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## ***Community Heroes Then & Now***

In this issue we look at some of our most respected community heroes,  
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Vivek Shraya, George Pratt, and Chris Edwards

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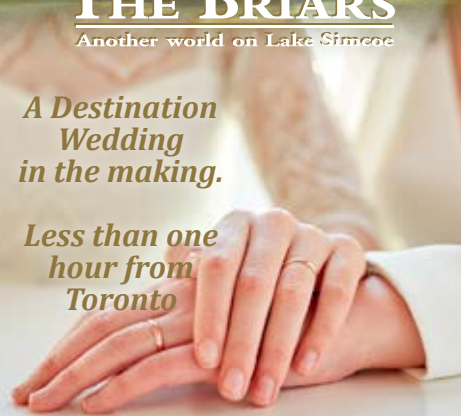
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## From the **Publisher**



What an exciting year 2017 was for **PinkPlayMags**. We celebrated a BIG milestone, our 10-year anniversary, which is not a small feat at all by Canadian publishing standards. We had a rocking party for the occasion, City of Toronto named us “one of the most praised magazines”, and Queen’s Park called us “a staple in our community, featuring stories, community, entertainment, and daring photography and art”. As well, we had a really fantastic editorial theme for the year, taking a look at the LGBTQ community starting from the 60s, and continuing all the way to imagining what our future might look like.

This year it is all about heroes. Heroes are important to us, and to our community.

We decided to mirror the theme of PinkPlayMags 2018 with the theme of our current fourth season of our talk show **On the Couch**. While the show is doing a year long look at Creative Heroes: Then & Now, the magazine will take a look at heroes who had an effect on community, commerce, politics, the scene, and human rights.

Welcome to 2018, and **Community Heroes: Then & Now**.

I must admit that I do worry that we will forget our past, our history, our struggles,

and the reason why we are here today. This is what drives a lot of my work in the community. I fear that as we get integrated into society, and get complacent with what we have accomplished as a community, we will soon not remember our heroes; those who paved the way, done the work, and had to fight really hard to get everything we got. So, heroes, and making sure we write about them, is important to me, and thankfully our team here at PinkPlayMags feels the same.

So here we are with a really exciting year ahead of looking at some wonderful movers and shakers, fighters and advocates, and all around good, kind, passionate people. Many who we included in this issue are personal heroes of mine. I leave you to find out more by jumping in and enjoying our spring edition.

Here we are lovely readers, now in our 11th year. THANK YOU. It means the world to us that you continue reading us and loving us. Have a great start of the year, and we will see you again come summer time, for a continued look at our community heroes.

**Antoine Elhashem**  
**Publisher**

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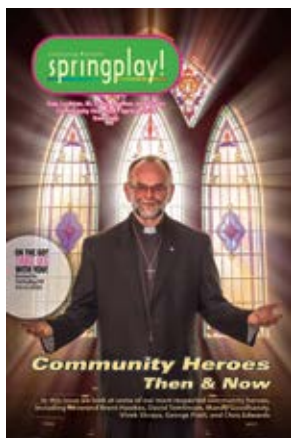
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## From the **Editor**

**G**reetings readers! This year we're putting the focus on **Community Heroes: Then & Now**. Those who have made great contributions within the community, standing up and speaking out for themselves, and others.

In this first instalment, we are featuring the wonderful **Reverend Brent Hawkes** on the cover. He has been at the helm of the *Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto* for several decades, bridging the gap between sexuality and religion, a daunting task to say the least. One of his more memorable moments was when he presided over Canada's first same-sex marriage, even before that sanction was officially recognized and legalized within the court system. This past Christmas he gave his last sermons as minister of the Church, and is now about to embark on the next chapter in his life.

Our other two main features are as equally exciting, as Jerry Schaefer chatted with the debonair **David Tomlinson**, and Sherry Sylvain sat down with the wonderful **Mandy Goodhandy**. Tomlinson is a writer, actor, and comic, who teaches, directs, and produces. The second season of his *Writers Block* scripted webseries is launching this month, and he's also currently working on two upcoming plays. Busy guy! Speaking of busy, Ms. Goodhandy, is in the constant phase of reinvention. This comedian, singer, entertainer, and Club 120 / 120 Diner owner, has a long storied history within the adult entertainment field. She's currently working on her memoirs, along with



a music album, both to be titled, "Just Call Me Lady".

Our travel feature is on **Detroit**, the city many are referring to as the comeback kid. After declaring bankruptcy just five years ago, this city is now one of fastest changing skylines in America. Also, be sure to read an excerpt from the new novel "G", by author **Joie Lamar**, who has also been doing some great groundwork for the people of Puerto Rico since the devastating hurricane last year.

Our Hot Artist feature is written by Joey Viola who had the opportunity to chat with artist extraordinaire, **Vivek Shraya**, while Kelly Wilk looks at all the queer programming at Toronto's **Gladstone Hotel**, our Community Cornerstone this issue. As well, Paul Bellini has contributed a wonderful article that reflects on all the work of community visionary and long-time business owner, **George Pratt**. Finally, Toronto's darling Jeanette Jabier takes a moment to remember the incredible **Chris Edwards**, who we all miss dearly.

As always, we have Horoscopes by Julie Antoinette, From The Heart by Mychol Scully, and Event Listings by Sherry Sylvain. It's going to be an exciting year ahead as we bring you more from community minded individuals who are making a difference. Stay tuned, and enjoy the read!

**Bryen Dunn**  
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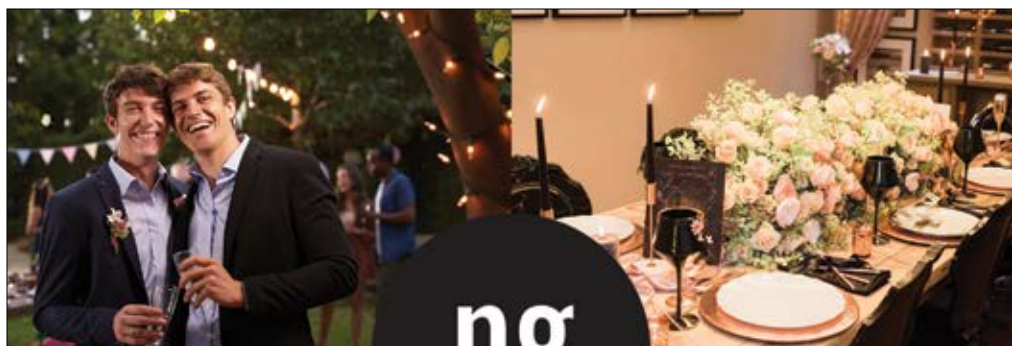
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# Reverend Brent Hawkes

## Fond Farewell & New Beginning

*By Cheryl Costello*

**R**everend Brent Hawkes has been a strong pillar within Toronto's LGBTQ2+ community, having officiated during some significant milestone human rights junctures that have defined history.

When news of his retirement from the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCCT) was announced, yet another milestone was being forged. "We made the announcement to the Church about two years ago that I'd be retiring somewhere around my 40th year of service, which would give congregants time to adjust, and the board time to find a replacement," Hawkes stated. When asked how he knew it was time to move on from his role at

MCCT, Hawkes said, "When I look back at the past 40 years I can see that part of my job was to establish the Church and grow it as a credible institution in our community, bringing it into the mainstream in terms of the LGBT human rights movement."

Planting those seeds as much for the community as the Church, was a critical part of Hawkes' ministry and role as a leader in Canada's religious landscape. "One of the things I'm most proud of is the work the Church has done to make spirituality and even religion, more accepted in the LGBTQ2+ community. There's no question, when I became pastor of the Church in 1977, that religion was such an enemy of the community that people were closeted if they were involved in churches. Now when you look at the Pride parade, one of the largest contingents is the spiritual groups."





He continues, “Early on, when I was out in public I made the decision to wear my clerical collar and a pink triangle so people would see gay and Christian together. Whenever I’m working or coming from the office, my partner John and I will be out on Church St. walking around holding hands so that people see LGBTQ2+ and Christian together. Making spirituality and religion more acceptable in our community so that people don’t have to choose between the two is something I’m most proud of in terms of the changes we’ve seen, and the role the church has played in that.”

Making faith more accessible to the community was a crucial part of what Hawkes’ work did for Toronto residents at a time when rights for same-sex couples to marry held an uncertain future. Where some argue that religion should stay in its respective lane, Hawkes noted that the church should be present when it comes to discussions surrounding human rights, especially where there is any, “God vs. them” rhetoric.

“They can’t make that argument if we’re there and we’re leading press conferences, organizing petitions, and speaking at rallies. It’s been very important for the church to play that leadership role around human rights. Equality in law is important, but it doesn’t mean equality in practice, so there’s still a lot of work to be done to ensure that those laws are implemented, and that LGBT individuals feel safe and welcomed by the various institutions across Canada,” he explains.

Hawkes’ work in the community made spaces safer for those who grew up and came out in Christian households. Scenes of Hawkes wearing a bullet-proof vest just to be able to marry gay and lesbian couples, were in newspapers and on television everywhere.

“That was the first time I had to get fitted for a bulletproof vest, which the Church bought me one, and there were a few occasions throughout the years I needed it. In 2001 when we did the first gay and lesbian marriages, there was significant backlash and significant threats. The day of the wedding, yes, I had to wear a bulletproof vest. I had twelve body-guards protecting me. They picked John and I up that morning and escorted us to Church and into the building. There were 50 police officers in the Church and 1,000 people came to the wedding. Everybody had to be searched and there were protesters outside,” he recalls

Hawkes is reluctant to call it courage though, and eschews appearing in the community as virtuous. “I think it’s more stubbornness. I was born and raised in the Maritime region, and in small communities all across Canada people talk about standing up for your neighbours and your family, and not letting people bully or discriminate against them. Being a pastor of a church in a city like Toronto, it was just right for me to respond, and right for me to take stands.”

When reflecting upon his work at MTCC, Hawkes noted that as proud as he is of the past, he’s equally excited for what’s next on the horizon. “We’ve got a great deal of work



*Brent, thank you for your years of service, leadership, and courage.*



to do in terms of educating segments of our society, because there are still a lot of places and institutions, particularly religious institutions, where LGBTQ2+ people are not safe, welcomed and included. Whether that's educating those who haven't ever had the conversation or openness and awareness about LGBTQ2+ issues, we still have more educating to do."

It was after an international trip, speaking with religious communities abroad, that Hawkes was inspired to help organizations change from within. He noted that it would, "confront religious based homophobia and transphobia, to change hearts and minds without fighting for legislation. How do you change hearts and minds so that LGBTQ2+ people are safer and more accepted in families and institutions?"

When asked about how such a bold vision would look in practice, he replied, "The approach will focus on three parts, the first being developing faith-based strategies with scholars and leaders,

whether it's Christian, Jewish or Muslim. The second part will be to pick five strategically based countries around the world and meet with activists on the ground, to find out what they need. We want to ask them for input so that if we were to develop a 20-year strategy to change public polls from opposition to their identity, it would be based on their needs. The third strategy is finding out how to clean up our own backyard and work with faith-based institutions in Canada to make them more accepting. The three parts are a faith-based strategy, an international strategy, and a Canadian strategy."

However, Hawkes is cognizant of the homonationalism that can negatively impact assistance that comes from the West, which may then be interpreted as a form of modern day imperialism. "We would offer resources and money raised to do what they need to change hearts and minds, because it can't be us coming from Canada and telling another country what

to do, but instead us sitting down with activists from these select countries, and looking at best practices around the world to find out what's working and what's not working. We need to steer clear of homo-nationalist and imperialist ideas of we-know-what's-best-for-you. We can however, present the ideas in terms of what we've learned, while at the same time asking what might work in these places."

While looking back at the transformation of the community and the fight for rights therein, Hawkes reflected that in order to move equity forward, "It's a combination of protest and negotiation. There always has to be both, and people play different roles at different times. It takes the protesters to get the institutions to listen to us, and it takes the negotiators to move things forward incrementally, being willing to compromise and not hold out for everything instead of getting nothing."

He noted there were several reasons for the need to shift to a different approach, because the fights that held the community together at one time would shift. "We were artificially held together by the threat to human rights and you see it happening more in the form of LGBTQ2+ conservatives, or people involved in corporate initiatives, sports, or religious endeavours. With Pride though, you still see hundreds of thousands of people coming out, and if you look at the number of organizations in the parade, it's enormous."

Without missing a beat he added that, "The issue now is less about getting involved with the movement and more about finding your place within the movement. What's the place where you can make a difference, whether it's in building or institution, or changing corporations from the inside out, there are a lot of places where people can find themselves in the movement. Years ago, there weren't that many organizations and you had some people involved in almost all of them, so it was easy to be part of the bigger picture, whereas now it's about many more individual pictures."

"I never thought we would have marriage equality in my lifetime," Hawkes confessed, noting the incredible momentum LGBTQ2+

rights movements had in such a short period of time. "What I think happened is that the LGBTQ2+ movement has ridden on the coattails of the feminist movement, that talked about owning our bodies and having the right to them, and the civil rights movements, that spoke about equal rights for everyone. I think the major difference was momentum and the power of coming out."

When asked about how to keep the momentum going, he believes that we'll need to focus primarily on relationships and relationship-building. "There are many communities where there hasn't been progress with the police and much of the progress we've made has been with white LGBTQ2+ communities. It's going to change though, when we have both protest and negotiation working together over the long haul, building relationships to make change. Focus on relationships in the movement, while respecting people who disagree. The last thing we need in our communities is fighting against each other. We may not agree and that's okay. We may have different institutions doing different things, and that's okay as well. Wherever we can partner, we should partner."

"Being an activist and seeing change happen is unbelievably rewarding," he said smiling. Then asking if he could get religious for just a minute, Hawkes surmised, "It's one of the reasons I think we were given the gift of life, and why God put us here, is to make the world a better place for those who will come after us."

Retirement brings a new horizon with it, but there is no slowing down for Hawkes. "I'll be sixty-seven soon, and if there are other things I want to do, I better get at it. If I want to have a second career, it's now the time to do that!"

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# DAVID TOMLINSON

## *So, an idea walks into a room...*

*by Jerry Schaefer*

**David Benjamin Tomlinson** is currently one of the most prolific artists we have in our city, and he begins our conversation by describing a formative moment in his creative life.

“I remember being on a bus, a school bus, when I was a teenager, and there was something about the bus, that day. Everyone was in a really good mood, or I hadn’t been beaten up, yet. It was a good morning. I was in a really good mood and the bus energy felt very bright. We passed by a funeral procession and I saw people crying and they’re getting into cars. I felt weird that I was having this really good day when all that was happening. And this light bulb went off and I realized, ‘So, it’s all happening and all at the same time.’ There’s something beautiful and terrible and joyous and sad and it’s all happening at the same time. And that’s the place, that was the beginning of me understanding the place that I write from, that understanding that there has to be room for it all.”

And Tomlinson does make room for it all. He’s a writer, actor, and comic, who teaches, directs, and produces. When he’s not drinking tequila, he eats the right food and does yoga. On top of being successful at all that, he’s fit, handsome, stylish, and tall. Plus, he’s got a pair of eyes that just won’t quit.

Tomlinson’s latest victory is **The Writers Block**, a show about a work-family powered by coffee, scotch, and honesty — brutal honesty. It features

three desperate TV writers, trapped in a broom closet, working on a show they hate, a show about, well, mummies — mummies on an island off the coast of British Columbia.

“It’s a web series I did guerrilla style two years ago,” Tomlinson explains. “I created it with Matt Watts (Michael Tuesday and Thursday), and then Aurora Brown (The Baroness Von Sketch Show). Matt, and I did a season of it, 10 episodes on \$1500. It got the attention of Frantic Films and we pitched it to CBC, who said ‘Yes’, and so we got to shoot it.”

“I love watching Aurora be a strong woman leader, who, you know — she’s complicated and she’s not perfect but she’s, like, a woman in charge and then you get to see this queer character (Tomlinson) who is just, kind of, matter-of-fact and then they’re sort of balanced out by this other person. It’s like different people from different places having to work together in this situation that’s kind of f\*\*ked up, and I like the representation.”

He also wants to see representation of his Generation X demographic.

“There is no representation of Gen X (out there), right now. People are millennials and people are boomers. No one’s talking about Gen X. And I’m like, ‘Guys we invented the Internet!’ Gen X is in middle age right now and there’s some fascinating stuff happening. So, I’m excited to start to document those experiences.”

According to Tomlinson, the second season of *The Writers Block* is as sharp as the first, and will be launching March 2018.

“It’s satisfying to see all of the different elements of the show take a big step forward, and that it maintains its humour and its heart.” And its subtlety. “The dailies got sent in after the first day”, Tomlinson says, “and someone who had taken a look at them said, ‘I can’t tell when they’re acting or when they’re not acting. I can’t.’ And that’s great, but that’s like a rare experience. You don’t get that opportunity to be with people like that very often.”

Tomlinson has also written several plays and currently has a couple more on the horizon.

“The play I have recently finished is called Runswim. It is about a cottage weekend which

finds a group of friends cautiously examining the expectations, pressures, and complications of middle age and facing the uncertainty of what is next. That sounds very serious, but it’s really rather funny. And charming. The play I am currently working on is called Haon - Keeper of Sticks. It is a feminist spiritualist epic. The goal is to have a public read for each piece by the end of this year.”

How does he go about getting an idea on the page?

“It’s like this,” Tomlinson begins, “ideas are very much like people, to me. When an idea comes into the room and presents itself, I want to get to know it better, right? I don’t want to tell it what it is. I want it to tell me what it is. And I want to learn from it. So, I want to be active in the process and then I use tools to unpack what it is. Like, I will improvise at my desk, I’ll mutter and be taken down a path and feel something and sob.”

Really?

“When I’m writing,” he says, “anything is up for grabs. I had a roommate for a while, and he just got very used to me sobbing at my computer.”

For Tomlinson, timing is also part of the process.

“Sometimes an idea will come into the room and I’ll spend a couple of weeks with it and I’ll be like, ‘Oh no, we should not be dating! ... I love the time that we spent together, but I don’t think this is going to work.’”

Yet, he’s careful not to let frustration get in the way.

“When you sit with an idea, or you sit with inspiration, and the first day is just like, ‘Bang! Pow! I’ve got f\*\*king liquid honey! This is amazing!’ And day two is just like a horror show and it’s the hardest thing you’ve ever done. A lot of people hit that day and they think, ‘Well if it can’t be automatic honey, it’s not going to work.’ And I’m like: ‘No — that’s part of it.’ Those days are part of it. It’s about a bigger picture than that.”

Acting, too, has its challenges, particularly for LGBTQ actors.





"I made a decision, very early on, that I was going to represent onstage and be out. Because after all my years in the closet, I was not interested in going back in for any reason. I don't get seen for a lot of straight roles because most of the casting directors in the city know me as a queer, a gay man. That's what they call me in for. I certainly haven't heard, 'Could you be more straight?' in auditions, before, but I've certainly heard, 'Could you be more gay?' When I get that at an audition, I shut down completely, because they're chasing a stereotype and I'm unwilling to participate."

Tomlinson is quite passionate about getting gay stories out there.

"We often are looking at reflections of gay life that have become very corporate in their sensibility. So now, my hunger as a writer and as a performer is about reflecting things that are important to me. There's always going to be a queer character or queer sensibility to my work because that's who I am."

"It's not like I can sit here and say, 'I've seen so many stories about middle-aged gay men. I've seen all the iterations.' I have seen a lot of coming-of-age stories and those are important and great. I'm really interested, now, because of where I am, in telling what happens after the coming-of-age happens because, again, the stories will show us a way."

"My friends, right now, are dealing with failing parents, being a parent, middle life crises, reassessing their whole life's work. There are some fascinating, heartbreaking, beautiful things happening that are just not being talked about. We have to be authentic in our storytelling and we need for the gatekeepers to take chances on them."

Of course, getting past the gatekeepers isn't easy.

"I think the challenge facing all artists, right now, is this attitude on the behalf of gatekeepers that they're only interested in things that are an established property or have a fan base — like a YouTube star — over something else. I feel like we're cutting off our points of access for some work to get through. ... I feel like, 'This idea has to be an idea we all know,' or [the artist needs] 1400 Twitter followers and 1600 YouTube subscribers — I feel like that's putting you in the wrong place, because a person who has curated a million YouTube subscriptions maybe hasn't put that same amount of work into their craft as an artist."

Although Tomlinson doesn't think being gay is his defining quality, he does think it's integral to who he is as both a writer and a performer.

"It's personal," he says. "It's in my weave. That never changes. I'm right handed. This is the colour of my eyes. This is all in my weave. If you wanted to change my eye colour, you'd have to put in contacts."

But who'd want to change those eyes?

---

Jerry Schaefer is a Toronto actor and writer whose work has appeared on CBC radio and television.



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by Sherry Sylvain

# MANDY GOODHANDY JUST CALL ME LADY

**M**andy (Amanda) Goodhandy is a comedian, singer, entertainer, local business owner...and transgender. Not one of these single descriptors can alone define this woman who has been active in the Toronto community in various, often groundbreaking, capacities for 35 years.

She has been a male stripper in a gay bar, a drag queen hostess for male strippers in gay (and straight) bars, as well as the owner of an agency for male strippers that also produced all-male soft porn. This being way back when these were new and untested concepts. When she decided to divest herself of that interest, she was owner/co-owner of an after-hours sex club, and a successful and contented transgender sex worker. When the after-hours club began to sell illegal

liquor to be more profitable, Amanda stepped away, believing that selling sex was entirely acceptable, but selling illegal liquor was a step too far.

Believing that sex work was and is a business that can be rewarding and satisfying, especially when treated as a real business where one declares income, pays taxes and builds their credit rating to allow them to expand in to other business, that's what Amanda did. Recognizing the growing market for transgender sex and porn, Amanda developed businesses geared toward that market utilizing the internet for her adult websites, "ShemalePalace.com" and "LadyPlus", which featured transgender porn stills, videos, and advertisements of trans escorts in exchange for modelling therein. As that business proved itself successful, Amanda built on it and expanded to "The Lounge", a stripper bar featuring transgender female strippers and male strippers on various nights.

Having developed her internet and "Lounge" businesses, Amanda now found herself in a position to take her next logical step; she and her partner, **Todd Klink**, moved their interest in "The Lounge" from its sublet location in the basement of a Mississauga strip bar to a new venue, "Goodhandy's" at Church and Richmond Streets. in Toronto. This is where Amanda began to develop her new professional persona of Mandy Goodhandy. This new undertaking was initiated as a transgender club, focusing itself as a space for transwomen and their admirers to meet in a centrally located but discreet environment, with a good dose of sex positive space available to keep things more interesting.

**Goodhandy's** featured some outstanding opportunities such as live sex and fetish video shoots on stage with a live audience, private sex positive spaces available for rent to patrons, dancing, and a full bar. Unfortunately, the trans community and their admirers did not provide sufficient trade to make this specific concept viable, so, in keeping with Mandy's habit of reinventing herself and her business as required, "Goodhandy's" re-branded itself as "Club 120", a venue available to promoters to host all sorts of different events, including her own "Goodhandy's T-Girl Nights" on Thursdays, maintaining the view to a sex positive space as and when desired or required.



As “Club 120” developed, the business saw a change in the status of its physical space with the closing of the former Thai restaurant on the main floor, and the sale of the building. At that time, there was discussion that the building might be torn down to become a parking lot, pending acquisition of the adjoining property to build a major condo development. Fortunately for Mandy and Todd, that short-term threat was turned into an opportunity, with the acquisition of the main floor restaurant lease becoming “120 Diner,” a full-service restaurant and bar featuring live music and comedy.

Unfortunately, the threat to both businesses remains on the (hopefully) distant horizon, as a zoning by-law amendment application was submitted in October 2017 for a 45-storey, mixed-use development. At this point, it is not known how this proposed re-development may proceed, at what speed, or how it may impact “Club 120” and “120 Diner”.

As previously mentioned, Mandy has a history of reinventing herself and her undertakings to adapt to changing conditions. She also has some interesting and somewhat controversial views on life, business, identity and terminology. Mandy believes that sex work is a viable, realistic business opportunity for anyone, of any gender, who has the ability to work to a higher professional standard treating it as a business, and to be empowered and in control of their work environment.

Whereas most people, and especially marginalized individuals such as transpersons, are controlled by their environment and fear in their youth, any opportunity which provides control and confidence is ideal. Associated with this thought, Mandy believes that a significant problem facing transgender individuals is a long history of bullying and a desire to disown their past gender experience, which creates individuals who are incomplete, and thereby leading to weakness and a lacking in self-confidence. She thinks that if transpersons can embrace and accept every aspect of who they were, as well as who they are, they can become stronger people, regardless of gender identity.

Associated with this thought pattern is the idea that Trans is still something fairly new, and the language associated therewith is still being learned, not just by the general public, but even within the trans community itself. As a self-described



transgender woman, Mandy questions who placed all the other identities in one transgender box. She asserts that a transgender person is not the same as a drag artist, cross-dresser, transvestite, or any number of other identities which someone or some group, somewhere, decided should all be grouped together with a politically correct all-encompassing umbrella title. She extends this thought process to advocate for the reclaiming of terminology such as “tranny”, “shemale”, and “transsexual”, terms which have been recently deemed politically incorrect, yet are definitive and specific to certain types of people who feel accurately described as such.

Currently, Mandy believes that the recent recognition of trans people is less than it could be, that many of the trans spokespersons and self-proclaimed representatives are not good representations of who trans people are. She hopes to present herself as an alternative of trans representation as she works to complete her memoirs, along with an album of 10 vocal music tracks in various genres, both to be entitled, “Just Call Me Lady”. Her hopes are to have both completed and ready for a simultaneous late Spring release. Yet another chapter in her wonderful reinventions of life!

**Events Editor, Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).**



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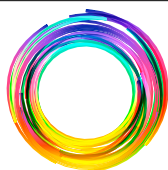
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# Detroit Has Its Groove Back

## *From Madonna to Martha and The Vandellas*

by Bryen Dunn

Following the 2008 financial crisis, the blue-collar city of Detroit was hit harder than many others. People moved away, often leaving their homes and business abandoned and in foreclosure.

Then in 2013, the city declared bankruptcy. Fast forward a decade, and things have taken a full one-eighty in the opposite direction. Detroit's financial woes may have dragged the city downward, but now major investors, huge development projects, civic pride by the locals who stayed, and an influx of young entrepreneurs looking to start a business in a city with a low cost of living and low rent, are taking Detroit to new heights once again.

The overall population is growing, the housing real estate market is hot, new businesses are opening up regularly, and the once abandoned buildings

are being renovated and revitalized. As with other similar stories in urban centres around the world, rejuvenation of a neighbourhood, or an entire city for that matter, often begins with artists. The typically low income creative types take up residence in the less desirable areas where rents are more affordable. They then transform that area into a more inviting and welcoming locale by way of art and independent businesses, and eventually others follow, rents rise, artists relocate, and the cycle continues.

This is exactly the case with Detroit today. The city has always been an important arts destination. **The Detroit Institute of Arts** was founded in 1885, and has one of the country's greatest art collections, including the frescoes by the famed Mexican artist Diego Rivera, entitled *Detroit Industry*. The DIA's collection is one of the largest in the U.S. with holdings in many areas—American, European, Modern and Contemporary, and Graphic art, as well as significant works of African, Asian, Islamic, Native American, and Oceanic art.





In 2010, the first *Inside/Out* exhibit was introduced celebrating the DIA's 125th anniversary, and the program has grown since then by bringing high-quality reproductions of masterpieces in the museum's collection to public spaces in Detroit's metro area. The downtown preserves some of the country's best examples of 1920s skyscraper architecture, as well as a rich variety of other styles like Romanesque, Renaissance revival, Beaux-Arts, Neo-Gothic, and more. Wide avenues, like Woodward and Grand River, reflect the City *Beautiful Movement* of the 1890s and 1900s.

With all this architectural beauty, there's plenty of opportunity to work within and around the downtown core to add some modern day pizzazz. The **Library Street Collective** is a contemporary fine art gallery in the heart of downtown Detroit that focuses on artists "who have developed their skills and art in public spaces." In the new resurgent Detroit, street art is an important component, filling public spaces—interior and exterior surfaces of buildings, public parks, residential neighborhoods and downtown. Instead of tagging buildings illegally, young artists are invited to contribute to the community through their work, hereby creating positive conversations around art.

The owners of *LSC* are also instigators of the new art movement, organizing public art projects like *The Belt*, a street-art-lined-alley decorated with murals by national and international artists, Z Garage, a 10-story parking garage that's filled with murals of art created by different artists, and the murals in *Eastern Market*. The view from the rooftop of *Z Garage* is one of the best in the city, especially at night overlooking the lit up skyline.

The **Detroit RiverFront Conservancy** is also doing some great work, cleaning up the city's 14 miles of waterfront along the Detroit River, creating recreational and green spaces and making the river accessible again. Hundreds of new restaurants have opened in the last few years, and there are new hotels and attractions being added regularly.

Another project spearheaded by this organization is the *Dequindre Cut Greenway*, an urban recreational path that was opened to the public in 2009, created along an unused railroad line. *The Cut*, as it's known locally, is a 20-foot wide pathway below street level, bounded by walls of grass and shrubs on either side that provides a link between the riverfront and *Eastern Market*, while offering access from residential areas along its length. Earlier graffiti associated with the rail line has been left in place by the Conservancy to preserve some of the historic landscape and history of street art in the city. There are also new murals along the entire length, sponsored by the *Conservancy* as well as the *Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID)*

One way to explore this area is by bike. *Wheelhouse* offers rentals to explore on your own, as well as a wide variety of guided tours that proceed at an easy pace. Tours include themes like Architecture, Auto Heritage, Churches, Music Heritage, Public Art, Sports Heritage, Techno, Underground Railroad, and Urban Farming. Other tours focus on neighborhoods like Belle Isle, Eastern Market, Hamtramck, and Southwest. *MoGo* is the city's first public bike share system offering hundreds of red-orange bikes that can be rented from several kiosks throughout the city.



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Music is another driving force within the city, and Detroit has had a long storied history here as well. The city is home to **Motown**, where *The Temptations*, *Marvin Gaye*, *Martha and the Vandellas*, *the Supremes*, and many others recorded with the *Funk Brothers* from 1959 to 1972. Motown is an important American institution and an expression of African American urban culture in the 20th century. Today, the houses where founder *Berry Gordy* began his recording business are preserved as part of the *Motown Museum*. There's a short film about the history of Motown, as well as galleries exhibiting memorabilia, and the famous Studio A, where all these artists made their historic recordings.

What's so gay about Detroit? There's lots actually. **Ferndale** is the most well-known gay-friendly neighbourhood, located just north of downtown and easily reached by a short taxi ride. Ferndale's current mayor, *David Coulter*, and former mayor, *Craig Covey*, are openly gay men, and the neighbourhood even has its own Ferndale Pride celebrations. The suburban city of **Royal Oak** is also LGBT friendly with a youthful, exciting vibe of restaurants, bars, and nightlife. *Pronto!* is one of the most popular queer bars in metro Detroit. The **Palmer Park** district was the epicenter of gay life in Detroit in the '70s and '80s, and is currently seeing a resurgence of growth once again. Some of the original gay bars and businesses that weathered

*Detroit.* *Motor City Brew Tours* offers a great biking tour of microbreweries and historic buildings connected to the brewing industry.. *Traffic Jam & Snug* was one of the first brewpubs in Detroit, established in 1965, with an eclectic menu of made-from-scratch dishes. They make all their own bread, as well as cheese and beer, and most produce comes from *Earthworks* urban farm. In 1992, they became the first official brew-pub in the State of Michigan, and today they continue to brew a wide selection of hand-crafted beers.

While one might not think of Detroit as an outdoor adventure destination, paddling on the *Detroit River* with views of the downtown skyline is definitely a unique experience. There are a few different operators who rent kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards, such as *Detroit River Sports* located just outside of the city core. There's actually a series of canals along the shoreline opposite the eastern end of **Belle Isle**, that are lined with residences from mansions to cottages. This urban oasis is definitely not on the radar of most tourists, but one that should be for anyone seeking a bit of an active pursuit.



through the transformations are *Menjo's* and *Club Gold Coast*.

*Menjo's* was where the Motor City material girl herself, Madonna, hung out before her career exploded. This Entertainment Complex now includes the *Menjo's Bar*, the *Eagle Leather Bar*, and the *Olympus Theater*, offering karaoke, trans events, concerts and performances. *Club Gold Coast* is where you want to be if you're looking for male strippers. Other noted Detroit institutions include *Gigi's Cabaret*, which has the longest running female impersonation stage in the state, and *Escape Lounge*, an all-male, after-hours, all-night eatery and bar that's located on the east side of Detroit.

**Midtown** is another gay welcoming area filled with art, culture institutions, and theatres. Did you know that Detroit has more live professional theatre seats than any other American city except New York? This is also where *Woodward Bar and Grill* is located., the oldest gay bar in Detroit that opened in 1960. Its storied history is reflected in the pictures on the walls, operating as a restaurant for local area businesses during the day, and becoming gayler as night falls. Recently, **Corktown** has been attracting a younger, more adventurous population, that includes a vibrant LGBT community as well.

**Motor City Pride** attracts some 40,000 people each year, held in downtown Detroit's Hart Plaza. There's a parade and street festival, complete with food, vendors and entertainment. The parade starts at Griswold and Fort streets, and heads down Griswold to Jefferson, ending at Hart Plaza. Mark your calendar for June 9 and 10, 2018.

Finally, the biggest development happening in the city right now is dubbed, **District Detroit**. This

## Discover Detroit

### Resources

Detroit Tourism - [www.visitdetroit.com](http://www.visitdetroit.com)  
 Pride Source - [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com)  
 Motor City Pride - [www.motorcitypride.org](http://www.motorcitypride.org)  
 Ferndale Pride - [www.ferndalepride.com](http://www.ferndalepride.com)  
 Equality Michigan - [www.equalitymi.org](http://www.equalitymi.org)  
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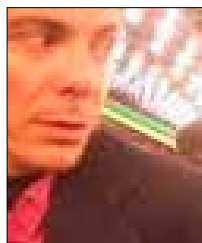
### Recommended Events

Hotter Than July, Motor City Pride, African Word Festival, The Hoedown, Electronic Music Festival, Detroit Together Men's Chorus, Dally in the Alley, Marche du Nain Rouge

massive project encompasses 50 blocks, eight theatres, and five neighborhoods located along the downtown's main artery, Woodward Avenue. This is also where the new *Little Caesars Arena* recently opened, now home to the *Detroit Red Wings* hockey and *Detroit Pistons* basketball teams. An easy way to get around is to jump on the new *Q Line* streetcar system that runs along Woodward Ave for three miles from downtown to West Grand Boulevard.

Detroit's motto, *Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus*, was coined in 1895 after a fire nearly destroyed the city. It fittingly translates as, "We hope for better things; it will rise from the ashes." This seems to stand as true today as it did then!

Bryen Dunn is a freelance journalist based in Toronto with a focus on tourism, lifestyle, entertainment and community issues.





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## Hot Artist

I have often said that music is my favourite outlet, as it was my entry into the arts, but the more I grow as a multi-disciplinary artist the more I am excited about working within many mediums. I just really love making art.

### 2. What was one of the defining moments for you when coming out as trans?

I wrote a song called “Girl, It’s Your Time” when I had first started using she/her pronouns, and it feels like the most special gift from transness.

### 3. Has being trans and a PoC ever hindered you from expressing yourself in a society that seemingly caters to cis white artists?

I don’t think being POC or trans are hindrances, but rather institutions or audiences who see non-cis/ non-white art as niche or unrelatable. This view is not only inaccurate, but also detrimental as it affects the kind of opportunities I am presented with, or funding that I am offered.

### 4. What advice can you give young, queer, and/or PoC artists who are inspired by you, your work, and your achievements?

I meet a lot of young IBPOC artists who at the core are seeking popularity and fame, which I wholeheartedly support. But popularity is ultimately hard to predict and is fickle, so I firmly believe in the importance of focusing more on developing your craft.

### 5. What can we expect from the young finalists of VS. Books in the years to come?

The 2018 VS. Books open call will be out in early spring and based on last year’s entries, I will say that one of the biggest thrills of this imprint so far is the range and unpredictability of the writing. Young IBPOC writers are so much more versed and explicit in their politics than I was when I was starting out, and this makes me feel hopeful about the future of CanLit.

Joey Viola is the Co-Founder of MoJo Toronto and an LGBTQ community leader who utilizes his passion and flair for the art of writing by bringing a fresh perspective in reviewing entertainment and advocating for equality, tolerance, and social/political justice.



**O**riginally from Edmonton, Alberta, **Vivek Shraya** grew up as many Canadian queer kids did in the 80’s - without visibility, representation, or access to the proper terminology.

Today, now living in Toronto, the lines are less blurred and Shraya does an inspiring job at representing herself (and in turn, individuality) in all areas of her craft.


She began writing songs when she was just 13 years old. Since her 2002 musical debut, she has released multiple celebrated albums. Her latest, “Part-Time Woman”, was recorded with **Queer Songbook Orchestra** and named one of CBC’s Best Canadian Albums of 2017. Shraya has veered into other outlets of self-expression and artistry as well, including (but not limited to) writing and film-making, which have also garnered some well-deserved accolades.

With her latest undertaking, she adds “publisher” to the long list of accomplishments. **VS. Books**, an imprint of *Arsenal Pulp Press*, is a new publishing initiative that’s described as “a mentorship and publishing opportunity for an Indigenous or Black writer, or a writer of colour, between the ages of 18-24 living in Canada”. Her goal is to push through the systemic barriers that surround cultural production in Canada.

I caught up with Vivek to find out more about all these great projects.


### 1. You’ve been writing songs since you were 13 years old, but have branched out into film, books, visual arts and more. Do you have a favourite outlet?





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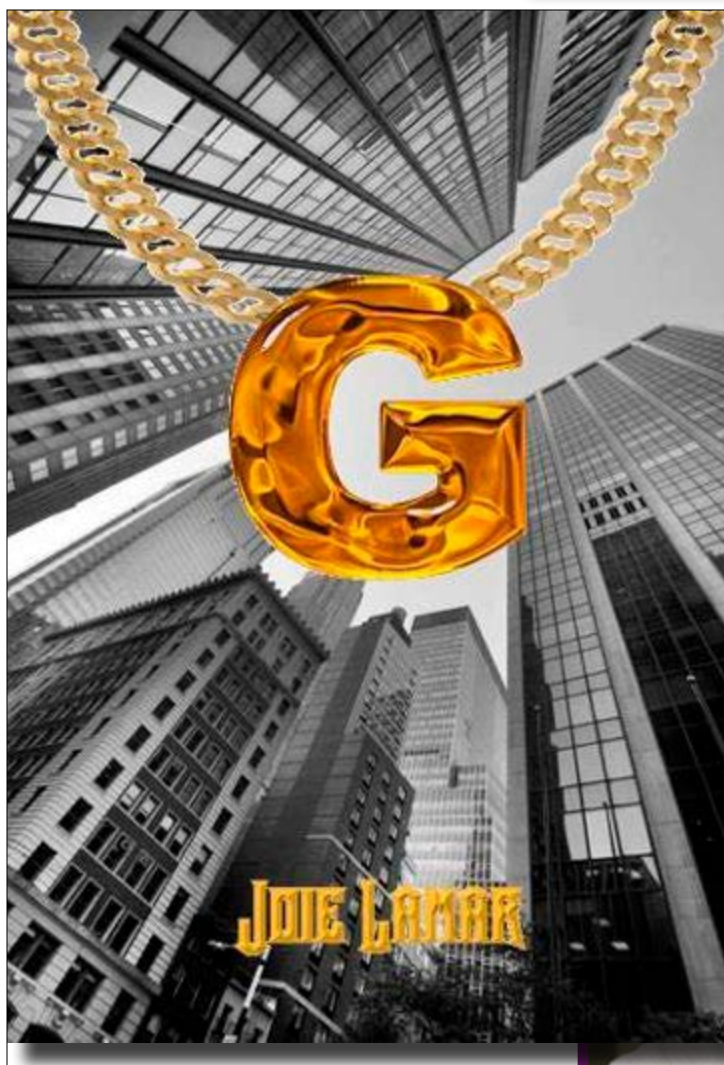
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*“G” is a radical novel with riveting characters, a unique understanding of street and organized crime, and a relentless pace. “G” (for Gangster) takes you into the unknown world of the Gay mafia in New York City. But this is more than just a crime thriller. Setting a new standard for author Joie Lamar, “G” is a compassionate portrait of the main character’s fight against her fate - and an unforgettable novel of lesbian gangsters, passion, and violence. Joie Lamar has written a brutal and brilliant saga of murder, forgiveness, and redemption.*

### **The following is an excerpt from Chapter L1.**

I’ve been in the Barclays Bank building in lower Manhattan many times, but never on the shit end of the stick before. I am one of the few who Leticia has allowed to deliver her deposits to wall street. She is going to miss me for sure but not as much as she will miss her deposit.

Now I find myself floating to the ground, having been thrown from the rooftop of this high-rise building, to my death. What the fuck has happened? That’s a rhetorical question since I will surely hit the ground before anyone can answer. I expect that I am propelling towards the street at a very high speed, but for me time is suspended. Interesting. I am somehow aware that it, time, mathematically speaking, no longer has meaning for me. It is true what they say, my life is flashing before my eyes as I descend. Slowly, like a movie that will end abruptly in a dark theatre, only there will be no fanfare to this ending. No credit roll. My life will end with a thump.

It is a street conversation that we have often, proudly, too afraid and immersed to understand it for what it is; an abbreviated life. I was born into this world of crime and short lives. I am a G, in every real sense; a Latina lesbian gangster. The last photo of me will be of my face smashed by the concrete that I am heading towards now. I should have taken more selfies to be remembered by.

The Gay mafia exist in all its hidden splendor in New York and various cities around the world. In the big apple, we have cored out the fashion industry, clubs, drugs, and yes, even Wall Street. G stands for gangster, as I said, but not in just the hetero or cis kind of movie magic. We are hard core; dyke like, lipstick lesbians, and the many variations in between. We travel in all circles and as part of the sometimes unknowing, Pride flag waving, LGBT community. We control the street thugs hired into the industries that the gay mafia runs and owns. We are like unicorn sleeper cells bound to enforce rainbow law. Don’t let the pretty colours fool you. It gets ugly on these mean streets.



My name is Sonny. I didn't realize what a rough year I was truly having until right at this 'plummeting to my death' moment. I should have paid full attention to the inspirational, stay positive, and be grateful posts on Facebook. It would not have changed my current situation, but I might have appreciated life more before this. I might have paid attention to my surroundings and possibly seen this coming.

Great, I'm pissing myself as I fall. My thoughts and body are completely disconnected. One knows it is going to die, and has completely given in to the fear of the thump. while the other contemplates the life that has left behind. I apologize for my thoughts becoming random as of this point but I am, after all, falling to my death.

Ohhhh, my love, Raya. She came along and wet me from head to toe. It's true, my life was totally dehydrated before I met her. Please don't judge me for thinking about her as I urinate. She was "Pura" when we met. That means pure, in English, and what we call people outside of this criminal element. I loved that Raya had no idea of what went on in the background, in Greenwich village and the many "Gay-centric" areas of New York. She was my first normal like sit down to dinner date kind of woman. It felt so easy. And besides wanting her body on that first date, I wanted this kind of life with her forever. It would take time, and saving up for the big disconnect, but scarier than all of that, I would have to let her in to my world; into my secrets.

Her face belied her shock the first time I told her about myself. That dirty, ugly, side of me. The person that left people bloodied and scared. And the Sonny who would have to kill you if Leticia so ordered it. The entire city is a front for money laundering, drug, sex, and gun sales. It all passes through the almighty Leticia before the Italianos receive their nasty proceeds, minus her cut. The cut that pays me a living.

That Raya and I had just made love for 4 hours straight, and that she had screamed for God repeatedly, was probably the worst time to talk about murder and crime. There is no sugar coating it and truly, no comforting way to tell it, now that I remember that day. Still, she accepted my lifestyle like a boss and we began to plan my departure from this life of indecency on the same day that we both professed our love for one another. It was a short one year plan and I was 6 months into it, almost to the minute, before finding myself on this trip South to Streetville.

My mind is drifting. Raya will come home to find I haven't let Bullet, our Dachshund, out to shit. She will clean up his messes around the house, cursing my name, as she always does. She will rehearse the speech asking me to get rid of him if she happens to step in any dog crap. He will weave in and out of her legs in the excitement of welcoming her home while she pours herself a glass of wine.

Dropping to my death PSA here: Political correctness dies while you're falling to your death, which is why it is so easy to tell you that I feel the warmth of diarrhea making its way out of my ass. Is death the final and biggest embarrassment of your life? Is this how it culminates? How long will my brain continue to review my life, after I've shit on someone looking up to see me nosedive in horror?

We don't do normal dinner time in my house. Ironically, Raya has adjusted to this, while I plan that dream life of consistency. She does not ask questions but she knows that my hours are spent enforcing Leticia's law and running her nefarious errands. Dinner will be cooked without any expectation of what time we eat or where in the house we plant ourselves to do so. She will keep it warm for me. Bullet and that glass of wine will keep her company on the couch and chances are Raya will turn on the television to the news channel.

Maybe she will recognize my Fila Ferrari shoes from under the coroners blanket over my body in the street. She always hated that I could spend \$300 on sneakers and rightly so. Now they will end up in a box, on a dusty shelf, as evidence for a murder that will never be investigated. Gangsters die on the street like used condoms spill life into to our sewage systems in New York City. My blood, shit, and piss will simply show up as wetness on the Wall Street cobblestone in tomorrow's newspaper. No one will bat an eye once the body is removed. The stench will not be any more or any less. She won't really put it together until the police or Leticia call her. This will warrant that ugly cry of hers. The kind of cry I tease her about when we watch *The Notebook* together.

I wish that I could tell her how sorry I was that I did not keep my daily morning promise to be careful. That even from the depths of hell, where I am surely going, I will regret not marrying my beautiful Raya. That all that Salsa practice we spent hours and money on would not give birth to our first dance on our wedding day with the whole family watching in awe.

I really hope my legs fall nicely once I hit. I don't want Leticia to refer to me as another broken puppet on the street.

---

Joie Lamar is the author of several books that include her "Lips and Hips" memoir series - "Mambo Lips" and "Salsa Hips". These memoirs have been adapted for film in a screenplay titled "Las Alas", with production beginning in 2018. She's also published, "Sapphoetry", a balladry collection, and now "G" is Lamar's first work of fiction, available online or in your favourite book stores as of February 2018. Lamar was also the visionary, curator, and a contributor to a book titled "Cuarenta y Nueve", which means 49 in Spanish. It is a compilation of artistry by creatives of every discipline in honour of the 49 lives lost in the Orlando Pulse massacre. 100% of the proceeds of this book are being donated to LGBTQ organizations. Lamar currently lives in Ajax, Ontario with her wife Natalie and their two fur babies.



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## Community Cornerstone

by LoAnn Halden

While there have been great strides made towards equality in Canada, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer-identified (LGBTQ) people still live in basic fear for their lives in many other parts of the world. In the spirit of and with homage to the Underground Railroad, the mission of the **Rainbow Railroad** is to help LGBTQ people as they seek safe haven from state enabled violence, murder or persecution.

Since it was founded in 2006, the organization has enabled nearly 500 LGBTQ people to reach safe destinations - most recently, 57 LGBTQ individuals living in Chechnya, 31 of whom have now arrived in Canada.

**Rainbow Railroad** will be honoured at a special fundraising event on May 11th, 2018. *Voyage* is an event put on by the **International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)**, who are holding their 35th Annual Global Convention in Toronto from May 9 to 12, 2018. *Voyage* is open to the public, and is being held at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, and includes a silent auction stocked with travel packages, cocktails, a networking dinner, and the *IGLTA Honors*, celebrating those who have improved the global landscape of LGBTQ tourism.

“The *Voyage* reception will signify a milestone in the visibility and efforts of the **IGLTA Foundation** to support LGBTQ tourism through education and research and the development of the next generation of industry leaders. The term *Voyage* represents the movement for LGBTQ tourism and complements the passion and mission of the Foundation,” said IGLTAF Board Chair Gary Murakami.

The *Pathfinder Award*, part of the annual *IGLTA Honors*, is given to an individual, business, or organization that has made significant positive impact on their destination, demonstrating the highest standard of warmth and hospitality to the LGBTQ community. “Given the current unstable global climate and relative uncertainties in some countries and cultures, organizations like **Rainbow Railroad** are even more essential to lead us forward in our fight for equality and the ability for people around the world to live authentically without fear of persecution or harassment,” remarked Murakami.

**Rainbow Railroad** strives to provide access to refuge to our brothers and sisters living under constant threat of violence and death. Executive Director Kimahli Powell, commented, “On behalf of everyone at Rainbow Railroad, and especially the individuals and families we usher to safety every year, I am grateful to accept this award.”

Please consider making a donation to help LGBTQ people escape persecution, murder and violence. Your support will go directly to help LGBTQ refugees. [www.rainbowrailroad.ca/donate](http://www.rainbowrailroad.ca/donate)

Tickets and information for *Voyage* can be found here: [www.igлта.org/convention/rsvp/voyage](http://www.igлта.org/convention/rsvp/voyage)

LoAnn Halden is an avid traveller, and Vice President of Communications at IGLTA.





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# SPRING IN THE CITY

by Sherry Sylvain

## Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

March 9 - May 20

Retelling the epic story of Joseph, his eleven brothers and the coat of many colours, this magical musical is full of unforgettable songs including "Those Canaan Days", "Any Dream Will Do" and "Close Every Door".

Lower Ossington Theatre, 100 Ossington Ave., Toronto  
[www.lowerossingtontheatre.com](http://www.lowerossingtontheatre.com)

**Tip:** Try one of the matinee performances, and take a couple of young friends who need an introduction to musical theatre.

## OMG Saturdays

Saturdays from 11:00 p.m.

Enjoy a wild selection of talented drag artists while you have a cocktail from the fully stocked bar, and a bite to eat from the kitchen. There's no way to predict what could happen during this irreverent, recurring show with an ever changing group of performers.

O'Grady's, 518 Church St., Toronto

[www.ogradyschurch.com/](http://www.ogradyschurch.com/)

**Tip:** Go hungry with a group and get a selection of yummy snacks to share over drinks, but try not to laugh with your mouth full.

## TICOT Brunch

Sundays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Each week The Imperial Court of Toronto brings you a Variety Show featuring all kinds of entertainers! Drag Queens, Drag Kings, Live Singers, Musicians, and so much more. Proceeds from the show go to support Reign 31's Charities of Choice - The PWA Food Programs and Rainbow Railroad.

Church Street Garage, 477 Church St., Toronto

[www.ticot.ca](http://www.ticot.ca)

**Tip:** Bring some tipping dollars because each and every performer or performance you tip is donated directly to the Court and it's charities.



## Sunday Scene

**Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

In this FREE Sunday Scene series, speakers from the world of art and beyond offer their responses to the current exhibitions. Whether focusing on a single work/artist or on multiple exhibitions, guest presenters draw provocative connections between programs and broader cultural and intellectual debates.

The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery,  
231 Queens Quay W., Toronto  
[www.thepowerplant.org/](http://www.thepowerplant.org/)

**Tip:** Check the website in advance as this series takes place on various Sundays – not exactly random, but not precisely at regular intervals either.

## TICOT Drag Bingo

**Last Sunday each month, 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Join The Imperial Court of Toronto on the last Sunday of each month as they present “TICOT Drag Bingo” with a variety of hosts and special guests. Proceeds go towards the Reign 31 Charities of Choice: PWA Food Programs and Rainbow Railroad.

Flash On Church, 463 Church St., Toronto  
[www.ticot.ca](http://www.ticot.ca)

**Tip:** This event is open to all. There are no gender or membership restrictions in place, nor are there any male dancers providing entertainment during this time. All proceeds go to the charities.

## Regal Beagle Bingo

**Sundays from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

Join Randy Spearhead for an early evening of Bingo. Drink purchase gets you one (1) bingo card - capped at four per patron. There will also be raffle tickets for sale. Proceeds to the Imperial Court Reign 31's charities - PWA Food Programs and Rainbow Railroad.

The Black Eagle Toronto, 457 Church St., Toronto  
[www.ticot.ca](http://www.ticot.ca)

**Tip:** After a little while at Drag Bingo (see above), you continue your drinking, playing and community support at bingo without drag – maybe a little leather and denim, instead.

## The Toronto Pancakes and Booze Art Show

**April 6 from 8:00 p.m.**

Toronto's Premier Underground Art Show featuring 80+ Artists Showcasing Live Audio & Visual Performances, Live Body Painting, and Free Pancakes! Paintings, mixed media, photography, sculptures, drawings, graffiti. \$10 General Admission (Cash at the Door) \$13 Line Jumper tickets. Ages 19+ ONLY.

The Opera House, 735 Queen St. E., Toronto  
[www.pancakesandbooze.com/](http://www.pancakesandbooze.com/)

**Tip:** Take your most avant-garde attitude and eclectic group of friends because, well, really... does this sound “average”?



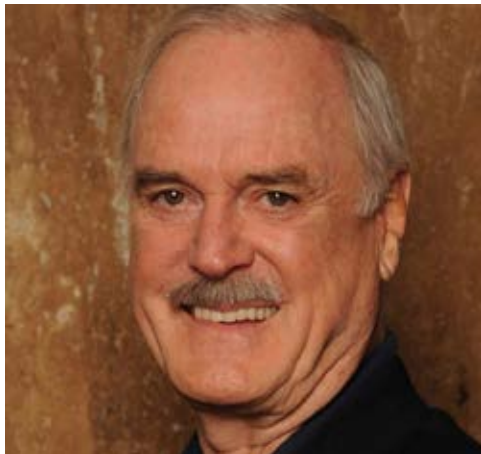
## John Cleese - “Why There is no Hope”

**April 9 at 7:30 p.m.**

Iconic comedian of Monty Python and Fawlty Towers fame makes a rare appearance for a lecture about life, politics and the kitchen sink.

Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., Toronto  
[www.roythomsonhall.com](http://www.roythomsonhall.com)

**Tip:** Practice listening to a good British accent; you won't want to miss a single word or nuance from this cheeky bugger.



## The Red Dress Ball

**April 14 from 8:30 p.m.**

Celebrate with international superstar DJ Kitty Glitter, and some of Toronto's finest drag talent, as they raise funds and awareness for the 20th annual PWA Friends For Life Bike Rally. Whether you dress in red, or wear a red dress, the Red Dress Ball is a celebration of the creativity of Day Three of the 6-day ride, and a symbol for raising funds and HIV/AIDS awareness. The Red Dress Ball is an independent fundraiser in support of the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation (PWA) through their sustaining fundraiser, PWA's Friends for Life Bike Rally.

The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St., Toronto  
[www.bikerrally.org/](http://www.bikerrally.org/)

**Tip:** Wear your ruby slippers! And, tuck some extra cash in your sock for those surprise emergencies that pop up, like something on a silent auction table that you simply MUST have.

## Canadian Music Week

May 7 – 13

A celebration of Canadian music at various venues throughout the city, featuring performance, workshops, discussion groups, and more. Various Venues.

[www.mw.net](http://www.mw.net)

**Tip:** Check out the **FULL listing of bands and events on the website**. There is a lot to choose from during the week, and you'll find yourself spoiled for choice. I suggest Ori Dagan if you haven't seen him before.

## Women's Forum Canada

May 10 & 11

The very first Women's Forum Canada takes place in Toronto May 10 and 11, 2018 in the run-up to the 2018 G7 Summit hosted by Canada. It will gather 800 leaders from the G7 countries, North America and beyond, to reflect and react to the topics on the G7's agenda. It will challenge the G7 not just to take on the issue of gender equality, but to unlock the transformative potential of women's leadership with the goal of having an impact on decision-makers.

Fairmont Royal York Hotel, 100 Front St. W., Toronto

[www.womens-forum.com/registration/g7-womens-forum-canada-2018-registration](http://www.womens-forum.com/registration/g7-womens-forum-canada-2018-registration)

**Tip:** You may want to listen more than you speak – we have one mouth and two ears, and they should be used proportionally.



## 2nd Annual March for Mental Health

May 12, noon to 3:00 p.m.

This peaceful march will start and conclude at Nathan Phillips Square, to raise awareness for mental illness and addiction, and a call for improvements to mental health and addictions services. Through strength in partnerships, participants are calling on the provincial and federal governments to provide equitable, timely access to evidence-based mental health and addictions services, by increasing funding and ensuring a full range of mental health services and supports are accessible to every Canadian.

Nathan Phillips Square, 100 Queen St. W., Toronto

[www.mfmhto.com](http://www.mfmhto.com)

**Tip:** **STRETCH before and after. Wear comfy, sturdy shoes. Have an open mind and an open heart.**



## Artistry in Silk: The Kimono of Itchiku Kubota

Until May 13, 2018

Celebrating the work of Itchiku Kubota (1917–2003), an innovative artist whose spectacular creations gave new meaning to the art of kimono. The exhibition presents 41 kimono designed and produced by the artist over three decades, from 1976 to his death in 2003.

Textile Museum of Canada, 55 Centre Ave., Toronto

[www.textilemuseum.ca](http://www.textilemuseum.ca)

**Tip:** Take a camera – a good one – and practice your skills at capturing proper colour and texture.



## Classic Albums Live: AC/DC Back In Black

June 2 at 8:00 p.m.

AC/DC's sixth international release, Back in Black is comprised of fun and furious hits. "From the ominous tolling that opened 'Hells Bells' to a closing blast of defiance titled 'Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution,' the ten songs on Back in Black rock out with brute force and raunchy humor." (Rolling Stone). Classic Albums Live and its roster of A-list musicians from across the country perform rock favourites exactly as you remember hearing them. Tickets: \$29.50–\$59.50

Massey Hall, 178 Victoria St., Toronto

[www.masseyhall.com/](http://www.masseyhall.com/)

**Tip:** Take throat lozenges; you're going to need them afterwards.

Sherry Sylvain is a transgender woman who has been working in the LGBTQ community for too many years to count (or admit to).







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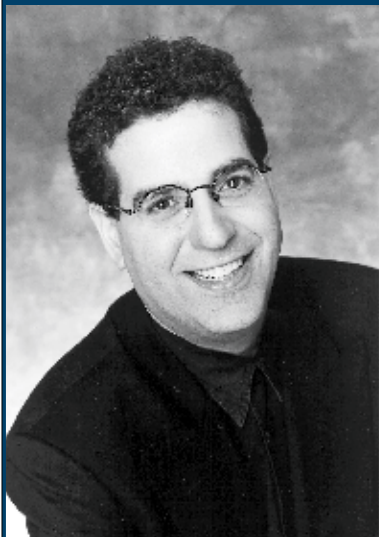


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## George Pratt – Brought Sexy Back

It's easy in today's 'allegations' and 'accusations' climate to forget that there once was a time when most sex was sinful or even illegal. It took men like George Pratt to break down those doors. In the past four decades, he was the driving force behind such clubs as Colby's, Bachelors, Sneakers, Remington's, George's Play, and currently Flash.



Pratt's innovation was to put naked men on stage in Toronto. Before then, there were only sheepish Chippendale-type shows. Then, in the mid-90s, he ushered in an era of naked men with exposed erections. Before George Pratt, we'd have to take a bus to Montreal in order to see something like that.

It was serendipity that led to the opening of Remington's, Pratt recalls. "There was a death in the Cooper family, who owned all the strip clubs on Yonge Street. One brother had the *Brass Rail*, another had the *Zanzibar*, and the father had the *Bermuda Tavern*. When the father died the sons didn't want any competition with female strip clubs, so that's why they decided to turn it into a men's club. They approached me and I offered to run it." One of the most successful gay businesses in Toronto, Remington's is still active more than two decades later. However, its current owners and Pratt remain estranged.

## Community Visionary

Still, the impact of Remington's in the 90s cannot be underestimated. A weekly event called Sperm Monday led to a famous police bust. "They secured the back exit so no one could get out. They came in and stopped the music, turned on the lights, presented search warrants, and hassled the customers," Pratt vividly remembers. It's impossible to imagine such Nazi-like tactics being used on any gay establishment nowadays, but this was the type of discrimination Pratt had to fight just twenty-two years ago.

Controversy followed him to his new club, Flash. To begin with, an 'anonymous' petition circulated the neighbourhood, decrying the opening of this sinful new sex club. There were also rumours of live sex shows, but the club opened successfully nonetheless. Then, the Adult Entertainment Association of Canada waged war with Pratt's new club because it operated privately, forgoing the need for a cabaret licence.

The prudish City of Toronto will not grant new licences for strip clubs, but it does honour 'grandfathered' venues. Flash occupies what was once a steak house, and therefore did not qualify. Even his other bar across the street, George's Play, which mostly hosted Bingo games, was jeopardized when the owners of the building living upstairs complained about the noise. If there is any lesson here, it's that running a gay business is no walk in the park, and trailblazers like Pratt are as important today as ever.

Paul Bellini is a Canadian comedy writer and television actor. Bellini is a well-known figure in the Canadian television comedy industry for his work on *The Kids in the Hall* and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*.





## From The Heart

By *Mychol Scully*

**H**uman culture has always celebrated elevated concepts of “the hero” and heroism. From ancient myth to modern media, we have always sought to identify some special quality in a small, select group of individuals whom we imagine are somehow separate (better) than the common man.

While researching the topic of heroes and heroism for this assignment, I wrestled (heroically!) with my own ambivalence regarding the concept as it’s applied in modern culture. Earlier Western cultures shared a common definition of hero and heroism that focused on extraordinary individuals responding in extraordinary ways to extraordinary circumstances. Other cultures around the world in historical times played on this same riff. Heroes (predominantly male) are made of different stuff than common folk, whether due to their lineage (Hercules’ father was a god) or through some special quest.

In modern times, the word hero has, to an extent, been democratized (and in my opinion, trivialized). Now we celebrate almost anyone who engages in the slightest act of apparent altruism, of public service or an unanticipated response to a challenging situation.

In part, I think this might be a response to the predictability and routine of our mundane 9-to-5 lives. Believing that we are offered few opportunities to exhibit what we perceive to be extraordinary qualities in our own lives, we celebrate and elevate others just like us, insisting that their personalities must contain some special “stuff” that sets them apart.

In fact, I believe we are all capable of such extraordinary performances, when presented with extraordinary circumstances. By insisting that our heroes must have some unique character trait that energizes and directs their heroic behaviour, we let ourselves off the hook to exhibit those traits ourselves. It’s a way to minimize society’s expectations about our own response to tragedy, life challenges and invitations to adventure.

The challenge, as I see it, is to acknowledge our own capacity for a heroic response to life, moment by moment.

**“We can be heroes, just for one day.”**

**- David Bowie**





Resist the compulsion to keep your head down, to avoid being noticed, to allow your perception of the opinions of others to compromise your natural, compassionate response to others' circumstances.

I'm not suggesting that we should run around looking for burning buildings to rush into. The criteria for personal heroism is personal. For some people, the simple act of making eye contact with a stranger can feel heroic. Tossing a five dollar bill into a beggar's cup probably isn't a heroic act, but inviting that same beggar into a nearby fast food outlet and spending that five dollars on coffee and a muffin might be.

Our culture's definition of heroism does have one important defining aspect. The hero isn't *trying* to be a hero. They just are. They're not looking for the acknowledgement of others. In the moment, they're just doing the right thing.

We must challenge ourselves daily to recognize opportunities to rise above the mediocre. To allow our natural compassionate human response to be expressed. To connect with life around us and not be a spectator in our own lives.

## **The candle's flame is not diminished by lighting another candle.**

I guarantee that if you cultivate the habit of compassion, your life will improve. Stress will

become more manageable. You'll sleep better at night. You'll smile more often. Your inner critic might shut the f\*\*k up (or at least be quieter and easier to ignore).

## **Acknowledge your inner greatness, because you're awesome, if only you would allow it.**

In the next issue, I want to explore the social pressures that conspire to shut down this natural compassionate response, how to recognize them and how to resist and respond to them. There are many ways to change the world and our experience in it. Celebrating our shared humanity is one way to make a difference that's available to all of us.

---

Mychol Scully is Senior Art Director for INspired Media Inc. publications PinkPlayMags, theBUZZ, The Local Biz Magazine, and The Pink Pages Directory. Mychol is available for thoughtful conversation or lascivious teasing anytime at [mychol@mychol.com](mailto:mychol@mychol.com).






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# Spring Horoscopes

by Julie Antoinette

## Aries (March 21 – April 20)

You must learn the lesson of letting go. Know that anything you love can never be separated from you. The nature of love is connection and inclusion. The nature of fear is separation and isolation. Choose wisely.

## Taurus (April 21 – May 21)

If you've hit rock bottom in one area of your life, know that this signals a new start. This spring brings a fresh new beginning. You've attempted to revive the situation but the planets urge you to abort mission and hit the "reset" button. It's time for a game change.

## Gemini (May 22 – June 21)

You are entertaining existential-type questions lately. With every interaction, decision and emotion you experience, you ask, "Who am I really?". Don't be disappointed if you don't receive a clear-cut, unequivocal answer. You are many things, to many people, in many situations. You have so many facets to your persona that diamonds are jealous of you. You must content yourself with this answer.

## Cancer (June 22 – July 22)

Burnout is catching up with you. You may think it's right, good and moral to put others first. However, you've nearly exhausted your resources to the point there's little left to give. You must fill your cup first. Iyanla Vazant, in her piece, "Put Yourself First" says wisely, "My cup runneth over. What comes out of the cup is for y'all. What's in the cup is mine."

## Leo (July 23 – August 22)

That dream that's been on the shelf for many, many moons, now beckons. It's time to dust off the years of cobwebs and neglect. Get ready for the spotlight. The world will soon grant you an audience. But first, practice, practice, practice. You've gotten a little rusty.

## Virgo (August 23 – September 23)

Buried emotions from long ago are surfacing. Fear not, they are surfacing in time for a spring-cleaning of your soul. You may be surprised (and maybe a little horrified) to find what's been hidden in the corners of your inner closet. Take comfort, we all have shadows and parts of us we'd rather not know about. The planets know you're ready to feel lighter on the inside. Feel it and heal it!

## Libra (September 24 – October 23)

Your relationship needs a communication makeover, Libra. That issue that's been nagging at you about your partner needs a voice - and an open ear. Do you trust that your partner has the maturity and humility to hear you out and to move forward constructively? If the answer is yes, plan a time and place to chat. If not, will you forever hold your peace?

## Scorpio (October 24 – November 22)

You may have endured a loss recently, Scorpio. Things may never be the same as they were and you can't go back. This is the nature of life. It must be lived forward. You can't have change without change. You are the sign of transformation and you know that in truth, all is not lost. You embody the wisdom inherent in the first law of physics: Energy cannot be created, nor destroyed, but simply changes form.

## Sagittarius (November 23 - December 21)

Your professional and social lives are melding together to form a combination as brilliantly complimentary as is chocolate and peanut butter. Your confidence is fostered and bolstered by your collegial confidants and your success is assured. You've finally found your tribe. What's more, on a daily basis, you feel at home, at play and at work all at once!

## Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

Your partner is longing for more sensitivity from you. You may perceive your partner as needy and a little too 'emo' for your liking. However, the truth is, you could use a little more softness in your approach. Sure, when it comes to business, you're hard as nails. But in the bedroom, feathers are better.

## Aquarius (January 20 – February 19)

A book you've read recently has captured your attention in a profound way. You don't know why but you can't let go of the feeling that a deeper message within its pages calls to you for clarification and application in your life. You must first understand your emotional reaction to what you've read and then you must question why you have that emotion. This will help you to unravel the message.

## Pisces (February 20 – March 20)

A joyful activity that you were involved with as a child has come back into your life. You don't know where you lost touch with this activity but now that you've reconnected with it, you feel more alive, excited and full of wonder again. Your inner child has come for a visit. It's playtime!

Julie is a Sociology and Psychology graduate, a Psychotherapy Intern and a lifelong student of the psyche. She seeks to relay intuitive messages of guidance from the collective astrological archetypes. As above, so below.



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## Looking Back

by Jeanette Jabier

In the summer of 1988, I mustered up enough courage to go to my first gay bar. CHAPS (9 Isabella St.) was the destination. It was a hot humid Wednesday night and I was shocked that there was a line up all the way over to Yonge St. At 10pm the music lowered as the deejay announced, “Its show time, please put your hands together for the incomparable Chris Edwards!” “The Right Stuff” by Vanessa Williams blasted thru the speakers, and from a small change room door emerged a statuesque Ebony Goddess. Her stage presence was commanding, her face beautiful! This was the start of a friendship that would last for over 25 years.

Fast forward to 1990, Chris creates the Miss Gay Toronto Pageant as a platform for new emerging young drag artists to showcase their talent, and introduce them to the art of female impersonation. This was the birth of yours’ truly, Jeanette Dupree. Among 14 contestants I emerged victorious, sweeping all three categories. Hence a tradition of co-hosting this annual pageant began, and continued up until 2016. Chris then created the Miss Gay Universe Pageant as another venue for new artists to perfect their craft. His acts of charity were boundless, and it was estimated that in his lifetime he personally raised over \$300,000.00 for various charities.

When I first started doing drag Chris would often buy me an outfit for an upcoming show stating, “You’re my drag daughter. You gotta look good Miss Thang!” That is what he was to me, my “mama”, which I often called him throughout the years. If not for Chris I would not have transitioned. His act of putting me in “drag” lead to my discovery that I was trans. In his eulogy I said, “How do you thank someone who has set you on the path of authenticity?” Every day that I wake up and look in the mirror I see the “Jeanette” that he helped bring to life.



Chris gave so much to Toronto’s vibrant LGBTQ2 community. Although American, in 1986 he was brought up here to Toronto from Fort Lauderdale to become a cast member of “An Evening At La Cage”, performing as Whitney Houston and Michael Jackson. He eventually moved here permanently in 2003. Last year (2017) was the first Pride without him, an emptiness felt by not only myself, but the entire Village as well. We ALL collectively miss him. He was such an integral part of Pride and its going to take time to get used to his absence.

Chris Edwards was many things to many people, Mentor, Idol, Legend, Hero, Friend. To me he was my FAMILY, a parent and someone I love very much. Rest now mama, my guardian angel. Thank you for all your love over the years. As long as I live I will speak of your kindness, your humility and that crazy sense of humour you had. I hope I make you proud. I miss you..

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Jeanette Jabier (AKA Jeanette Dupree) credits female impersonation as the catalyst to becoming a trans woman. She loves to perform and has received numerous accolades and titles, going as far back as being crowned Miss Gay Toronto in 1990. She’s currently working in the cosmetic industry and still performs on special occasions.







Presented by INspired Media Inc., Pride Toronto, Canadian Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Ontario Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and Berkeley Events.

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