd be attracted to... they aren't going to be enough and I'm going to look elsewhere."

The worst part of it, Nicole added, is the feeling that because they've bought so strongly into these tropes, a partner may discount

the relationship without ever truly giving it a real chance.

Zach's experiences were not much of a departure from Nicole's. When asked if his identity ever resulted in friction in dating, he was quick to answer, "one hundred percent"

In one example, Zach experienced a particularly hurtful case of bisexual erasure, a process by which the authenticity of the identity of a bisexual person is called into question or outright doubted to exist, in a romantic relationship. "I had an ex who was...like 'are you sure you're bi? Cause you just kind of sound like a gay guy at times.'" What Zach felt hurt the most from this experience was this statement came from a bisexual woman, an unfortunate example of internalized biphobia.

With men, the experience was similar, with the pervasive accusation that Zach's identity was "just a phase," rearing its ugly head.

Nicole faced similar prejudice for not being a "gold star gay," saying she'll occasionally have experiences with female partners that feel she's "just doing this for fun" or that she's the type of bi girl "who really actually only falls in love with guys."

Partly to blame, Nicole felt, is that she is more "femme presenting,"

leading to her style and gender expression carrying with it various stereotypes of how she should act and who she should be attracted to.

Both parties exhibited clear hurt and frustration over these experiences, with Nicole reiterating the "superficial feeling" biphobia can cause in relationships and Zach lamenting the emotional toll of having "a core part of who [he] was being challenged...for no apparent reason."

One hope spot that both parties shared is a general lack of fetishization from within the queer community, though it seems our straight friends still have some ways to go in this regard.

"It's interesting that you bring up fetishization," Zack began, "because I have seen that happen with bisexuality, just not within the queer community...[it's] mostly in the straight community."

Zach added that the experience of fetishization differs between bisexual men and bisexual women. "I'll say that I'm bi and they're like, 'you're just gay' but if they're talking about a woman that's bi, like, Oh my God."

This observation was echoed by Nicole's discussion of her own experience, "As a bi female, [in] the

straight male community, there's a certain degree of fetishization of bi females...it's often looked at as 'that's really hot, and if I'm dating you, then that means you'd automatically be down to have threesome, have somebody else.'

Outside of dating, both Nicole and Zach shared some of their experiences with friends and the wider queer community.

Nicole's experience has been fairly positive. With a diverse friend group identifying across the queer spectrum, Nicole said that "[No one] has tried to ostracize or say anything about my sexuality. They've all been like, 'Hey, that's great. You're awesome that you're a part of it.'"

Though it's clear that acceptance of bisexuality and bisexual individuals has been increasing, it's important to remember that Nicole's experience is unfortunately not universal. Zach felt that since he came out, he's felt somewhat disconnected from the queer community.

"All that questioning, all that doubt, all that challenging... it kind of left this disconnectedness where I'm hesitant now to go into queer spaces," Zach said.

There's been times, Zach stated, that to avoid feeling out of place in his own community, he adopts the label of gay, simply to avoid accusations and doubt.

Additionally, Zach shared a particular experience where a former friend told him under no uncertain terms that "bi people do not exist" and that they either "default back to straight, or come out as gay," a claim made more vexing as the same friend was in the process of discovering their own sexual identity.

"Yeah, that one kind of sits with me," Zach added, after a brief moment of quiet reflection.

Though the focus of this article was biphobia, it's important to remember that queerphobia

comes in many forms and impacts vulnerable members across the queer spectrum in countless ways, even from within the community itself. It's important, especially in our current political climate that we stick together as a community and make all members feel safe and welcome for years to come. 🌈



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MISOPHONIA
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All Hail



Long may they reign



The Kings

by Chrissy Costa

In the world of drag, the queens outnumber the kings all across the country and in Pittsburgh, it's no different. While the drag queens seem to be thriving and the scene here flourishing with brunches, bingos, pageants, and happy hours, the kings seem to be several moves behind.

Nothing can sexually confuse this ol' lesbian more than a handsome drag king. I remember watching *The L Word*, (the original series) and swooning as drag king Ivan Aycock (Kelly Lynch) seduced Kit (Pam Grier) to the tune of Leonard Cohen's "I'm Your Man." I wanted to be both of them, simultaneously. So I was astounded to learn that there are so many people who don't even know that drag kings exist, much less in Pittsburgh!

Though they may be outnumbered, there are several kings currently shaking up the drag scene here, determined to change the status quo. Meet some of Pittsburgh's hottest drag kings:

Max Starvania has quickly become a crowd favorite in the 'Burgh. Max attributes his start in drag to the pandemic and S&S Productions - S&S is founded by Indi Skies and Luna Skye. "I went to the first S&S Productions Drag Brunch at Trace Brewing during Pride. I had been exposed to drag before but there was something about that show that was so different. I think it was being around other humans for the first time in a long time, it being Pride, and had a lot to do with Indi Skies and Luna Skye as hosts. They were positive, kind, funny, and the performances were wildly entertaining," said Max.

Over the course of the next year he went to a lot of S&S shows and eventually got to a point where

he said, "I think I want to do this." Max said it was partially because he wanted some kind of a creative outlet and partially because watching drag got him through a tough year. "It brought me so much joy that I wanted to do the same for others. After performing in my very first number I was absolutely hooked. I was never a theater kid in high school. I actually went to college for film production to be behind the camera, not in front of it, but being on stage ignited a little flame I didn't even know I had. Drag has also allowed me to experience gender in a more nuanced way. It has given me the confidence outside of drag to dress more masculine of center which is how I prefer to express myself. There are very limited rules

in drag which is what makes it so freeing creatively!" Max keeps his drag as positive and



Julian Chaotic



Land Shark

humorous as possible in an attempt to stay true to what got him into it in the first place.

Mitch Please has been performing just over a year and says he didn't know drag kings existed until about two years ago. But that realization was also a catalyst to his entrance into the world of drag. "I always loved drag. I have been fascinated by it from the first show I attended in college. I was involved in performing arts through high school and college, so the transition to performing in drag just felt natural to me. Drag has given me a chance to flex my creativity with both performing and visual arts, enjoying the artistry behind the costumes, props, and makeup."

Land Shark said he went from the typical theater kid to drag performer pipeline into becoming a drag king. "I missed performing. I'd wanted to do it since 2018, but the "rules" on gender presentation in drag felt a lot more strict at the time. Hell, I was almost a drag queen at the start of 2020 because I wanted to wear colorful makeup and didn't think kings could. I was actually pretty bitter about drag for a while, until some friends invited me to a drag brunch in 2022. I saw two kings perform that day and they were doing exactly what I wanted to do. I was thinking of a first number and a name before I got home. A month later the shark was born. A lot of my inspiration comes from Saturday Night Live, and I figured Land Shark had a nice ring to it."

BraxXx has been doing drag for just under two years now. He says though the scene here is scarce and he feels the kings don't get as much recognition and support, the drag queens have been very welcoming in Pittsburgh. "I've always loved going to drag shows in the previous years. I'm a very shy, quiet guy but have so much respect for drag entertainers. I was at pride in Columbus a few years ago and I just randomly decided after the pride show I wanted to show up for an

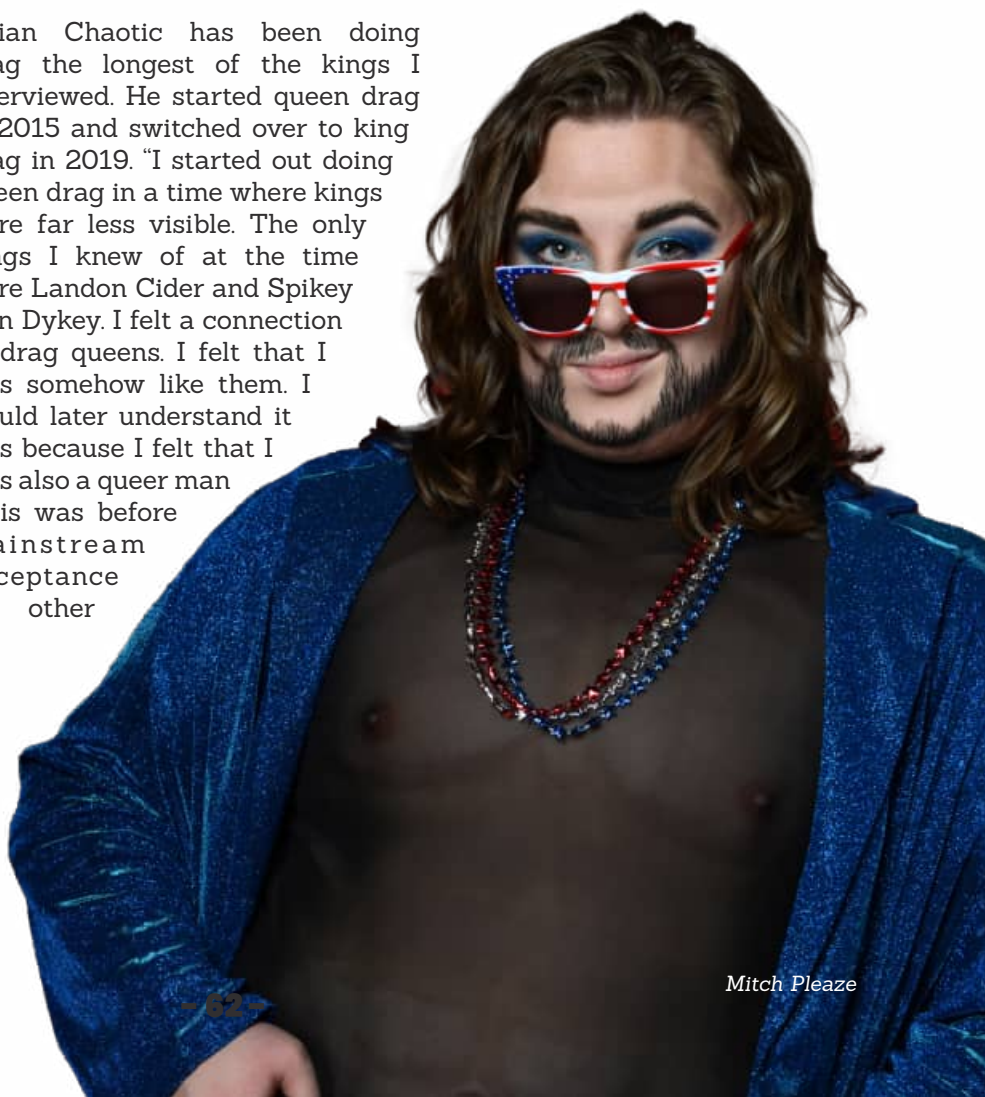
open stage and have loved it ever since." He hopes one day there will be more crowds filling places at all drag king venues. "It's very rare to get a crowd at drag king shows."

Micah Sanova has always been drawn to a stage. "I have a big personality and I love being known as the life of the party. Drag in particular is just so beautiful to me in what it allows people to be and create. I've been a fan of drag for years now, and attending shows in Pittsburgh has allowed me to witness and experience watching performers who are reflective of me, my beliefs, and have made me feel seen. That's the feeling I want to give others. When I started doing drag, I used it as a way to express the sides of myself and my identity that I'm unable to comfortably express at moments in daily life: my sexuality, my fluidity, my gender. I wanted to figure out who I am and the stage is a place where I can try, fail, change ideas, and grow."

Julian Chaotic has been doing drag the longest of the kings I interviewed. He started queen drag in 2015 and switched over to king drag in 2019. "I started out doing queen drag in a time where kings were far less visible. The only kings I knew of at the time were Landon Cider and Spikey Van Dykey. I felt a connection to drag queens. I felt that I was somehow like them. I would later understand it was because I felt that I was also a queer man (this was before mainstream acceptance of other

identities in drag really started happening). In October 2019, I switched my persona to be masculine presenting when I started coming out as trans to close friends. That became a major outlet for me to be gendered/named correctly while I was living in a house where I couldn't be myself. I still have both queen and king personas. Indigo Chaotic (the queen) is the deadname/pre-transition version of Julian Chaotic (the king)---so I have a drag transition that mirrors my real life transition. I still occasionally bring out Indigo for some numbers where I tell my story of transitioning and issues that I face against people who don't accept me as who I am."

Agni Paradise has always loved performing and has been watching drag since he was old enough to get into shows. "I was in a Bollywood fusion dance team in college and after graduating I really missed it. I've always felt like Indian movies and culture (both south and north)





Agni Paradise



Micah Sanova



BraxXx

really lends itself to drag but there's tragically few South Asian drag artists let alone kings, and I really wanted to do the numbers I had always wanted to see! Beyond that, drag has been important to my exploration and expression of gender as a trans person." Agni describes his drag as very South Asian. I think overall as a queer person who isn't white, when you first come out it can feel like there's a choice to be made between your queerness and your culture. I know when I first came out I could barely find any South Asian drag performers, especially local to me. Beyond drag, at first I didn't even know of any South Asian gay people, let alone any South Asian trans people. I honestly didn't even think that I wanted to transition for a long time because I wasn't seeing myself in the white transmascs who were prominent. Within my drag, I find it really important to be loudly both queer and Indian, and to show more people like me that they can be both as well. Drag has a long history of being an artform trans people (and others) use to express both the personal and political, showcasing joy within ourselves."

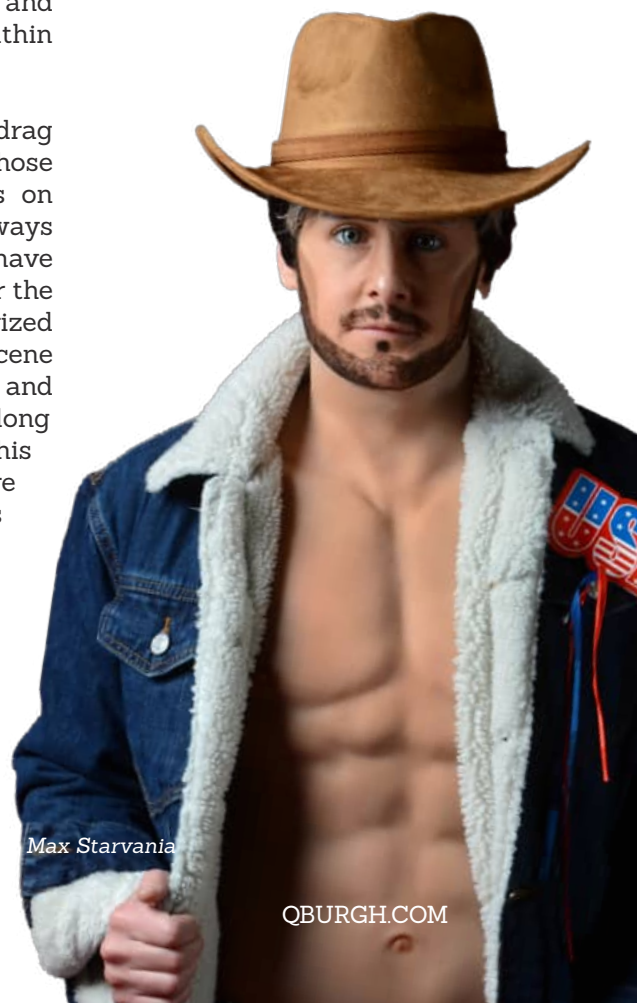
Zion Grindr has been doing drag the least amount of time of those interviewed but has no plans on stopping anytime soon. "I've always admired the art of drag and have been a fan for a long time. Over the past few years I've re-familiarized myself with the local drag scene and was in awe of the up and coming talent, as well as the long established performers in this city. I also noticed that there were not a lot of drag kings and especially not enough Black drag kings. I wanted to change that and start my own drag journey to explore the really cool intersectionality of my gender expression and art."

Almost every king echoed the same sentiments across the board regarding the future of king drag. More

inclusivity, more spaces outside of bars, more intersectionality. Land Shark said, "I think there's still a general consensus that the kings here aren't as good as they'd like us to be. But most of us are relatively new. Give us time."

Mitch Please would love to see the bars and a lot of the more seasoned performers be more open minded and inclusive to drag kings in our community. "We are just as valid in our drag and our existence, and deserve the same recognition we give them." Max wants to see kings and other drag artists that don't fit the binary to be booked and hosting their own shows. "I also want our short list of queer specific venues to support drag and to take care of us as performers. We rely on these spaces to be able to do our art on a consistent basis so having them support drag in addition to all the other queer events they host is paramount to the scene being able to thrive."

These kings refuse to be checkmated. 🌈



Max Starvania



SZR

Sapphic Club Night For Pittsburgh's Queer Ladies

by Chrissy Costa

For the queer ladies of Pittsburgh looking for a space to dance, party, and connect with other queer ladies, look no further. SZR club night takes place every second Saturday from 9 pm to 2 am at The Underground, which is the club inside of Brewer's Bar.

SZR is a sapphic club night and the first actual consistent Saturday night party thrown by and for lesbians and queer women in the city. "Steel Carabiner at Blue Moon, Crush Hour, and the now defunct Femmes & Them's Night at P-Town predate SZR and deserve a shout-out. But I, and many other queer girlies in the city really wanted an actual dance party and we wanted it over a weekend," said Huny Young, founder of SZR.

Huny says the LGBTQ+ venues in Pittsburgh don't really focus on lesbians. "They'll let us gather there and even give us a night during the week, but they save Friday and Saturday night for the gay boys. I think they assumed we weren't into going out as much as the men are, but the truth is we just want events that are specifically marketed towards and created for US. Queer people have always found community and connected with each other on the dancefloor, and that includes lesbians."

The first SZR was in January of this year and Huny says it was a huge success. It's continued to grow very quickly and has garnered a lot of attention and support, so much so that they also added a daytime version in April.

As for the SZR experience, Huny says it's wild and sexy. "There are go-go

dancers and shot girls. I want it to feel like a dykey Studio 54. SZR day party is every fourth Saturday, 3-8 pm at 5801 and that's classic day party vibes. I love the night, but there's nothing like dancing under the sun all day, getting that serotonin boost, and having the option to go on a date later or even go home. The crowd is mostly queer, cis, and trans women and non-binary sapphic femmes, but we also love to see the trans men pull up. Many of them began their queer journey identifying as lesbians, so they are our family. And of course, some gay boys pull up, too. Anyone is welcome at SZR as long as those who are not sapphic don't take up too much space. It's also important to note that we are a Black queer femme collective and Black queer and trans women and femmes are centered."

Huny also wants to disprove the notion that lesbians can't or won't fill up a venue on a Saturday night. "SZR has proven we can."

Huny Young is a DJ, event producer, and award-winning photographer. Bred in New York, NY and currently residing in Pittsburgh, Huny's work in music and the visual arts is rooted in exalting Black women and the LGBTQ+ community. As the founder of Mostbeautifullest, dubbed "the collective altering Pittsburgh's nightlife scene for the better," a co-founder and the Experience Lead of the Queer Fam Fund, as well as consulting on diversity outreach and curating lineups for both national and international festivals and events, her mission to expand visibility and access in nightlife is a through-line in everything she touches.

Mostbeautifullest (aka The MoB) is a Black queer femme-led party collective based in Pittsburgh, PA. It's giving kakis, club culture and cuntiness; QTBIPOC to the front.

Amongst many treasured accolades, Huny was named Person of the Year in Music 2021 by Pittsburgh City Paper; is a 2-time recipient of the Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh grant (2016, 2020); a 2020 "Best in Pittsburgh" honoree for co-founding the Pittsburgh Artists Emergency Fund; and was most recently named a 2024 Black LGBTQ+ Change-Maker in the Arts by GLAAD. Her portraiture and installation work has been exhibited in The Mattress Factory Museum, The August Wilson African-American Cultural Center, Space Gallery, McDonough Museum of Art, at Prizm Art Fair (Art Basel Miami), and more.

Huny has done interviews and podcasts and even DJed in Mexico since SZR began and says SZR is what everyone wants to talk about. "People in LA and Philly have also DMed me to ask for SZR to come to their city, too. I think that speaks to the marketing of it, the joy that's apparent, and the need for more lesbian-specific events even beyond Pittsburgh. It's a really dope look for this city in general, too. I love it when Pittsburgh nightlife gets attention elsewhere; it's always been a focus of mine even as a booker/curator. We get overlooked and slept on far too much considering the innovation and talent that is present here and I say that as someone who got my start in DC and NYC nightlife."

Thank you for your service, Huny! 🌈

Mostbeautifullest Pride month events:

June 1 - Cherry Bomb Day Party: Pride Edition, 4-10pm at Trace Brewing

June 1 - Real Hot Girl Sh*t: Pride Edition, 10pm-2am at Cobra

June 7 - SZR, 9pm-2am at The Underground

June 8 - Mostbeautifullest @ Hot Mass 11pm - late

June 29 - SZR Day Party at 5801, 3-8pm



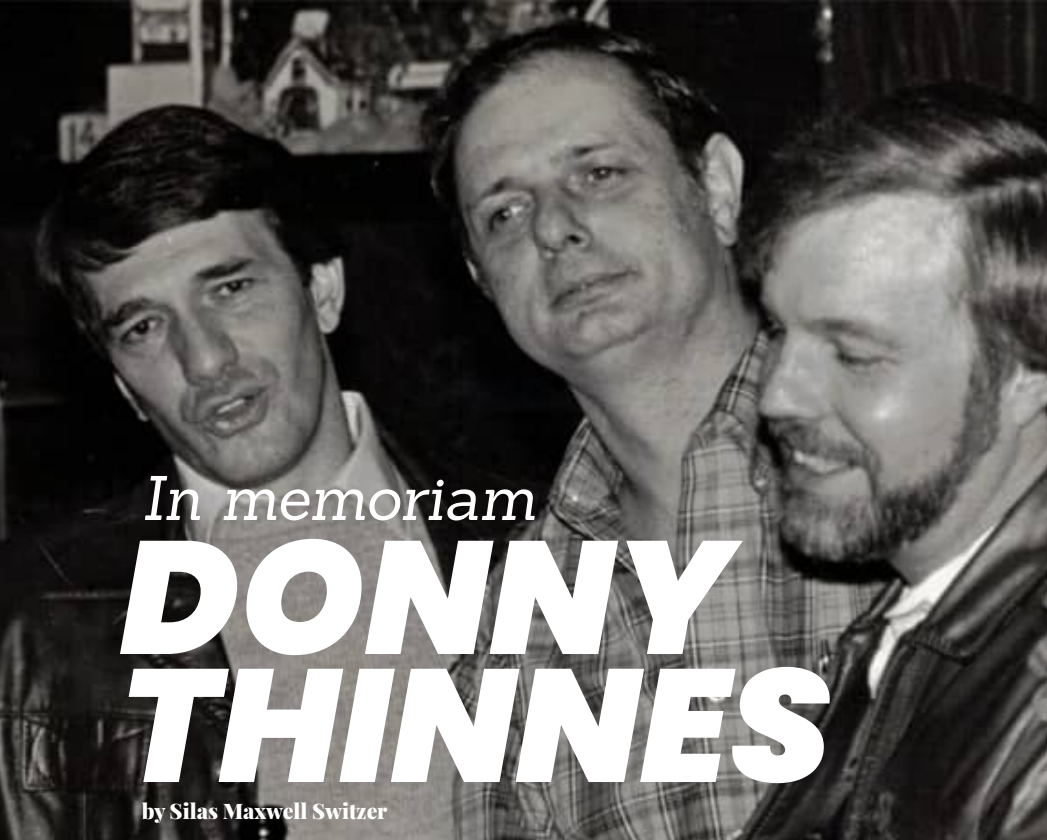
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In memoriam **DONNY THINNES**

by Silas Maxwell Switzer

Chuck Tierney, Donny Thinnes, and Jack at the Norreh. Year unknown

The dimly lit room is scattered with men in jeans with hankies poking out of their back pockets. They eye each other curiously, waiting for the right moment, sipping their drinks at the standing bar. The room is hazy with smoke; the chatter from upstairs leaks in, providing adequate background noise for a room that would otherwise be near silent. Two men catch each other's eye, one tilts his head toward the back room, and the other begins walking slowly, but without hesitation. Soft music lilts in as the soft conversation resumes and everyone waits to see who will pair off next.

This is how I imagine the Norreh. The late Donny Thinnes' bar was dubbed as more "serious" than the other gay bars of the 70s and 80s, known in part for its multi-floor division with very different bars existing on separate floors. "Donny's was famous for downstairs and its back room where it was dark, you could go downstairs, and then there was another bar and there were no seats, people just stood around. It was somewhat darker than upstairs, and then the back room through a little hall was even darker," says

Tim Ziaukas, a patron of the Norreh in the 1970s and a friend of Donny.

There was a time when the second floor was a lesbian bar, "One of the few really women spaces in the city." There was a time when the downstairs bar was a leather bar. There was a time when the second floor was disco and art, and the first floor was pool tables and games. "Norreh" is "Herron" spelled backward; the bar resided at 1226 Herron Avenue, and there were "a lot of inverted things happening at the Norreh."

The Norreh was a late bar; it was the place to go after having heard the last call at every other gay bar in the city. You could party at Pegasus, The Eagle, The Holiday, and at the end of the night the Norreh would always be there waiting for you. "Was there ever last call at the Norreh, aside from the final one?"

The Norreh was initially branded as a social club, as many gay bars at the time were. Being licensed as a social club was a way for after-hours bars to operate somewhat under the radar and out of the eye of local law enforcement. This was

essential during a time of police raids on gay bars and clubs. As for the bar owners, "You had to be both sweet and sour at the same time, you know, it took a rough, tough person to be in an illegal business." The Norreh/D.B.'s/Donny's Place had its doors open for about half a century, which not many other gay bars in the area can claim. As a social club, the Norreh offered membership cards to its patrons, which offered a sense of community to the regular attendees of the bar.

All kinds of events occurred at Donny's Place: a Country and Western reunion, Halloween parties, Superbowl parties with All-You-Can-Eat dinners, and a fundraiser in conjunction with the Pittsburgh Motorcycle Club that gave teddy bears to children in the hospital over Christmas. Donny held toy drives and gave out free soft drinks to designated drivers. For their 20th anniversary celebration, there was "Something Special Everyday" for 20 days leading up to the anniversary. This included things like free pool and pinball, a free album from DJ Billy, and an open bar, free food, and gifts for everyone on the 20th day, October 13th, "All on Donny." The bar was even presented with a Certificate of Merit in Public Health in 2001 for "outstanding service to the citizens of Allegheny County in the recent outbreak of Hepatitis A!"

Donny himself had been involved with Pittsburgh's gay bar scene since the late 60s when he started working as a liquor runner for Lucky Johns, another giant in the world of local gay bars. "[Donny] has been a part of the business and a part of LGBTQ Pittsburgh since the Nixon administration." According to Mr. Ziaukas, "He was funny too. Dark, edgy, um, uh... interesting."

Aside from running the Norreh, Donny also helped establish the Pittsburgh Tavern Guild Association: a line of communication and collaboration between the gay bar owners in the city. The Tavern Guild was instrumental in helping to

put on the yearly Memorial Day and Pride month picnics, as well as many other LGBTQ events across Pittsburgh. Donny and the Guild were also key in aiding the Pitt Men's Study, a study dedicated to curing HIV/AIDS. At the time of the AIDS crisis, the Guild came together and allowed the study to set up places to give blood in the bars, massively increasing the reach and effectiveness of the study.

Donny had a reputation for taking care of those who lacked community. "He had a very generous spirit and was very kind and giving to many people, particularly many people who had little or nothing because of what it meant to be gay and out in the early 70s." Like many of the bar owners of the time, Donny gave generously, and often anonymously to LGBTQ causes and organizations around the city. "There were a lot of gay and lesbian orphans in the 60s, 70s, people who really had no other family than the family they made in the community. And people like Donny did a lot of things for holidays with those people. You know, there were dinners and holiday gatherings. So I mean, he really was among the people who helped create a sense of community."

Donny Thinnes passed away this year on January 20 after battling a myriad of health issues. He was 76 years old. 🌈

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FABULOUS FUNNY FOLKS

by Roy J Gloeckl II

Queer comedians of Pittsburgh

This city has a lot of options for entertainment but if you're tired of musicals with sad singing French folks or grown-ups dressed like cats, maybe you should switch up your routine and support your local live comedy scene. Bars, libraries, coffee shops, every night of the week, there's comedy happening somewhere in Pittsburgh. There's probably something hilarious happening right now and you're missing it! Let's be real, the tickets for these shows are probably gonna be much cheaper than Hamilton and no one's going to roll their eyes cuz you wore a Steelers jersey to the show. So get to know some of our favorite queer comedians and where you just might find them slinging jokes!



Georgia Warder (she/they)

Fave Venue:

Don't Tell Comedy Pittsburgh shows.

Stand-up Standout:

Sarah Silverman

Why comedy? My coming out experience was rough so I listened to Ellen's interviews with Oprah after she came out as well as her specials. Comedy really helped me through that time in my life.

Must-see:

Happiest Season.

Your act:

Being a lesbian is part of my act, but only because it's part of my life experience. I'm happy to include that part of my life, but I never try to make it the focus of the set. I want audiences to laugh first and foremost. I really enjoy performing on rural shows where some of the crowd might not be comfortable with queerness, but I love it if I can get them to laugh at a queer topic that they may not have known before coming to the show.



Asher O'Briant (they/he).

Fave Venue: Alaska. Middle of the night. Snowed in at a bar.

Stand-up Standout: Margaret Cho.

Why comedy? I've always loved writing, but performing became a necessary evil in showing off my thoughts.

Must-see: For anyone who hasn't seen But I'm a Cheerleader, you're rooting for the wrong team.

Your act: My set is not all queer-coded. I do try to lull cis-het audience members into a sense of security, before pulling the rug out from under them. I think it helps to not only normalize all identities but also to bring comedy to subjects that are treated as tragedies. Coming out can be sad and scary, but there's so much laughter and joy to these experiences that is missing from the mainstream media. I mean, what's funnier than going through puberty...twice?

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Whitney Mor (she/her)

Fave Venue:

Brillobox.

Stand-up Standout:

Bernie Mac.

Why comedy?

Storyteller comedians inspired me. As a writer, comedy combines the two things I love most: writing and laughing.

Must-see:

Broad City.

Your act:

I haven't run into a lot of audiences that have taken issue with me being gay which is a blessing. I mostly run into comics with that issue.



Matty Malloy (he/him)

Fave Venue: Fat Cat, Bottlerocket Social Hall, and Arcade Comedy Theater.

Stand-up Standout: Lisa Lampinelli, Ali Wong, Nicole Byer, Wanda Sykes, Bianca Del Rio, Fred Armisen.

Why comedy? I performed theater all my life but NYC had her way with me and I was tired from the endless audition/rejection cycle. Once I ended up in Pittsburgh, it seemed like the perfect time to try stand-up and find a way to reignite my love of performing.

Must-see: Special, Bonding, and Search Party. I also love the podcast Las Culturistas with Matt Rogers and Bowen Yang.

Your act: As a confused, closeted, gay child growing up at church in a conservative town, I find a lot of humor now looking back on my life. I do get nervous if there is an older, conservative crowd, but I think since I make fun of myself a bit, it invites them to laugh with me AND at me. The one thing I never want to do is cut back queer material to make an audience comfortable. If anything, it should be amped up even more.



Envy Sinn (she/her)

Fave Venue: P Town (Comedy Open Mic every Thursday!)

Why comedy?

I've always had the idea to pursue comedy but while I was co-hosting a show at Casey's Draft House, my fellow host Chuck Lewis was really the driving force for finally getting me into doing stand-up!

Must-see:

Q-Force. I am a huge fan of adult animation!

Your act:

Being a drag queen gave me the confidence to do stand-up. Lots of my comedy tends to be more on the suggestive & raunchy end so my identity does end up in much of my act! It can be very hit or miss with a primarily straight crowd so I might try to deliver a joke differently. That was also a driving factor for why I started hosting an open mic in a queer space so that queer people will have a place to perform with zero judgment.



Michael Buzzelli (he/him)

Fave Venue: Brillobox.

Stand-up Standout: My mentor and friend, Bob Smith, the first gay comedian on the Tonight Show. My friends Gab Bonesso, Teresa Roberts Logan, Melanie White, Chris Duval, and Alan Olifson, who help make me a better comedian. Chrissy Costa. Don't tell anyone but she has a heart bigger than her hoop earrings.

Why comedy? I had written a comedy. A friend told me the script was funny but I didn't describe it in a funny way. I found a pitch class but it cost \$1,000 so I went with Greg Dean's Comedy Class for \$300 (he taught Whoopi Goldberg). So, frugality got me into comedy. I fell in love with the format. I could write a joke that day and get feedback the same night.

Your act: My identity is a big factor in my act. To quote Harvey Fierstein, "I am who I am." I am a storyteller first and foremost, but comedy works best when it comes from a place of truth. Audiences want to enjoy themselves and whether a comedian is black or white, gay or straight, we can all find common ground.



Brandi Roberts (she/they)

Fave Venue: St. Clair Social & Arcade Comedy Theater.

Stand-up Standout: Jim Carey, Debra Wilson, Wanda Sykes, Whoopi Goldberg, Sam Jay, Dave Chappelle, Yamaneika Saunders.

Why comedy? It was a natural course of events. In high school I was voted "Class Clown." I used comedy to heal myself from trauma. But, the major push was when I dropped out of college in 2015 and one of my old managers at Chili's kept encouraging me. One day, I went for it and actually signed up for an open mic. Well, here we are eight years later and counting. Thanks Ronnie!

Must-see: The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love.

Your act: My sexuality is a part of my act but I try not to focus on it too much. I have many places of sectionality in my identity. I think it is important to highlight for visibility and to use it as a means to dismantle outdated stereotypes that hinder the minds of those that do not necessarily support the community due to a lack of understanding.



Abbey Hannis (they/she)

Fave Venue:

My friend's couch while we watch Glee!

Stand-up Standout:

Gianmarco Soresi. Really relatable for old theater kids.

Why comedy?

I never really wanted to pursue comedy, I'm an actor first. But a great friend of mine really pushed me to do it and I never looked back!

Must-see:

Our Flag Means Death.

Your act:

Comedy is one of the best ways to be yourself and my queerness has given me a lot of inspiration for my comedy. I've had plenty of crowds where 'gay topics' were not something they were interested in. You just gotta remind yourself that sometimes the jokes aren't bad, it just isn't the right crowd for you.

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Jo Crawford (they/them)

Fave Venue:

Casey's Draft House.

Stand-up Standout:

I gotta go with Maria Bamford. Although, I think a lot about Steve Martin's approach to stand-up in the 70's. Locally, Georgia Warder is dedicated, funny, and a really sweet person. She makes West Virginia look...better. Envy Sinn is an absolutely electric drag performer/comic/host. She saw me perform once and told me I was a non-binary icon. I was like "dawg, you just hosted while pole dancing. I am OK." You've also got Slater Williams who's out here doing music and comedy. Until Slater, I'd never met anyone who was so excited to tell me that they're also non-binary!

Why comedy?

Anything that showcased a more abstract and/or absurd style was absolutely my vibe (Newgrounds, SNL, Comedy Central, & Adult Swim). So to this day, my mom still doesn't understand my sense of humor. Also, I owe quite a bit to early Chappelle (ironic, I know) and Tina Fey. But a special shout-out to Patton Oswalt for showing me that comics can make a whole career out of being absurdist nerdy oddballs.

Must-see:

Rocky Horror Picture Show (live). But I'm a Cheerleader. The Golden Girls.

Your act:

I lean more deadpan so when I talk about my queer perspective, it becomes this understated thing that doesn't conflict with my desire to talk about something like that Tupac hologram and how solemn it must be to live out the rest of its existence on someone's thumb drive.



Joe Esch (he/him)

Fave Venue:

Bottlerocket Social Hall and Bryant Street Barber Shop.

Why comedy?

Jeff Foxworthy's Golden Corral sponsorship.

Stand-up Standout:

The aforementioned Jeff Foxworthy.

Must-see:

The Other Two, Bottoms, Los Espookies.

Your act:

My identity factors in a bunch but I don't think that's exclusive to me or even queer comics in general. Just a consequence of a very individual-oriented format. For the most part, it's been pretty successful. Part of being a good stand-up comic is being able to relate with all kinds of people who aren't necessarily like yourself.



Abigail Elias (she/they)

Fave Venue:
St Clair Social!

Stand-up Standout:
Big Jay Oakerson, Steph Tolev, Sarah Sherman, Gabby Lamb and John Mulaney.

Why comedy?
I love making people laugh. As a kid, I would fixate on what I said or did to make people laugh so I could do it again. On a more insane note, I matched with my therapist's son on Tinder one time and while retelling the story, five different people told me to try stand-up. And so I did!

Must-see:
But I'm A Cheerleader.

Your act: My vibe gives 'gay' to gay people and most women, but not to the primarily straight white men in the audience. I'm someone whose style leans hyper femme so when I pop out saying 'I like women and also have a boyfriend,' it ruins some sort of illusion for them. I try to pepper it in, but sometimes it bombs. And that's okay! Not every flavor of comedy is for every audience.



Roy Gloeckl (he/him)

Fave Venue: My first is still my fave: Bottlerocket Social Hall. Shoutout to Kingfly Spirits, Brillobox, and Willow Station, too!

Stand-up Standout: Robin Williams, Steven Fry, Randy Feltface, Gianmarco Soresi, Sarah Millican, Larry Dean.

Why comedy? As the great Roger Rabbit said, "My whole purpose in life is to make people laugh." I've been writing silly things since childhood, I did theater in high school and college, so this just seemed like a natural next step for a snarky smart ass like me.

Must-see: The Birdcage. Harley Quinn animated series. Schitt's Creek.

Your act: Every time I mention that I do comedy, someone says, "oh that's terrifying, you're so brave, etc." As someone with major anxiety, you would think I'd agree but, I'm going to confess to you, Qburgh reader, being on stage is the one time I feel like myself. I get that mic in my hand and the fear is gone. It's a beautiful thing and I hope everyone, especially you, finds that one thing they are simply meant to do.



RESPECT

by Gustavo Thoth & Mr. K

In the realm of sexual wellness, how often do we define respect for ourselves and the relationships we place ourselves in? Without an understanding of RESPECT, we set ourselves up for harm, be it physical or mental, which can produce deep long-lasting scars. Additionally, healed scars from other traumas can be reopened and create greater harm.

For a community or an individual to grow and not turn into callous destructive clicks or individual destructive time bombs, all voices and experiences must feel welcomed and seen as valued contributors that are part of the greater whole of the community, moreover, realizing that one is part of something bigger than self is important. For integration into a broader community to take place in a healthy way, one must know self.

In looking at sexual wellness, Dr. Lana Holstein, a Yale-educated M.D. presents an interesting idea about sexuality. Dr. Holestien describes sexuality within seven dimensions (biological, sensual, desire, heart, intimacy, aesthetic, and transpersonal) which committed couples can use to transform their relationship from a day-to-day operational process devoid of human-to-human engagement but instead more towards a magnificent experience that strengthens the bond and provides grounding for both individuals in the relationship. An underlying ingredient to these various sexual interactions between two humans is RESPECT. The World Health Organization asserts, "Sexual health when viewed affirmatively, requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence." The view of pleasurable is a state of being that is defined by the individual, and how the individual defines pleasure for self. What it means to feel safe in sharing that understanding with another is also self-defined. In the self-defining and sharing of self, one is defining R-E-S-P-E-C-T and they are telling another what it means to them.

In real-world situations, a non-judgmental state is necessary when interacting, as superficial appearances are subjective and ill-advised as a basis for judgment. Consider a Black Leatherman walking into a bar, one may infer from the formal leather

appearance, officer's cap, and riding crop under his arm, that said Leatherman is a Dom top, evoking many variations of assumption to fill the mind before saying hello. In another situation, imagine seeing a local Porn Hub celebrity out at the club. Because you saw their performance online, does one take this as a definitive statement of one's willingness to engage or participate in sexual activity or willingness to be groped by others in a public situation? For RESPECT to be active, all participants in any interaction must communicate with each other and be willing to find out what Respect means to all involved with the interaction. Unspoken fantasies cannot be the grounding for any relationship, be it a one-night stand, ongoing friends-with-benefits or a long-term relationship. Moreover, respect is not some perceived understanding gleaned from an old archaic signal, but instead, it is a verbal statement and request of what is wanted and where the boundaries lie. Talk to the Leatherman and the Porn Hub celebrity in an open-minded, judgment-free way. You will find that they are humans with their own unique desires, interests, and comfort zones just like everyone else.

The non-profit organization Yourtown in Australia, conceptualized respect nicely in its basic understanding of it as an intentional action of accepting somebody for who they are, even when they're different from you or you don't agree with them. Respect within relationships creates feelings of trust, safety, and well-being. Additionally, respect is a learned behavior that does not come naturally – one must be open to learning about oneself and others.

So, with all this new understanding of respect, what is the next step? Aretha Franklin, put it perfectly, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T... Find out what it means to me." Look at yourself in the mirror and define respect for self, what you find pleasurable, and how you want to be treated. Moreover, as you engage with others verbally share your desires and listen and learn how others want to be treated. If you are open to it, allow a shift in your thinking about self, but do so in an informed and thoughtful manner, not in a manner of coercion, mental or physical.

If you have access to music, your authors invite you to listen to Aretha Franklin's song, Respect, and then meditate on the words. 🎵

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LGBTQ Non Profits, Groups, Charities, Leagues

Advocacy & Resources

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Swissvale, PA 15218
412-297-0548
Sisterspgh.org/brotherspgh

Gay 4 Good Pittsburgh

pittsburgh@gayforgood.org
Gayforgood.org/pittsburgh

Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation

North Side
925 Brighton Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
412-626-3812
Hughlane.org
East Liberty
421 N Highland Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Lebo Pride

Contact@LeboPride.org
412-419-1678
Lebopride.org

Love Diamond Project

(412) 807-0503

Nuns of Steel

Sister6p@nunsofsteel.org
(724) 400-3825

The Open Door

P.O. Box 99243
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
info@opendoorhousing.org
opendoorhousing.org

Pennsylvania Youth Congress

413 Walnut St
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 743-1035
payouthcongress.org

PFLAG Greensburg

506 Strangford Rd
Blairsville, PA 15717
(724) 459-8532
pflaggbg@gmail.com

PFLAG Pittsburgh

PO Box 5406
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
(412) 833-4556
pflagpgh.org

PGH Equality Center

info@pghequalitycenter.org
(412) 422-0114
pghequalitycenter.org

Pittsburgh Black Pride

PO Box 7514
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
info@pghblackpride.org
pghblackpride.org

Pittsburgh Leather Pride

steelcitylthr@gmail.com
pghlpw.com

Pittsburgh Pride Group

525 East Ohio St
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
info@pittsburghpride.com
pittsburghpride.com

Proud Haven

525 East Ohio St
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 346-1324
proudhaven.org

QMNTY Center

525 East Ohio St
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 953-4666
qmntycenter.org

Queer Family Planning Project

PO Box 2084
Lower Burrell, PA 15068
info@
queerfamilyplanningproject.org

Rangoli Pittsburgh

rangolipgh@gmail.com
rangolipittsburgh.com

SisTers Pittsburgh

2014 Monongahela Ave
Swissvale, PA 15218
412-297-0548
Sisterspgh.org

Three Rivers Business Alliance

1735 E. Carson St. #403
Pittsburgh, PA 15203-1705
724-205-0752
3rba.com

Trans Buddy Pittsburgh

transbuddypgh@gmail.com
(412) 944-4261
transbuddypgh.org

Trans Pride Pittsburgh

transpridepgh@gmail.com
transpridepgh.blogspot.com

TransYouniting

525 East Ohio St
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 346-1324
transyounitingpgh.org

True T Pittsburgh

4623 Liberty Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15224
(412) 291-8196
truetpgh.com

Washington County Gay Straight Alliance

59 E. Strawberry Ave
Washington, PA 15301
724-213-0096
wcgsa.org

Washington PA Pride

59 E. Strawberry Ave
Washington, PA 15301
(724) 835-4285
washpapride.com

Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh

(412) 687-8017
wcspittsburgh.org

The Arts

412Step

412StepContact@gmail.com
412step.com
LGBTQ line dancing

Arts Out Loud

4818 2nd Street
McKeesport, PA 15132
artsoutloudinc.org

Dreams of Hope

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dreamsofhope.org

Glittersty

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Junior Chamber of Commerce Players

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jccppgh.com

Lavendar Book Club

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community.lavenderbook.club

Queer Pittsburgh Crafters

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reelq.org

Renaissance City Choir

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rccpittsburgh.com

Steel City Squares

squaredancepittsburgh@gmail.com
steelcitysquares.org
LGBTQ square dancing

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Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-773-1120
AIDSFreePittsburgh.org

Allies for Health + Wellbeing

5913 Penn Ave
Pittsburgh PA 15206
412-345-7456
AlliesPGH.org

Central Outreach Wellness Center

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2360 Hospital Drive, Upper
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724-707-1155
North Side
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Pittsburgh, PA 15212
412-322-4151
Washington County
817 Jefferson Ave
Washington, PA 15301
724-993-8000
CentralOutreach.com

Metro Community Health Center

1789 South Braddock Avenue,
Suite 410 Pittsburgh, PA 15218
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MetroCommunity
HealthCenter.org

Pitt Men's Study

P.O. Box 7319
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-621-1643
PittMensStudy.com

Shepherd Wellness Community

4800 Sciota St
Pittsburgh, PA 15224
412-683-4477
SWOnline.org

Parties

Crush Hour

crushhourpgh@gmail.com
facebook.com/crushhourpgh
Monthly/Friday Happy Hour for
Pittsburgh's Queer Ladies and
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Dog Noise

instagram.com/_dog_noise
Queer Disco

G2H2

facebook.com/profile.
php?id=100057686288349
Gay Guy Happy Hour every
month

Honcho

crew@honchopgh.com
honchopgh.com
A queer rager in Pittsburgh.

iCandy

iCandyPittsburgh@gmail.com
icandypittsburgh.org
various events

Jellyfish

jellyfishpgh@gmail.com
linktr.ee/jellyfishpgh
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Social Groups

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pghlpw.com

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412-444-5032
fortpittbears.com

Lavendar Arcade

instagram.com/lavender.
arcade
Steel city queer pinball night

Singles Out Pittsburgh

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Steel City Pups

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Pittsburgh Tigers - LGBTQ Hockey

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Qrew Pittsburgh

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Steel City Bowling League

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steelcitybowling

Steel City Softball League

P.O. BOX 90097
Pittsburgh, PA 15224
412-444-5064
Steelcitysoftball.org

Steel City Volleyball League

Facebook.com/groups/
steelcityvolleyball
Steelcityvolleyball.org

Stonewall Alliance

901 Western Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
info@stonewallalliance.org
*Parent organization of the
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Hughlane.org

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LGBT & Allies
pride@carlow.edu

Carnegie Mellon University

PRISM

Room 335 Cohen University
Center
prism.andrew.cmu.edu

CMQ+

cmq-web@lists.andrew.
cmu.edu
cmqplus.weebly.com

Chatham University

Queer Student Alliance

levi.peacock@chatham.edu
instagram.com/chatham_qsa

Community College of

Allegheny County

Rainbow Alliance (Allegheny)

808 Ridge Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
412.237.4657
ccac.campuslabs.com/engage/
organization/rainbowallegh-
eny
jczajkowski@ccac.edu

Rainbow Alliance (Boyce & South)

1750 Clairton Road
West Mifflin, PA 15222
412.469.4649
ccac.campuslabs.com/engage/
organization/rainbowsouth-
boyce
asosanko@ccac.edu

Rainbow Alliance (North)

8701 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
ccac.campuslabs.com/engage/
organization/rainbownorth

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Duquesne Lambda

Union Information Center
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Pittsburgh, PA 15219
instagram.com/duqlambda
duq.campuslabs.com/engage/
organization/lambda

La Roche College

Gender and Sexuality Alli- ance

sarah.white@laroche.edu

Point Park University

Gender & Sexuality Spec- trum Alliance

201 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
pointparkgssa@gmail.com
linktr.ee/PPU_GSSA

Robert Morris University

Student Alliance for Equality (S.A.F.E.)

Nicholson Center 132
412-397-6828
hitchins@rmu.edu

University of Pittsburgh

Rainbow Alliance

611 William Pitt Union
412.648.7834
linktr.ee/rainbowatpitt

LGBTQ+ Affirming Faiths & Churches

Bet Tikvah

4905 Fifth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 256-8317
bettikvah.org

Community House Presbyterian Church

120 Parkhurst St
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
(412) 321-3900
thecommunityhousechurch.
org

Dor Hadash

4905 Fifth Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 467-6188
dorhadash.net

East Liberty Presbyterian Church

116 S Highland Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15206
(412) 441-3800
cathedralofhope.org

First Unitarian Church

605 Morewood Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 621-8008
first-unitarian-pgh.org

Metropolitan Community Church of Pittsburgh

4503 Old William Penn Hwy,
Monroeville, PA 15146
(412) 683-2994
mccpittsburgh.com

Queer Pagan Pittsburgh

facebook.com/QueerPagan-
Pgh

Saint Mary Magdalene Parish Catholic Community

509 South Dallas Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
412.661.7222
saintmarymagdalenepgh.org/
lbgtq-ministry

Satanic Temple Pittsburgh

tstpittsburgh@gmail.com
facebook.com/tstpgh
tstpgh.com

Sixth Presbyterian Church

1688 Murray Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15217
(412) 421-2752
sixthchurch.org

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Three stylized rainbow clouds are positioned at the top of the image, each with a different color sequence: red-orange-yellow-green-blue-purple-pink-black, red-orange-yellow-green-blue-purple-pink-black, and red-orange-yellow-green-blue-purple-pink-black.

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