

Jay Inslee reflects on three terms as governor: LGBTQ+ and climate justice wins

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

On January 15, 2025, Bob Ferguson will become Washington's 23rd governor. Ferguson's campaign promised healthcare reform, expanded access to mental health, and a commitment to continuing the environmental legacy of outgoing Gov. Jay Inslee, who is wrapping up his third and final term. While Ferguson has some big shoes to fill, Inslee told the *Seattle Gay News* that

he is excited to embrace retirement. "I would like to consider getting a chair position of the Rotary auction in Bainbridge Island," Inslee joked in an interview with the *SGN*. "In all seriousness, I do not see myself being in elected office in the future. I do not have elected office in the farthest distances on my radar."

SEE **INSLEE** PAGE 13

LINDSEY WASSON



Gay US ambassador under Biden returns to Seattle

BY MADISON JONES

HURRICANE BERYL RELIEF
WORK COURTESY NYHUS

After decades advocating for LGBTQ+ and civil rights in Washington state, Roger Nyhus, a Gay man and accomplished entrepreneur, had the opportunity to represent the US abroad. In stark contrast to the Trump administration recently banning the usage of Pride flags in all US embassies and federal buildings, Ambassador Nyhus flew the rainbow flag at his official residence in Barbados, where Queer acceptance has struggled to make inroads.

On his first day back in Seattle, Nyhus spoke with the *SGN* to reflect on his recently completed diplomatic assignment.

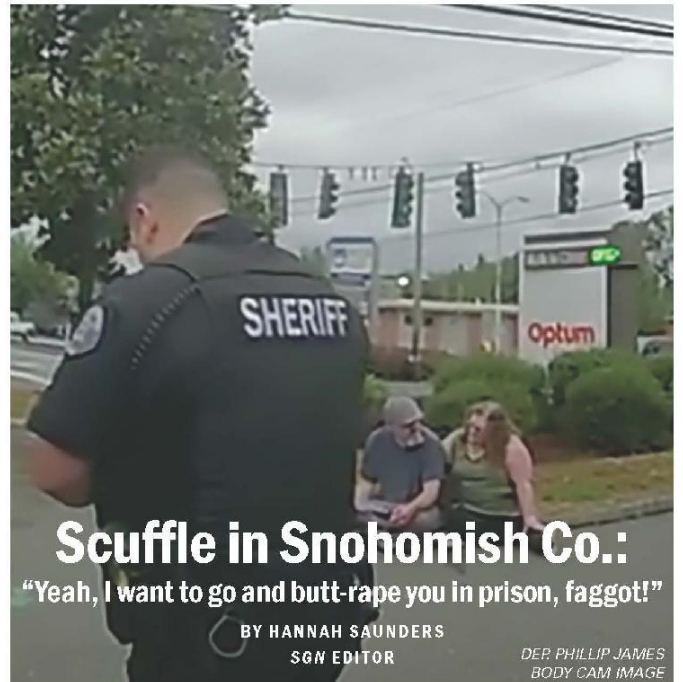
Madison Jones: Now that you're back

in Seattle, what have you missed most about being away from home?

Ambassador Roger Nyhus: I have missed the human connection most with my friends and family. I have also missed the variable weather. It's always 85 and sunny in Barbados, which makes it hard to keep track of what season it is.

MJ: What is the story behind being appointed ambassador? Did the Biden administration reach out to you first or vice versa?

SEE **NYHUS** PAGE 14



Scuffle in Snohomish Co.:

"Yeah, I want to go and butt-rape you in prison, faggot!"

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

DER PHILLIP JAMES
BODY CAM IMAGE

On July 29, 2024, Alex Childers and their partner Matthew Goldman were attempting to serve medical malpractice papers to a doctor in Snohomish County. After repeatedly being turned away by the receptionist, the pair stepped outside and were met by Clifford Helbert. A fight broke out.

Though police reviewed video evidence showing Helbert, 43, as the primary aggressor and spewing homophobic slurs, among others, at Childers, they charged both parties with assault: one report even neglected to document the anti-Queer rhetoric altogether.

"Honestly, it's like they were not interested at all. We had to shove the video in

their face — nearly — and force them to watch," Childers told the *SGN*. "It was strange, because they were really [uninterested] in what [Matt and I] had to say. We really had to push it."

The incident

Childers, 35, and Goldman, 24, visited Optum a couple of times that day to serve paperwork to Dr. Chiyang Wu. Goldman went into the clinic alone the first time, and the practice manager said the papers could be left there, or Goldman could wait until Dr. Wu was done with patients to serve

SEE **SCUFFLE** PAGE 12

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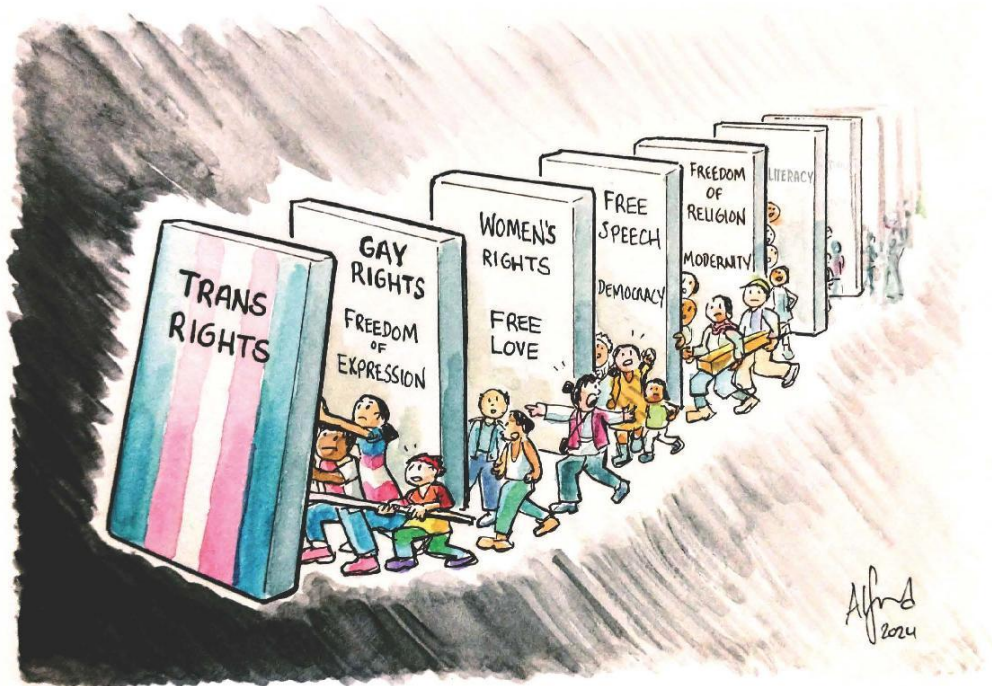
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OP-ED



UNITED WE STAND ★ DIVIDED WE FALL

Pride over fear: Trump's lunacy

BY THE SGN EDITORIAL BOARD

President Donald Trump vowed to end "transgender lunacy." In the first few days of his second presidency, he showed his own lunacy instead.

His policies are aimed at breaking the spirit of our Transgender community, denying them basic human dignity and in many cases, endangering their lives. In addition, many LGBTQ+ immigrants are facing the reality of being deported to countries that are openly hostile to their existence, potentially lethally. News broke this week that Trump plans to house up to 30,000 migrants at Guantanamo Bay — the base used following the 9/11 attacks with a disturbing legacy of torture. Furthermore, he denies the historical reality that has created income inequality for

Black and Indigenous people and minorities of color.

Trump's careless disregard for human life was spotlighted this week when he put a freeze on federal funding, causing chaos throughout many agencies. Medicaid portals across the country went dark. After numerous states sued, the White House abruptly rescinded it, but its press secretary took to social media to insist it "remains in full force." We can only hope the dysfunction that's reminiscent of Trump's first term will hinder him and his allies in the Capitol from making progress on their sinister agenda: to undermine every institution that protects, defends, and uplifts minorities in America.

As expected, Trump also unleashed a flurry of unlawful executive orders during

his first few days back. We expect that our courts will fulfill their duty to uphold the rule of law, yet Trump will seek to upend their authority and grow support for his efforts to undermine them. And he hopes to overwhelm our sensibility with his sheer brutality, hoping to elicit our surrender.

Recognizing the resilience of our LGBTQ+ community and our readership over the course of our 50-year history, the SGN has adopted the slogan "Pride over fear since 1974." As the third-oldest LGBTQ+ newspaper in the US, we've seen and documented this before. We know that when we stand together, we win in the end.

SEE LUNACY PAGE 11



Lifelong's bittersweet move to spin-off Capitol Hill thrift store, expand services

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

JOE WOLF

For over 40 years, the nonprofit Lifelong has been fighting for and serving marginalized communities through food and nutrition access, housing services, and HIV support. CEO Erica Sessle recently made an announcement that may come at a cost to the Capitol Hill community.

"This spring, we will move from our current Lucile Street location to a new, larger facility in Georgetown. This move will enable us to significantly enhance our kitchen and warehouse operations, paving the way to better serve the growing needs of our neighbors," Sessle stated.

The new facility, located in Georgetown Yards on East Marginal Way South, is over twice as large as the current space, Sessle said. It will feature a larger kitchen and warehouse storage spaces, and improved programmatic and administrative areas.

Sessle said these changes will allow the organization to increase meal production, smoothen grocery distribution, and expand services to meet future needs of Seattle residents.

"As part of this planning, we have made the difficult decision to close the Lifelong Thrift Store in Capitol Hill when our lease

ends on March 31," Sessle said. "For years, the thrift store has been a cherished community hub, and its legacy is a testament to the care and compassion that defines Lifelong."

Despite this impending loss, Sessle said Lifelong will continue to prioritize its core services, like food and nutrition, housing access, insurance, dental care, aging and disability services, and medical case management.

During a period of growth decades ago, Lifelong was formed through the merger of two nonprofits that responded to the AIDS epidemic. Lifelong Thrift started out as the

Chicken Soup Brigade Thrift Store, with the goal of providing home care, rides to medical providers, and food. The store has long been dedicated to serving the Queer community, including a program that provides \$25 vouchers to those living with HIV to connect them with services and items they need.

For more information visit <https://www.lifelong.org>.

Seattle advocates to host National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day event

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

A passionate group of advocates, volunteers, and community leaders have banded together to host an event for National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on February 8 from 2 to 4 p.m., including a robust panel discussion. The theme for this year is "Engage, Educate, Empower: Uniting to End HIV/AIDS in Black Communities."

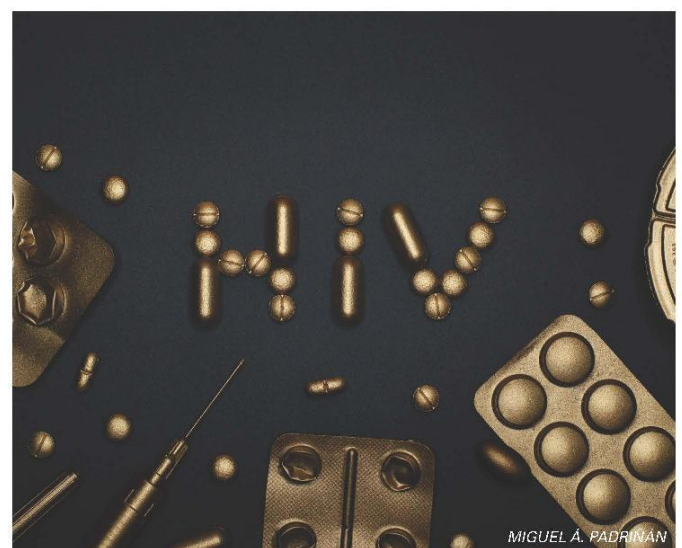
"Together, we work to create community-centered events that raise awareness and foster education about HIV/AIDS in the Black community," organizer Britney Lincoln said. "Our events are rooted in the Black community and collaborating with organizations that serve and support the LGBTQIA+ community."

Attendees will dialogue about HIV stigma, racism, and homophobia as they relate to prevention and care, highlighting how HIV continues to disproportionately

ately impact Black communities, as well as how to identify and engage in meaningful steps to address this, according to Lincoln. People can also engage in conversations about ending HIV in Black communities by addressing barriers.

Washington's Department of Health data state that every four days, a person who identifies as Black is diagnosed with HIV. While Black people account for 4% of the state's population, they represent 19% of new HIV diagnoses. Furthermore, 70% of new HIV infections among Black people born in the US are from men having sex with men, out of which 72% are under the age of 35.

Speakers at the event will include Andrew Ashiofu, Ariyah Jane, Dale Peace, and Michele Andrasik. Information and guidance on resources for HIV prevention and care will be provided.



MIGUEL A. PADRINAN

"Our panelists bring a wealth of experiences and insight to these topics, and I believe their voices will inspire and empower attendees to take meaningful action in their communities," Lincoln said.

Light refreshments and food will be offered during the gathering, which will take place at the Hildebrand Hall in Plymouth Church, 1217 Sixth Ave. in Seattle.



STEWART O. KALLAPPA
DJ GREEN

Remembering our beloved Stewart O. Kallappa Jr.

Stewart O. Kallappa Jr. passed away on Nov. 17, 2024, in Yakima, due to complications of pneumonia. Stewart was born in March of 1957 and lived in Neah Bay, Port Angeles, Bothell, and Central Seattle.

Stewart had many jobs working with the public. In Neah Bay he was employed as a bus driver for Head Start youth. He later worked as a hair stylist and colorist, most notably at Patti's Off Peabody, and also various saloons in the Seattle area in the '90s.

Stewart was a very active, vibrant person. Proud in his Indigenous heritage, boldly celebrating life happenings, and taking care of his family was of utmost importance to Stewart.

Stewart made friends that lasted through his lifetime and beyond wherever he went. He was loved by all who knew him. He will be missed terribly at birthdays, gatherings, and the annual Pride festivals held in Seattle.

Stewart was predeceased by his father

Stewart "Skandi" Kallappa Sr.; his beloved mother Barbara Hunter-Kallappa; his sister Lisa; his grandparents Oliver Jensen Hunter and Vida Ward-Thomas; his aunt Olive Hunter; his nephew Jamie Lachester; and his niece Rachel Gonzales.

He is survived by his brother Oliver Kallappa Sr., sister Rhonda Kallappa, son Peter Clarke, three grandchildren, and numerous nephews and nieces.

There was a cremation after a viewing last November. During the fierce storm, many managed to pay their respects despite road closures. Leave it to Stew to be in the middle of a storm!

The family is overwhelmed by his loss. It was decided that they will gather on his birthday and hold a celebration of life in Neah Bay on March 13, on what would have been his 68th birthday. People are encouraged to bring and share their photos of his haircuts, colorings, etc.



STEWART O. KALLAPPA
DJ GREEN

UTOPIA WA welcomes new youth program director

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

Taimane Tuia'ana is deeply committed to ensuring that no youth feel invisible or unworthy. With this in mind, she was recently promoted to the youth program director position at UTOPIA Washington, which has been working to connect QTBIPOC people to resources since 2009.

Tuia'ana has dedicated the past 14 years to youth development across King and Pierce Counties, having served as a para-educator, youth coordinator and program developer. She's launched the creation of inclusive spaces like Le Lumana'i o le Pasifika, a Pacific Islanders club at Federal Way High School.

"Through all these experiences, one thing remains clear to me: young people are searching for love, acceptance, and spaces where they feel seen, heard and valued," Tuia'ana said in a UTOPIA social media post. "As a diasporic Pacific Islander and unapologetic Samoan Fa'afafine Transwoman, I know firsthand the power of representation, healing, and belonging."

Educators and mentors who saw Tuia'ana's potential and who loved, supported, and empowered her to thrive are experiences she carries with her every day,

ones she is committed to paying forward to youth and young adults.

UTOPIA's Mana Youth Program cultivates youth leadership and advocacy through reclaiming Indigenous Queer identities and cultural practices, and focuses on the lived experiences of QTBIPOC youth.

"I believe in empowering young people to embrace their potential as leaders for their communities, and to achieve academic success. By centering their inner healing and lived experiences, we can equip them with the tools, confidence, and mindset they need to thrive and make a lasting impact," Tuia'ana said.

The organization's Mana Youth Council encourages youth to advocate and seek policy change, all while fostering care and support. The Mana Care Work Program allows students to connect one-on-one with a team member to construct an individualized care plan, including the development of leadership goals and ways to strengthen personal connections.

Under the program, youth can meet with mentors up to four times per month. This initiative also allows UTOPIA to understand what resources are needed to assist



TAIMANE TUIA'ANA
COURTESY UTOPIA

young people in the Queer Pacific Islander community. The program currently serves Chief Sealth International, Cleveland, Auburn, and Mt. Tahoma High Schools.

"I am excited to continue reclaiming and celebrating Indigenous identities, elevat-

ing QTBIPOC voices, and creating spaces where young people can fully embrace their authentic selves," Tuia'ana said.

For more information visit <https://utopiawa.org>.

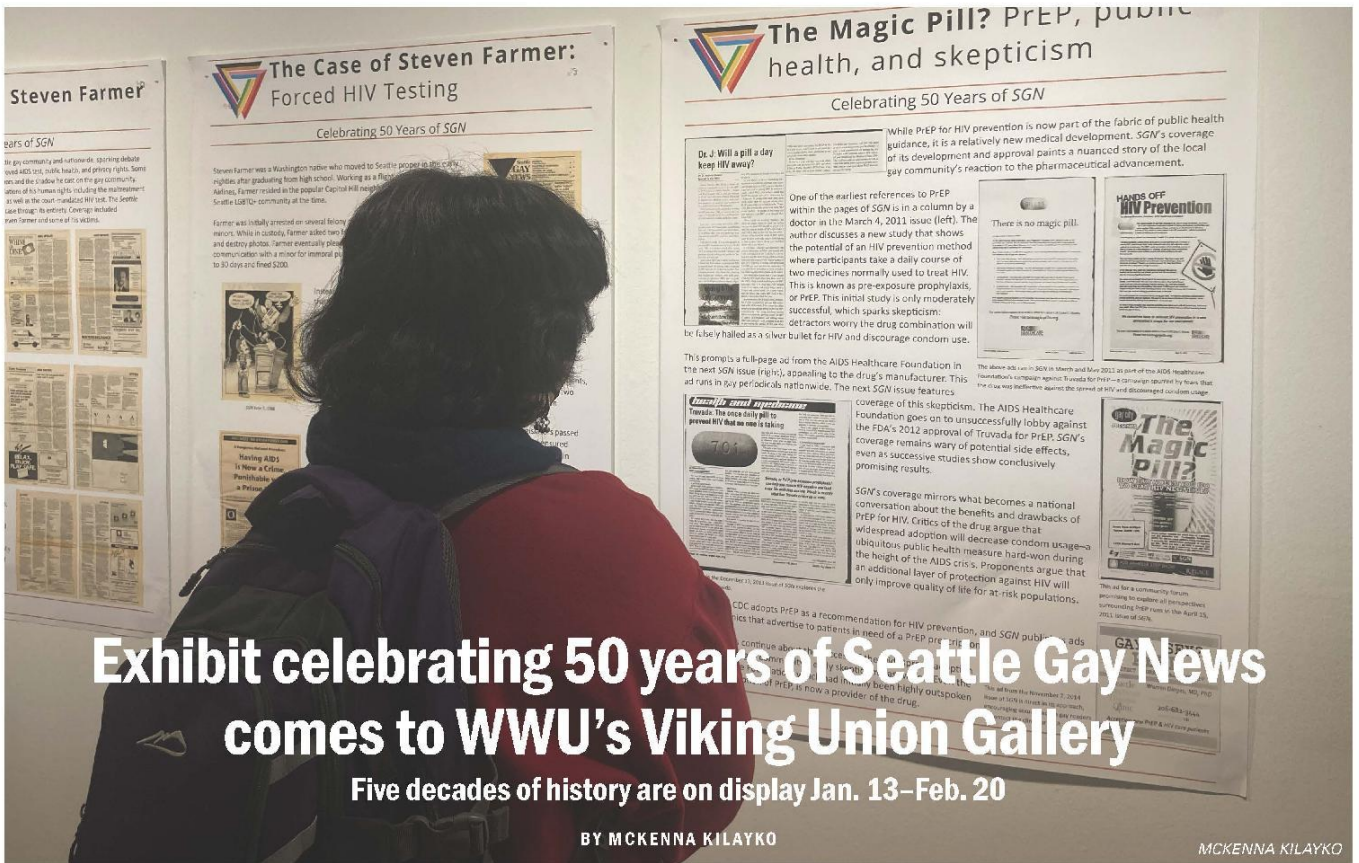


Exhibit celebrating 50 years of Seattle Gay News comes to WWU's Viking Union Gallery

Five decades of history are on display Jan. 13–Feb. 20

BY MCKENNA KILAYKO

MCKENNA KILAYKO

When one steps into the Viking Union Gallery at Western Washington University, the white walls display a collection of headlines from past issues published by the *Seattle Gay News* (SGN). The topics on display range from popular culture and travel to education and legislative moments.

On Jan. 14, the gallery hosted a reception with guest speaker and SGN publisher Renee Raketty, opening the [display].

"Whether it's the heartbreaking obituaries during the AIDS crisis, the joyous celebrations of Pride, or the sobering accounts of hate crimes and discrimination, the SGN has captured it all," she said.

Archives of the past five decades of the SGN hang proudly on the gallery walls, which provides ample reading opportunities on its progress as a paper.

"It's so cool to see how long-running the SGN is and that they've been documenting, representing, and supporting the Queer community in Washington for so long," Western second-year student Jacqueline Ojeda Mendez said.

The idea to archive the print issues of the SGN came from a video on KING5, a Seattle news station, which showed piles upon

piles of past issues of the SGN [belonging to] former owner George Bakan, who died in 2020.

SGN staff member Rick McKinnon was contacted by former Seattle Public Libraries CEO and Chief Librarian Marcellus Turner to help assist in the effort to archive the papers.

McKinnon explained in an email that the process of archiving past issues of the SGN involved microfilm, a compact way to store items like newspapers and other documents.

"Jessica Albano at UW Libraries and her library student employees did a painstaking review of all of the UW's microfilm of the SGN to make sure they had a complete run of each year and, in the process, identified a few gaps that they are hoping to fill in," he wrote.

What started as a small collection of microfilm from the University of Washington Libraries has slowly grown as more issues are collected to fill in the gaps from the start of the paper in 1974 to the present.

"We had been preserving the SGN on microfilm for some time, but the multi-institution effort to rescue George Bakan's

print issues of the SGN provided an awesome opportunity to fill gaps in the UW Libraries holdings," Albano wrote in an email.

She wrote that microfilming allowed UW Libraries to distribute runs of the SGN to other institutions. They were also able to provide free access through the Washington State Library's Washington Digital Newspapers website, ensuring that the SGN's LGBTQ+ history would be accessible to anyone. Back issues available can also be read on this site.

Since the first newsletters came out of the Seattle Gay Community Center in 1974, the SGN has covered topics like HIV and AIDS and legislative moments like the 1978 defeat of Initiative 13.

"When it came to important issues like HIV and AIDS, we were the first paper to repeatedly report on [it]. We provided life-saving information to LGBTQ people," Raketty said.

The SGN has adapted and evolved with the rapidly changing environment around it. It is one of the longest-running LGBTQ+ newspapers in the world, continuously making the effort to uphold its mission of

fighting for equality, she said.

"I hope our efforts bring new readers to the SGN during this time of great uncertainty for the LGBTQ+ community and when it is more important than ever to connect people with facts and quality journalism," Albano wrote.

That sense of uncertainty resonates with Raketty, who finds hope in the legacy of the SGN.

"We're going into a time where our right to exist will be challenged again with the next federal administration. It's good to know that we came together in the past," she said. "We were successful at obtaining our victories. And no matter what defeats we have over the next four more years, we're going to succeed again."

Note: If you have a collection of print issues of the SGN (big or small), please leave your name and email or phone number with the Viking Union Gallery staff for former SGN staff member Rick McKinnon.

This story was originally published in The Front, a student-run newspaper at Western Washington University.



MCKENNA KILAYKO



MCKENNA KILAYKO



A light against the dark: Vashon Island's 'Menorah' of Hope

BY NOVA BERGER

NOVA BERGER

Off of Seattle's coast, on an island only accessible by ferry, sits Vashon, the Pacific Northwest "Stars Hollow." It's perhaps the definition of a picturesque seaside town, defined by its tight-knit and inclusive community. With the highest concentration of LGBTQ+ people in Washington state, it's a haven for creatives, as well as anyone seeking acceptance.

But this *Gilmore Girls* equivalent faced challenges in the summer of 2024 after a local religious figure, Abbot Tryphon of the All-Merciful Savior Monastery, filmed and posted videos of homes with Pride flags, citing Bible verses against the eponymous sin, leading to backlash from island residents.

In response, Vashon rallied around its values and formed Not on Our Island (NOOI), a grassroots initiative aimed at fostering solidarity. Inspired by similar movements like Not in Our Town — which works to combat hate and discrimination nationwide — NOOI quickly gained traction, drawing over a hundred people to its first meetings.

"The community wanted to know what they could do," a member of NOOI told the *SGN*. "Many voices joined in, and it became clear that many identities were impacted."

A figurative light in every window

NOOI's mission is to spread a feeling of all-inclusive safety through education, outreach, and public events. It organized workshops and outreach events such as "Identifying Intention and Action," "Inclusive Voices: Building Connections," "Responding to Statements that Sting," and "Community Advocacy and The Laramie Project." Interviews with NOOI members appeared on the local radio station and in the newspaper.

NOOI's efforts were further amplified by posters, yard signs, and stickers as symbols of solidarity, created by local artist West McClean and available at NOOI events, Vashon Print and Design, or through the *Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber*. The breadth of NOOI's work is obvious: a visit to the island reveals that

nearly every organization and business on the main street displays a poster in its window.

For residents, it demonstrated a shared mission: to fight against miscommunication and misinformation, and the negative effects they can have.

"It's about coming together and holding hands," said Jennifer, a NOOI member. "It's something everyone can do."

History shows that large-scale community movements like this work: In 1993, in Billings, MT, white supremacist groups began distributing antisemitic literature. Residents, religious leaders, and community organizations came together to support the Jewish population by putting menorahs in their windows in solidarity. Ten thousand houses joined in, and the collective action isolated the hate groups and ultimately led to the decline of their activities in the area.

Like those Billings residents, Vashon's community is responding to hate with hope. The overwhelming support evidenced by the posters goes to show this.

The community is readying itself to face whatever challenges arise in the new year, especially after the election, following a message of MLK-like nonviolent social protest. People looking to become involved with the group to make a positive impact can attend events, display solidarity with signs and stickers, or use their voice to spread awareness.

NOOI showcases the beauty of Vashon Island beyond its nature — it's not just as a place of peace but a beacon of light for marginalized communities everywhere.

Upcoming NOOI workshops include "Microaggressions" (February 15), "Anchoring the Storm" (April 19), and "Connecting Across Differences with Aya Caspi," in conjunction with the Vashon Center for the Arts (September). These resources, as well as access to previous workshops and podcasts, are at <https://www.facebook.com/projfile.php?id=61562926508449>.



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More protections for Queer students does not remove rights from other youth

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

ZEN CHUNG

Senate Bill 5123 would expand protections for students in public schools by adding four protected classes — ethnicity, homelessness, immigration status, and neurodivergence — to nondiscrimination provisions, and by breaking down sexual orientation, including gender identity and gender expression, into three separate classes. The Senate’s Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee held a public hearing, with those in opposition claiming that these expansions would remove rights from cisgender girls.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are already protected classes, but SB 5123 provides definitions different from the state law enacted in 2010.

“Laws must evolve to reflect our growing understanding of identity and discrimination,” said primary bill sponsor and committee vice chair, Sen. Twina Nobles (D-28). “The current antidiscrimination statute of Washington state includes outdated language that doesn’t adequately distinguish between important identities, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.”

Sen. Nobles explained how discrimination and bias have devastating consequences for marginalized students, such as higher rates of mental health challenges and lower academic performance.

Personal experiences

Jaarvi Ganapathy, of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council, assisted with the drafting of SB 5123, with the goal of creating more inclusive and equitable schools.

“Inclusive schools allow students to be seen and to focus on their education. As someone who identifies as a member of several groups this bill seeks to protect, I ... experienced how a lack of inclusivity creates barriers in the education system,” Ganapathy said.

Ganapathy said the understanding of gender identity is not what it was 15 years ago, and that this bill would make necessary updates to the language of the state statute.

Felicia Walker, a pansexual Transgender woman who testified in support of the bill, noted how she began her transition two years ago.

“I know many people do not understand nonheterosexualities, much less, non-cisgender-conforming experiences,” Walker said. “You’re not expected to — but you should trust that those of us who do have these experiences started that journey back in childhood. It may be difficult and a new concept, but we owe it to our children to let them explore and figure things out on their own.”

She noted how schools need to be a place where youth can be their authentic selves without experiencing harassment or discrimination, since students spend most of their time there. Walker added that children should not suffer because adults feel uncomfortable.

“To those of you pushing back, ask yourself why. Is it because the existence of people who are not cisgender or not heterosexual make you so uncomfortable that you need to demonize this to make yourself feel better?” Walker asked. “That you try to erase us by saying, ‘You don’t deserve to be treated with respect,’ no matter how young we are? We are people. We are valid,

and we deserve to exist in society and move through it as we truly are — just like anybody else.”

Opposition

A concerned citizen, Jennifer Heine-Withee, said Walker’s comments are not reflective of heterosexuals and that she found them to be offensive, but that she forgave Walker. She then asked if the purpose of SB 5123 is to ensure that everyone’s rights are respected.

“How can that be when boys who identify as girls are given the right to use the girls’ bathroom, locker room, and showers? Would that guarantee that the rights of girls in these private spaces aren’t violated? Don’t girls have the right to privacy, dignity, and safety while they are in the restroom or locker room?” Heine-Withee asked.

She also raised an issue that has been sweeping the nation in recent years: fair competition in sports. “Right now, [cis] girls are on the losing end,” Heine-Withee said.

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WA Democrats seek to amend Parents Bill of Rights after outcry about harm to LGBTQ+ youth

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

Last year the Parents Bill of Rights, or Initiative 2081, brought forth by the extremist group Moms4Liberty, went into effect despite concerns regarding the outing of LGBTQ+ students. For the sake of bipartisanship, Democratic legislators chose to approve of the initiative as is, rather than placing it on last November's ballot. Now, they are attempting to amend the law, but Republican legislators have more momentum than ever before.

Senate Bill 5181, heard by the Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education on January 21, would primarily make changes to bring its language into alignment with existing law, and alter some of the 15 rights that the law enshrines.

"I feel a sense of urgency as I bring this bill forward today... We said that when we passed the initiative in 2024 that if changes were needed, we'd make them," said Sen. Claire Wilson (D-30), a bill sponsor, noting how about 90% of what was in the initiative was already within current state law. "This is a cleanup bill. This is not an overhaul..."

"It became clear over the interim that some of our more poorly written provisions in the initiative were causing confusion for school districts' implementation because of potentially conflicting revisions within state laws."

One of the proposed amendments replaces the term "public school record" with "education school record," which would allow parents to inspect their child's education records — but make no changes to parental oversight of a child's healthcare information under existing state law.

SB 5181 would also remove parental rights to notifications when medical services and follow-up care are offered or provided. The bill would also expand the definition of classes protected from discrimination under state law to include sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation and gender expression or identity, and disability.

Safety concerns

"As sexual violence attorneys, we see two unfortunate realities that are addressed by this bill," said Elizabeth Hendren, a parent who sits on the advisory council of the Sexual Violence Law Center. "The first is that LGBTQ+ individuals are targeted for and experience sexual violence at significantly higher rates. The second is that sexual violence is frequently perpetrated by family members and sometimes, even parents."

For youth experiencing harm at the hands of their families, schools play critical roles in providing supporting environments while connecting them to resources. Hendren said she appreciates the bill's sensitivities regarding student records protections in cases in which parents are involved in a crime.

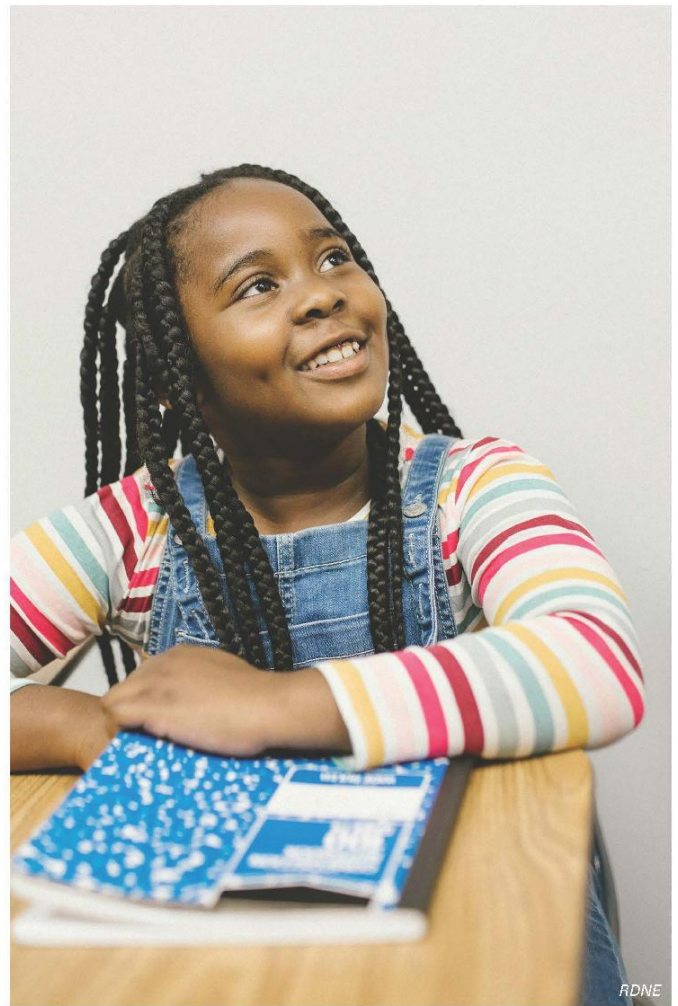
Under I-2081, parents receive an immediate notification if their child is taken or removed from the public school, without parental permission, into a youth shelter or "host home." SB 5181 adjusts that language to allow parents to be notified within 72 hours.

"By clarifying these rights and protections, you help foster an environment of trust and support for young people, including those who identify as Transgender or gender diverse," said Danni Askini, executive director of Gender Justice League. "As a former foster youth myself, I'm a survivor of sexual abuse as a child. This bill is also deeply personal for me."

Askini said she supports processes that streamline record requests relating to education and notifications to protect a student's safety, and noted how this bill is crucial for Transgender youth, who face greater rates of familial rejection. Askini believes SB 5181 would ensure the respect for confidentiality in educational settings for Trans students, which can be lifesaving.

Medical record notifications

The hearing was not without pushback, however. Several concerned citizens and



ADNE

two school district leaders spoke in opposition to the proposed amendments.

"We do oppose the removal of provisions related to medical services being offered or provided to children," said Jean Hill of the Washington State Catholic Conference.

Hill said schools are allowed to make decisions when parents are unavailable to do so, but that does not give public schools the right to take action on nonemergency medical decisions. Hill believes SB 5181 is an intrusion into family privacy.

Autumn Meadows, a concerned citizen, made a point of attacking gender-affirming care, like hormonal therapies. Eatonville School Board President Ronda Litzemberger also testified in opposition, saying that I-2081 renewed trust between schools and parents, which was vital after coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The passage of this bill would jeopardize that progress, she said.



Lesbian Home Journal seeks submissions of women's writing for first issue in 50 years

BY MARIDEE BONADEA

It's a good feeling to be able to tell your story to your allies, so we don't lose sight of who we are and who our community is. Also, in these trying times, we want to find meaning in our lives.

These are two reasons why I've launched the third issue of the *Lesbian Home Journal*. The first issue was printed in 1975 (the second followed several months later), the result of a collaboration by a group of lesbian feminists who wanted to have some visibility in a way that would build the community we dreamed of. We focused on writing because that's what we had in common. We also felt that women's diaries and letters were dismissed as unimportant and thought the *Lesbian Home Journal* would serve to elevate these traditional women's writings.

Two of us who contributed to the original issues recently started a conversation that sparked the idea of a third issue. We agreed

that the lesbian community had changed in ways that neither of us fully understood. We are hoping that, through this third issue, a picture of what the lesbian communities across the country look like in the 21st century can shine through.

We concluded after much discussion that women's journals and letter writing were still on the sidelines of recognized writing, so after almost 50 years, we want to publish writings by everyday women. Any person, no matter their gender identity, that identifies as a lesbian is welcome to send in several submissions of 700 words or less (diaries, letters, dreams, poems, short memoirs), as well as photos, art, graphics, or maybe even a comic.

Email submissions to maridee_bonadea@yahoo.com or mail to Maridee BonaDea, PO Box 1123, Vashon, WA 98070.

Complete track records on LGBTQ issues for Trump's starting lineup

BY NICO DIALESANDRO, BENJAMIN LAND, AND SPENCER MACNAUGHTON

This story (<https://www.unclosetedmedia.com/p/rubio-rfk-jr-hegseth-bondi-noem-mcmahon>) was originally published in *Uncloseted Media* (<https://www.unclosetedmedia.com>), an LGBTQ-focused investigative news outlet.

MARCO RUBIO

Trump Administration Position: Secretary of State

Status: Confirmed, 1/21/2025

Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, 2006: In an interview with the *Tallahassee Democrat*, Marco Rubio describes his opposition [to] Gay adoption in Florida: "Kids should not be forced to be part of some social experiment," he tells the paper.

United States Senator, March 2013: During a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference, Rubio tells the crowd, "Just because I believe that states should have the right to define marriage in the traditional way does not make me a bigot."

December 2015: In an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network during his presidential run, Rubio says [that] if elected, he would appoint anti-Gay-marriage justices to the Supreme Court, roll back Obama-era executive actions that protect LGBTQ people, and undo laws that protect Trans people's right to use the bathroom that matches their gender identity.

February 2016: At a campaign rally in New Hampshire, Rubio says, "Marriage should be between one man and one woman."

August 2016: Rubio is under fire by LGBTQ advocacy groups for speaking with the anti-Gay Florida Renewal group.

August 2017: Two months after the Pulse nightclub shooting that left 49 people dead, Rubio asks evangelicals to show compassion to LGBTQ people. "I want to be clear with you: Abandoning judgment and loving our LGBT neighbors is not a betrayal of what the Bible teaches. It is a fulfillment of it," he says.

March 2022: Rubio defends Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" bill, which bans [teaching] anything related to LGBTQ issues in pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade classrooms. "Raising kids is the job of parents and families, not schools. And so that's what that bill does," he says.

June 2022: Ahead of a "Drag Queen Story Time" set to be hosted by the US Air Force Base, Rubio sends a letter requesting its cancellation. "Decisions over children and their bodies should be left to moms and dads serving our nation, not mediated through publicly funded propaganda on US Air Force bases ... The last thing parents serving their nation overseas should be worried about ... is whether their children are being exposed to sexually charged content." The event is ultimately canceled largely because of pressure from Rubio.

September 2022: An ad for Rubio's Senate reelection campaign features a video of a drag performer reading to children, overlaid by Rubio saying, "The radical left will destroy children if we don't stop them ... They indoctrinate children, try to turn boys into girls."

October 2022: Rubio receives a 0/100 score on the Human Rights Campaign's Congressional Scorecard. "Sen. Marco Rubio is one of the most anti-LGBTQ politicians in America and a threat to every LGBTQ person in Florida," says Human Rights Campaign National Campaign Director Geoff Wetrosky.

November 2022: Rubio votes against the Respect for Marriage Act, a law that codifies same-sex marriages. The law was introduced by President Biden amid wor-



KENNEDY AND HEGSETH GREG SKIDMORE
NOEM, WILES, RUBIO, TRUMP, BESSETT, MCMAHON, BONDI COURTESY PHOTOS

ries that the conservative majority on the Supreme Court that took away the right to abortion will target same-sex marriage in the future.

January 2025: Following an executive order signed by Trump that declares there are only two genders, newly confirmed Secretary of State Marco Rubio instructs his staff to freeze all passport applications with "X" sex markers and changes to gender identity. "The policy of the United States is that an individual's sex is not changeable," an email from the State Department read. "Sex and not gender shall be used" in official documents. The policy affects both current and future passport applications.

ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.,

Trump Administration Position: Health and Human Services Secretary

Status: Not yet confirmed. First confirmation hearing set for 1/29/2025

Environmental lawyer, January 2011: RFK Jr. takes part in the Human Rights Campaign's "New Yorkers for Marriage Equality" video series. RFK Jr. says, "This is the last vestige of institutionalized bigotry that's left in this country, and we need to get rid of it."

June 29, 2023: RFK Jr. defends his support for LGBTQ rights at a town hall meeting in Charleston, SC: "I don't agree with anybody who says we shouldn't respect Gay rights," he says. "If you're an American, you have those rights, and everybody should respect them, and I'm going to do everything I can to make sure those are protected, and I always have, my whole life."

June 2023: On right-wing media commentator Jordan Peterson's podcast, RFK Jr. discusses endocrine disruptors in the water being the potential cause of young people becoming Trans. "I think a lot of the problems we see in kids, and particularly boys, it's probably underappreciated how much of that is coming from chemical exposures, including a lot of sexual dysphoria ... They're swimming through a soup of toxic chemicals today. And many of those are endocrine disruptors."

On Joe Rogan's podcast, RFK Jr. suggests that poppers could be the cause of the transmission of AIDS. He promotes a Peter H. Duesberg theory, who is a prominent AIDS denialist: "HIV ... was a kind of free rider that was also associated with overlapping lifestyle exposures," RFK Jr. tells Rogan. In reference to Duesberg and other AIDS denialists, RFK Jr. says, "They argued that the initial signals of AIDS, Kaposi's sarcoma and pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, were both strongly linked to amyl nitrite — "poppers" — a popular drug among promiscuous gays."

July 2023: RFK Jr. says in an interview with Fox Carolina News, "I think anyone who is Transgender should be respected. ... But I also think parents should have the final say."

Democratic representative from Virginia Gerald E. Connolly holds a hearing to discuss RFK Jr.'s beliefs that are "vile, disgusting, racist, bigoted, antisemitic, anti-Gay, anti-science, and riddled with conspiracy theories. ... By promoting Mr. Kennedy, Republicans are deliberately providing a platform to amplify hate speech."

May 2024: At a campaign rally in Austin, Texas, RFK Jr. opposes gender-affirming care and backs a ban on certain treatments for minors, including puberty blockers and hormone therapy.

PETE HEGSETH

Trump Administration Position: Defense Secretary

Status: Confirmed, 1/24/2025

Early life, April 2002: While Pete Hegseth serves as publisher of Princeton's conservative campus newspaper, *The Princeton Tory*, an editor's note titled "The Rant" outlines the publication's anti-Gay views. "The movement to legitimize the homosexual lifestyle and homosexual marriages is strong and must be vigorously opposed ... Homosexuals themselves should not be demonized; however, their lifestyle deserves absolutely no special legal status."

September 2002: *The Princeton Tory* ranters express concerns about newspaper coverage of Gay weddings. "At what point does the paper deem a 'relationship' unfit

for publication? What if we 'loved' our sister and wanted to marry her? Or maybe two women at the same time? A 13-year-old? The family dog?"

Political commentator for Fox News, June 4, 2024: In his book *The War on Warriors*, Hegseth criticizes the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." He also writes unfavorably about Gay people serving in the military, arguing that their inclusion reflects a "Marxist agenda" that prioritizes social justice over combat readiness: "Not because I have a newfound ax to grind with gay Americans ... But because I naively believed that's what ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell was all about. Once again, our good faith was used against us. The Left never gives an inch and always takes a mile."

Jan. 14, 2025: During Hegseth's Senate confirmation hearing, Democratic Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand grills him about his contentious views about Gay people serving in the military. Gillibrand also condemns Hegseth's suggestion that addressing LGBTQ inclusion undermines the military. "To denigrate LGBTQ service members is a mistake," she says. In response, Hegseth says, "Senator, as the President has stated, I don't disagree with the overturn of Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

PAMBONDI

Trump Administration Position: Attorney General

Status: Not yet confirmed

Prosecutor, August 2010: At a forum sponsored by the anti-LGBTQ Christian Family Coalition, Pam Bondi pledges to oppose Gay marriage as attorney general of Florida. In an email to Politifact clarifying her position, Bondi says, "As Florida's next attorney general, I will vigorously defend [the] law banning gay adoption in our state."

Attorney General of Florida, May 2014: Bondi submits a request to a federal judge asking for a marriage equality case, which would allow same-sex Floridians the right to marry, to be thrown out. She says forcing Florida to recognize same-sex marriages would impose "public harm" and "create significant problems for the state's pension and health insurance program."

August 2014: Bondi files a motion to freeze an appeal by six same-sex couples challenging Florida's ban on Gay marriage.

December 2014: *The Tampa Bay Times*, Florida's largest daily newspaper, names Bondi "loser of the year" and compares her to a modern-day Anita Bryant because of her "relentless defense of Florida's gay marriage ban."

June 2016: Bondi oversees the investigation of the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, where 49 people were murdered. In an interview with Anderson Cooper, Bondi says, "People right now who are partners, who aren't married, officially, aren't able to get information. So we are trying to assist them in getting information." In response, Cooper challenges Bondi: "Had there been no gay marriage ... you do realize that boyfriends and girlfriends of the dead would not be able to get information and would not be able to probably get a visit in the hospital here. Isn't there a sick irony in that?"

October 2017: In an ideological pivot, Bondi backs the Florida Competitive Workforce Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. "I haven't read the bill, but of course, it's something that I would support," she says. Three years later, the bill dies.

Private citizen, registered foreign agent,

and lobbyist for the Qatari embassy; August 2023: In a Fox News interview with Sean Hannity, Bondi compares LGBTQ youth who are out at school but not to their parents to hiding that they were sexually abused or that they are struggling with heroin addiction.

US Attorney General nominee, January 2025: During her Senate confirmation hearing to become President Trump's attorney general, Democratic Sen. Adam Schiff asks Bondi if she will defend and respect marriage equality. "I will respect the law. Absolutely," she says.

KRISTI NOEM

Trump Administration Position:
Secretary of Homeland Security
Status: Confirmed, 1/25/2025

South Dakota House Representative, June 2015: In reaction to *Hedges v. Obergefell*, Kristi Noem releases a statement saying she disagrees with the ruling and that she "believes marriage is a special bond between a man and a woman." In 2022, she doubles down during a roundtable discussion with Young America's Foundation. "[I have] never supported gay marriage. ... A lot of my faith has to do with that."

Governor of South Dakota, March 2021: Noem supports HB 1217, a bill that would bar Transgender girls and women from playing on female sports teams. However, she later vetoes the bill, fearing a legal battle with the NCAA. "The NCAA is a private association. That means they can do what they want to do. And even though I fundamentally disagree with them when it comes to this issue, if South Dakota passes a law that's against their policy, they will likely take punitive action against us."

In response to backlash from her veto, Noem signs two executive orders that ban Transgender girls and women from participating on women's sports teams in public high schools and colleges across South

Dakota.

Also in March, Noem signs the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which allows discrimination against LGBTQ people on the grounds of religious beliefs.

February 2022: Noem signs a ... bill into law that effectively bans Transgender students from playing on the sports team that matches their gender identity.

February 2023: Noem signs HB 1080, which bans age-appropriate and medically necessary gender-affirming care for youth in South Dakota, into law.

February 2024: The Transformation Project, a Trans advocacy organization that was working on a government project in South Dakota, comes to a legal settlement with Noem and her health secretary after the state had unfairly terminated a contract with [it] based on what [it] called "national politics." South Dakota publicly apologizes and pays \$300,000 to the Trans advocates.

LINDA MCMAHON

Trump Administration Position:
Secretary of Education
Status: Not yet confirmed

WWE President and CEO, 1980-2009: Linda McMahon, who co-founded the WWE with her husband Vince McMahon, pushes several homophobic and transphobic storylines on their programs, some of which include Queer-coded fighters who perpetuate stereotypes that Gay men are predatory and other wrestlers who shout transphobic slurs.

Senate candidate, 2010: While running to become a Republican senator in Connecticut, McMahon supports the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law that denies same-sex couples the benefits and recognition given to heterosexual couples.

October 2012: On the campaign trail, McMahon flips and says, "I absolutely support America's law for same-sex marriage." She claims her position on the issue has

"been evolving."

PAC leader, September 2021: McMahon serves as the head of the America First Policy Institute, which penned the America First Agenda, a competing version of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. On its site, the institute publishes articles denouncing Trans rights, including one titled "Radical Gender Ideology Is Transforming American Society, and AFPI Is Fighting Back."

March 2024: McMahon writes a Fox News op-ed criticizing President Biden's proposed diversity, equity, and inclusion mandates.

US Secretary of Education nominee, November 2024: The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, GLSEN, releases a statement in response to McMahon's nomination: "McMahon's lack of expertise in education, paired with Trump's focus on so-called 'parents' rights' and 'school choice,' signals a continued push to strip critical protections for LGBTQ+ students and historically marginalized communities."

SCOTT BESSENT

Trump Administration Position:
Treasury Secretary

Status: Not yet confirmed. Final vote set for 1/27/2025

Early life, 1995: At 17, Bessett wants to attend the US Naval Academy after his father faces financial hardship. However, Bessett is unwilling to lie about his sexual orientation, so he is not allowed to enroll in the program because it is still following "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" laws.

1990s-2000s: Bessett sits on the board of God's Love We Deliver, a nonprofit founded in the 1980s that helps deliver meals to people with HIV/AIDS. (Exact dates not known)

Bessett openly supports the Elton John AIDS Foundation. (Exact dates not known)

US Treasury Department nominee, Nov.

24, 2024: Trump nominates Bessett to lead the US Treasury Department, making him the first openly LGBTQ person nominated for the position and putting him on track to make history as the nation's highest-ever ranking LGBTQ official.

Jan. 21, 2025: Bessett's nomination advances past a key Senate committee, teeing up his likely confirmation with a full floor vote in the coming days.

SUSIE WILES

Trump Administration Position:
Chief of Staff
Status: Assumed Office 1/20/2025

(Not required to face confirmation)

Campaigner, 1980: Wiles works as a scheduler for Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign. The Reagan administration would go on to be hostile toward LGBTQ people during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in which 89,343 Americans died from the virus during his presidency.

2018: Wiles helps run Ron DeSantis' gubernatorial campaign. The DeSantis administration would go on to pass a bevy of anti-LGBTQ legislation, including the infamous so-called "Don't Say Gay" law.

PAC leader, September 2022: As CEO of Donald Trump's Save America political action committee, Wiles oversees a \$1 million donation to the America First Policy Institute, a group that has published numerous anti-Trans articles and policy proposals.

2024: Former mayor of Jacksonville John Delaney says in an interview, "[Wiles] would be what I'd call left on LGBTQ+ issues, and I can't believe she would necessarily agree naturally with Donald Trump on immigration, but that's more me speculating."

Additional reporting by Sam Donndelinger.

LUNACY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Some of our advertisers may realign their media strategies for "new market realities," but we will persevere. We will continue to keep you informed, ensure that you are prepared, and inspire you to push through these next four, long years.

With that said, we are a newspaper. Here is the latest on Trump's anti-LGBTQ+ tyranny:

"Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government"

Signed on his first day in office, this order declares that there are only two sexes: male and female. It states that gender identity "reflects a fully internal and subjective sense of self, disconnected from biological reality and sex and existing on an infinite continuum, that does not provide a meaningful basis for identification and cannot be recognized as a replacement for sex."

The Secretaries of State and Homeland Security and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management will force government-issued identification documents, like passports, Global Entry cards, and visas, to reflect either of the two declared sexes. Transgender women will be inappropriately removed from women's prisons into all-male facilities.

The order will also "ensure that no Federal funds are expended for any medical procedure, treatment, or drug for the purpose of conforming an inmate's appearance to that of the opposite sex," and "ensure the freedom to express the binary nature of sex and the right to single-sex spaces in workplaces and federally funded entities covered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964."

All federal agencies are required to remove all educational documents that are inconsistent with this order, including both English and Spanish versions of the "US Department of Education Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth and Families in School" and "Confronting Anti-LGBTQ+ Harassment in Schools: A Resource for Students and Families."

"Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation"

Signed on January 28, this executive order accuses medical professionals of "maiming and sterilizing a growing number of impressionable children under the radical and false claim that adults can change a child's sex through a series of irreversible medical interventions."

It states that puberty blockers, sex hormones, and surgical procedures are "chemical and surgical mutilation." Under this order, children of active-duty servicemembers can no longer receive any form of gender-affirming care.

According to the text, "The Attorney General shall convene States' Attorneys General and other law enforcement officers to coordinate the enforcement of laws against female genital mutilation across all American States and Territories..."

The attorney general also will "prioritize investigations and take appropriate action to end child-abusive practices by so-called sanctuary States that facilitate stripping custody from parents who support the healthy development of their own children, including by considering the application of the Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act and recognized constitutional rights."

If Trump so desires, he could use his executive power to send the Armed Forces and the National Guard to rip Trans youth away from their families who support their transition journey.

Trump's order states that the administration will do whatever it takes to end "chemical and surgical mutilation," which may include limiting Medicaid and Medicare coverage for those seeking gender-affirming care.

Executive Order 14075 rescinded

Trump rescinded Executive Order 14075, also called "Advancing Equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Individuals." This order worked to address discriminatory and harmful state and local legislative attacks on Queer youth and families relating to medically necessary care. It directed the Department of Education to support

LGBTQ+ students, families, and school staff targeted by harmful laws.

It directed the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to reduce youth's exposure risk to conversion therapy through public awareness and the refusal of federal funding for such programs.

This order also safeguarded access to healthcare and supports for all Queer people, and helped states expand access to gender-affirming care. It worked to stop LGBTQ+ homelessness and housing instability, and strengthened supports for LGBTQ+ elders, like health disparities and social isolation.

With the rescission of Executive Order 14075, we may see a restart in federal funding for conversion therapy camps. We will see a rollback of supportive services, like counseling and LGBTQ+ affirming mental health care. Without this order, discrimination and barriers LGBTQ+ people face in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems will rise once again.

We can expect to see a spike in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the nation and less support for LGBTQ+ students in schools and educational facilities.

Executive Order 14020 rescinded

This order established the White House Gender Policy Council, and said that "the full participation of all people — including women and girls — across all aspects of our society is essential to the economic well-being, health, and security of our Nation and of the world."

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) will no longer be promoted across the federal and military workforce, and the work to increase comprehensive healthcare service access, including sexual and reproductive rights, will not move forward.

Executive Order 14004 rescinded and ban on Trans service members

Also known as "Enabling All Qualified Americans to Serve Their Country in Uniform" and enacted by the Biden administration, the order states that gender identity shall not prevent any person from serving in the military. The rescission, however,

signed by a five-time draft dodger, could ban Transgender men and women from joining or serving in the Armed Forces.

On January 27, Trump signed the "Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness" order, which states that mental and physical health conditions may result in time away from duty. Furthermore, it says, "Consistent with the military mission and longstanding [Department of Defense] policy, expressing a false 'gender identity' divergent from an individual's sex cannot satisfy the rigorous standards necessary for military service" and that it conflicts with a service member's "commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one's personal life."

This order will prevent Transgender people from enlisting in the Armed Forces, and Transgender women already serving will be banned from using women's sleeping, changing, and bathing facilities. This is to be implemented within 60 days of the order's date.

The reality in Washington state

While these efforts will inevitably impact Washingtonians, we live in one of the safest states in the country for LGBTQ+ Americans. For the first time in history, Washington has two LGBTQ+ legislators as majority leaders in both the House and the Senate, and Gov. Bob Ferguson has long defended LGBTQ+ freedoms, particularly against the first Trump administration. Likewise, Attorney General Nick Brown has already pushed back against Trump's order that seeks to overturn birthright citizenship, and he has spoken in favor of LGBTQ+ equality in the past.

The SGN Editorial Board comprises Publisher Renee Rakety, Editor Hannah Saunders, Digital Engagement Editor Aisha Misbah, Staff Writer Lindsey Anderson, and rotating members of the SGN staff.

SCUFFLE
CONTINUED FROM COVER

him on his way out, according to video evidence. Goldman said that it would take merely 30 seconds to serve the paperwork and that it had to be served directly to the provider, but the practice manager was insistent.

The medical malpractice civil suit relates to Dr. Wu's alleged handling of a work-related spinal injury. Childers said Dr. Wu intentionally refused further imaging and other requests from specialists when their injury wasn't improving.

Later, the couple entered the clinic together.

"I came down to explain the situation," Childers said. "[that] it's just the individual doctor. We aren't trying to cause any problems, but also, I do want to explain that if you try to help him "escape" or "get away," that's interference with due process." ... They got upset. I started to get upset too, but I didn't say anything. I kept control of myself. I let the situation go."

The pair walked outside to their car, and Childers said they began venting to Goldman because it had been a long and arduous process. Childers thought the conversation was private, and said they were pacing due to anxiety.

Helbert's written statement following the incident said he was at Optum with his girlfriend at the time, and claimed the two were harassing the receptionist. In his statement, he said they stormed out of the facility and that he and his girlfriend went outside and followed Goldman and Childers to their car.

"They were still in the parking lot plotting about what else they were going to do. I went back in and told the receptionist what they were saying and what they were driving. When I came back out, I was worried about what they might do. So I asked them to leave," Helbert's statement said. "The guy in the red [Childers] got in my face, yelling at me close enough to almost kiss me, like four times. Trash-talking me. I spit toward him, and he punched me in the face."

Childers is a former Boy Scout and a Coast Guard veteran, and said they know not to leave risks unchecked and to always be prepared.

Childers and Goldman said Helbert approached and whispered "faggot," then went to his car to get cigarettes and to put a knife under his waistband. Police reports do not mention Helbert being armed with a knife.

Video of the incident

Goldman recorded the incident. The video starts with Childers standing next to the passenger-side door of their car, within the parking line. Helbert is about six inches from Childers' face and says, "You fucking harassed her." Childers says they did not harass the receptionist. Helbert responds, "The fuck you didn't. I just recorded you planning your little fucking plan. Starting at you while you're over here, avoiding eye contact like a punk."

At this point, the practice manager steps outside, approaches the three, and tells them to step away from each other or she will call the cops. Childers tells her that they and Goldman were standing next to their car. Childers turns to Goldman and tells him to call the police, according to video evidence, to which Helbert responds, "Nobody broke the fucking law besides this retard."

Helbert then tells the two to get in their car and to "fucking leave," according to the video. After absorbing insults and attempting to explain the situation through Helbert's aggressive hand motions, Childers asks, "Where are your dentures, bitch?"

Helbert's written statement claims Childers got in his face and was trash-talking, yet Goldman's video depicts otherwise. "I spit toward him and he punched me in the face," Helbert's statement said.

Goldman's video evidence shows Helbert spitting directly into Childers' face, which constitutes as assault in the fourth degree under RCW 9A.36.041.2. The video shows Childers throwing a right-hand punch to Helbert's jaw, and the two ended up in a scuffle.

At this point in the video, the practice manager calls the police as Childers lay on top of Helbert, with their left arm stretched backward around Helbert's neck. Childers said to call the police and that they were restraining Helbert, who begins to panic and states that he can't breathe. Video evidence also shows Helbert ripping out a chunk of Childers' hair.

Helbert's girlfriend approaches to break up the fight: she pushes Childers' head and pulls their arm off of Helbert without any pushback from Childers, but Helbert continues to shout at Childers, including saying, "You're fucking dead," as shown in the video.

Childers tells Helbert he spat on them, that it was a biohazard, and that Helbert was going to jail.

"You just fucking hit me, you fucking



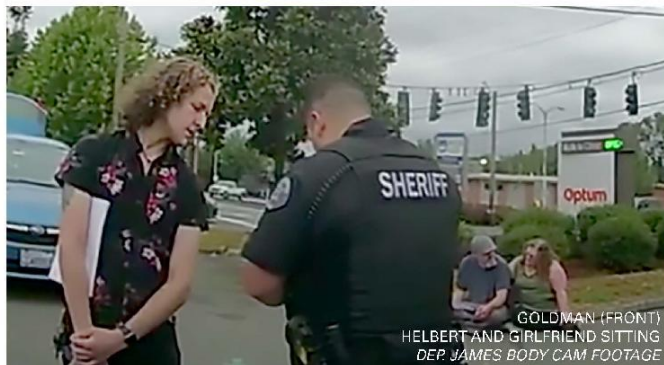
THE PRACTICE MANAGER, HELBERT, AND CHILDERS
GOLDMAN VIDEO FOOTAGE



EVIDENCE OF THE PRACTICE MANAGER,
CHILDERS, HELBERT, AND GIRLFRIEND
GOLDMAN VIDEO FOOTAGE



HELBERT AND GIRLFRIEND
DER. JAMES BODY CAM FOOTAGE



GOLDMAN (FRONT)
HELBERT AND GIRLFRIEND SITTING
DER. JAMES BODY CAM FOOTAGE

little cunt!" Helbert says.

Childers says that their response was self-defense.

"You're coming with me, cupcake," Helbert responds.

Childers replies, "Okay, cool." Helbert says, "Yeah, I want to go and butt-rape you in prison, faggot!"

On the video, Childers notes how this is a hate crime. Helbert repeatedly says, "Fuck you" while trying to push past his girlfriend to approach.

Responding officers charged Childers with second-degree assault and Helbert with fourth-degree assault, but neither were arrested.

"I wasn't squeezing — it would have been way worse," Childers told the SGM. "There would have been rub burns, there would have been some bleeding from rub burns, there would have been maybe some bruising already if I had actually put pressure on it. He wouldn't have been able to make any sound whatsoever, let alone scream and talk multiple times if I was choking him. I was only holding him in a lock, but the cops were adamant to try to act like I was choking him."

In his witness statement, Helbert wrote: "When Toni Davis and I exited the doctor's office, I realized that he and his associate were parked very, very close to where we were parked. We walked to our vehicle, and Toni Davis got in. I stayed out for a moment observing what I felt was a mentally disturbed individual ranting legal-speak while pacing around in what

appeared to me [to be] a manic state. While Mr. Childers behaved obnoxiously while vaping like a chimney, his associate had the camera on his phone rolling.

"It is my belief that mentally disturbed individuals shouldn't be physically harmed, because their circumstances are already difficult. So it wasn't my intention to do him any more harm, but I couldn't let him continue to harass people any further."

Law enforcement incident response

The Snohomish Police Department and the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office respond jointly to calls, including this July incident. The SGM received a comment from Courtney O'Keefe, the director of communications of the Sheriff's Office:

"In this case, both parties were involved in a mutual assault, where each party assaulted the other. Deputies referred charges for both individuals; neither of them were taken into custody at the scene. For incidents like this, deputies document the details, collect video, gather witness statements, and upload everything as evidence. The case is then forwarded to the Prosecuting Attorney's Office for further review.

"In the case report, the deputy noted the language used after the altercation. Once the case is reviewed by the Prosecuting Attorney, they will decide what charges to file. If they believe the legal threshold is met, they will add charges related to the malicious harassment or hate crime."

Responding deputies Jonathan Cissell, Samuel Wingham, and Ronald Smarr

noted how Helbert called Childers a “faggot” in their reports, yet Deputy Phillip James neglected to include that information, according to his narrative report.

“They wouldn’t even acknowledge the hate crime regardless of us showing them the video, and the fact that he...called me ‘faggot,’ and basically passively threatened to rape me in jail,” Childers told the SGN.

The Sheriff’s Office did not respond to further SGN requests for comment.

Body camera footage

Helbert initially refused to be seen by a medic, according to body camera footage. Responding officers did not ask Childers if they wanted to be seen by a medic, even though they were missing a chunk of hair and received a diagnosis of having a minimal middle finger fracture on July 31, two days later. Childers also asked officers for something to wipe the spit off their face, which officers did not provide, according to the footage.

Dep. James’ body camera shows him arriving on scene and approaching Helbert to ask what happened in a soft and calm tone — which changed during interviews with witnesses. Helbert has difficulty expressing himself, but says that he was trying to ensure Childers and Goldman wouldn’t be an issue.

“I told him he needed to leave. He got in my face and trash-talked me. Like hard, like right in my face — almost kissed me,” Helbert says on the video.

Dep. James then enters the clinic and asks the practice manager if she was having issues with the people outside. The practice manager explains how Goldman attempted to serve papers to Dr. Wu, and that his options were to drop the papers off at the desk or wait until the provider was finished with patients for the day.

The practice manager highlights how Helbert initiated the physical aggression, that he spit, and that Childers responded by throwing a punch.

“My doc is wondering if he should stay in here or if he should leave. What should he do? He’s done with his day,” the practice manager says.

The footage also shows Dep. James asking Dr. Wu if he wanted to receive the papers, to which Dr. Wu responded, “Not today,” and the two laugh together.

“I guess you know they’re coming at some point, so I don’t know if you just want them to get it over with, or you want to avoid the situation for now and deal with it later?” Dep. James asks.

Dr. Wu says he wants to deal with the situation later. Dep. James asks where he

parked and suggests he wait until responding officers disperse Childers, Goldman, and Helbert.

Less than six minutes into the footage, Dep. James refers to Childers and Goldman as “assholes” for trying to serve paperwork to the doctor. Around seven minutes, Dep. James again refers to the couple as “assholes” when speaking with other responding officers.

While recounting the incident to other deputies, Dep. Cissell and another noted how Helbert first spat on Childers, which the practice manager already told Dep. James — something Dep. James left out of the conversation with his comrades.

Charging hate crimes

Sarah Johnson, the deputy prosecuting attorney at the Snohomish County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office (SCPAO) said there are two ways a hate crime can unfold in Washington.

The first are obviously bias acts, like defacing property of Jewish people with Nazi symbols. Johnson said other criminal conduct can sometimes be elevated to a hate crime offense if the prosecutor can prove that the conduct was driven by one’s perception of the victim, like intentionally and maliciously acting based on another person’s race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, or mental, physical or sensory disabilities.

“Hate speech is not criminal behavior — it is generally protected by the First

Amendment. However, what people say surrounding the commission of a crime can often be helpful in determining the motive for committing the crime,” Johnson said.

A hate crime offense constitutes a felony, and the SCPAO handles all felonies committed within the county. After officer investigations, police reports and related materials are sent to the SCPAO, which reviews them and determines whether they agree with law enforcement that a crime has been committed.

“In their reports, law enforcement officers identify what laws they believe were broken, but only deputy prosecuting attorneys have the authority to file charges,” Johnson said. “We don’t receive too many referrals for this type of offense — as of now we have fewer than 30 cases that are either filed as hate crime offenses or are waiting to be reviewed for potential filing of a hate crime offense.”

Johnson said Helbert was referred for consideration of a fourth-degree assault charge, and that it will be reviewed for all possible criminal law violations, including a hate crime offense.

“We often receive requests from law enforcement to review cases for filing as hate crime offenses that we are ultimately unable to charge as such, and we often charge cases as a hate crime offense that were originally referred to us for a different charge. Attorneys always make the charging decision, not law enforcement,” Johnson said.

She noted how hateful words alone are

generally not enough to prove motive, and will look into the relationship between both parties, if it was an isolated incident or a pattern of behavior, and greater context of the incident, among other things.

Helbert, an Illinois native, has a rap sheet spanning decades that landed him three years in prison. Charges include domestic battery, aggravated battery and great bodily harm, burglary, harboring a runaway, and aggravated kidnapping.

In December 2024, Childers filed a civil protection order against Helbert, which a King County Superior Court judge authorized for one year, beginning on January 8, 2025. (Childers is a resident of Seattle.)

A court date has yet to be set.

Evidence and other information related to the case, provided by Matthew Goldman, can be found at <https://app.box.com/s/75pl9r0u1r4hngn5wfwz7gc35d7swc9x>.

Disclaimer: SGN Publisher Renee Raketty is an employee of a national division of Optum and a patient of Optum Care Washington. However, she had no role in the research, interviews, or reporting for this article and has not been a patient at the clinic location or of the doctor included herein. Optum Care Washington is a physician-owned and -led practice with full authority over medical decision-making and patient care, supported by nonclinical administrative services provided by Optum.

AXON BODY 3 X60A92450



CHILDERS AND GOLDMAN (BACK)
DEP. JAMES BODY CAM FOOTAGE

INSLEE CONTINUED FROM COVER

Standing up to Trump

Inslee’s terms weren’t without controversy, and they often included butting heads with President Trump. He’s proud that his successor will enter the office with similar previous experience. Early in Trump’s first administration, Ferguson challenged the constitutionality of his “Muslim ban.”

“Obviously [Washington is] never going to be turning down any way to work with the federal government, but we understand the threat that [Trump] possesses to our liberties, our sense of unity, and the US Constitution,” Inslee said. “We should never think about taking a knee to him. Other people are, which is disturbing, but we never will. In the first rodeo, we beat him in court. We have an excellent attorney general, and I am confident we will never take a knee to him.”

Inslee’s advice to Ferguson? Enjoy the position and its opportunities.

“I would advise [Ferguson] to be willing to take the former governor’s phone calls if he calls,” Inslee joked. “My real advice is to enjoy every day of being governor, because it is such a unique opportunity to help your communities. There is no other position in life where you can wake up every morning and have so many opportunities to help your community.”

Advancing LGBTQ+ rights

Inslee took his own advice to heart, especially when advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, he said.

“When it comes to pride, I want to preface that I’m proud of the state,” he said. “I feel the state has had this broad value system of respecting people’s individual decisions and their lives and not forcing any decisions on them. I recognized that, but the [voters] did their work at the ballot box, and we allowed people to be who they are and love who they wish.”

Inslee took office a month after Washington voters legalized same-sex marriage, and worked tirelessly to ensure protections for LGBTQ+ people and families.

In 2019, he signed into law a bill establishing the Washington State LGBTQ Commission, which works alongside community agencies to implement policies explicitly regarding the LGBTQ+ community. “We established our commission to make sure our communities have a voice in state government,” Inslee told the SGN.

That same year he oversaw the legalization of commercial surrogacy, with the key legal stipulation that couples of any gender, marital status, or sexuality may participate in the process.

In 2020, he signed a bill that abolished the Gay panic defense in Washington state, which allowed a person to mount a defense to a charge of a violent crime against a member of the LGBTQ+ community on

the basis of an unwanted sexual advance.

In 2021, Inslee signed into law a bill protecting families from extradition to foreign countries where they may face the death penalty for their sexual orientation. The following year, he signed the Gender Affirming Treatment Act, which covers gender-affirming care under state Medicaid.

Inslee signed another bill in 2023 that protects LGBTQ+ people who seek gender-affirming care in Washington state from criminalization or extradition back to a state that bans such care, as well as another one protecting the rights of Washingtonians to receive gender-affirming care, using the emergency clause to enact the law instantly.

“I’m proud that we have done things recently to keep reactionary states from coming in and reducing protections for Trans folks, and we’ve passed some bills to protect [people] in that regard,” Inslee said. “The state of Washington has accepted all Washingtonians for who they are.”

Climate change and a final note

Inslee’s legacy is marked by sweeping actions to fight climate change, and he said he will continue his work in environmental activism. “I’d like to be active in the fight against climate change and building a clean energy economy,” he said. “I don’t know what that will entail, but it may entail speaking to groups. It is what our generation will be known for.”

In his 12 years as governor, he passed

several significant climate change laws.

“It’s one of the things I’m proudest of,” Inslee said. “In our state, we have embedded environmental justice in everything we’ve done. We passed the Climate Commitment Act. We’ve made investments in clean energy funds.”

Under Inslee’s leadership, communities most affected by climate change receive the largest portion of revenue generated by the Clean Energy Fund, which works to develop and increase clean energy technology.

Other notable accomplishments include the establishment of paid family leave as a worker’s right. Inslee also promoted stricter gun safety laws, and preserved access to abortion rights. In 2021, he passed a 7% capital gains tax, which remains in effect despite an attempt in the last election to repeal it. In 2023, he formally abolished the state’s death penalty.

“We made a lot of progress in the last 12 years,” Inslee said. “As governor, I played some role in that progress. We had considerable success, and I believe the reason is that I was really confident in our state’s ability to move forward. Our state is a very forward-moving group that cares about compassion and allowing people to be who they are, love who they love, and move down the field of human progress and justice.”

RN: They reached out to me first. Right before Biden was to become president, I received a call from his campaign. They asked me “Roger, would you like to go to DC?” And my response was “Absolutely not!” because I wasn’t really interested in working over there. I also turned it down because I supported the campaign because I believed in it, not for the expectation I’d get something in return.

They then went on to ask, “Well, is there anything else you may want?” And that’s when I floated the idea “How about ambassador?” not really expecting I’d get it. Then a year later, the special assistant to the president called, saying, “He would like you to be the next ambassador to Barbados.”

Getting approved as an ambassador was a very arduous process. After the White House agreed to my nomination, there was a ton of paperwork, then I had to get approved by all the host countries in a process called “agrément.” [His post included seven Caribbean countries in all.] Last was attending all the confirmation hearings at the US Senate. In total, the whole process took me about two years to get approved.

The best part of it all is when you finally arrive to all the host countries and present your credentials to each government. I came into the role on January 19, 2024, and left exactly one year later.

I think it is a testament to President Biden for choosing someone like me to be an ambassador. I grew up in Westport, WA, a small coastal [town] where a lot of people work in the tourism industry, which is very similar to the experience of these countries. There have not been a lot of ambassadors from the Pacific Northwest. I am also of Native American heritage from the Chinook tribe, and one of only five

ambassadors to have been so, making me an interesting fit for this role.

MJ: What was it like being an openly Gay US ambassador in a region with strict anti-LGBT laws?

RN: Every government official I met was nice to my face, but being an out and proud Gay man did cause some concern. In front of my official residence, I would leave out a Gay Pride flag hanging between two palm trees. I heard both positive and negative things from people about leaving it out on display.

It is a very conservative and religious region of the world, and not an accepting place for LGBTQIA people, as there are a lot of closeted citizens in these countries. My intention with being out as Gay was so people would have a role model to show what their lives could be like and to give hope. The Biden State Department special envoy Jessica Stern even came for a week to meet with LGBTQIA activists. I also got to travel to St. Lucia to attend Pride, meeting drag queen Monét X Change, who is a dual citizen.

A large part of the job is not just policy but also engaging with real people. As US ambassador, you end up hosting a lot of events at the official residence. I was always very intentional about having diverse audiences at these events and including LGBTQIA people. Before leaving Barbados, a lot of people were thanking me for including them...

There was this one instance at the end of a meeting where a senior minister of another country came up to me and said, “Ambassador, I have to tell you I am so grateful for everything you do for us. That Pride flag is so important for us to see.” It was clear to me that this closeted man could not be his true self even among his peers.

I wouldn’t believe everything you read. Although there are some anti-LGBT laws on the books, the culture is the main issue for building acceptance there.



SENATE CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR THE AMBASSADORSHIP WITH SEN. MARIA CANTWELL COURTESY NYHUS

MJ: What is your relationship to state Sen. Jamie Pedersen? What was it like weathering Hurricane Beryl with him in Barbados?

RN: Jamie is my best friend. His whole family came to visit me midway through my year. Right toward the end of the trip, Hurricane Beryl, the strongest hurricane on record, hit the island. We had to hunker down together in the 100-year-old residence with the shutters down and all. Even though the hurricane did not go over Barbados directly, it was still very severe. The storm did however directly strike Grenada and St. Vincent.

MJ: What was your role working on the Hurricane Beryl relief efforts?

RN: Growing up on the Washington coastline helped prepare me for Hurricane Beryl. My role as US ambassador was to be a champion for these island nations, because they are incredible allies that deserved a strong US response. And

because of this, I decided I was going to fight like hell for them. We secured \$4 million, a record amount, and it was well needed.

As a part of the relief efforts, I insisted on flying over all the impacted areas within 48 hours. When flying over, I ended up breaking into tears. Seeing the people in their homes from the air, because they had all lost their roofs in the storm, just made me feel so overwhelmingly sad. Most of the buildings were also completely flattened...

Thankfully not too many people died, but it is important for us to ask: What about the next time? My job as US ambassador was to set a tone and respond in a robust way.

MJ: Do you have any advice for US LGBT tourists traveling to the Caribbean?

RN: First, start with reading the US State Department official travel advisories. In this region, I am not aware of any violence toward LGBT tourists. I’d say public displays of affection are generally frowned upon, but people overall are lovely and incredible. In the Caribbean, they are mostly tourism-based economies, so they are all very professional and treat people with respect. It is a place that does not currently embrace LGBT travelers, but it honestly should. LGBT people are statistically robust travelers that will spend good money for unique experiences...

There is absolutely hope for this region to become an intentionally welcoming place for LGBT visitors. I personally received a warm welcome as US ambassador, having two local families adopt me and call me their “son” even though I am openly Gay.

MJ: Any thoughts on the incoming Trump administration’s anti-DEI executive orders and banning changes to gender markers on US passports?

RN: As a private citizen, I see my job now as continuing the fight. These current events in the news shows us we cannot take any of our rights for granted, and not just for LGBTQIA folks but also for women and people of color. We are all in this fight together, and I will continue to be a strong voice to advocate for the rights of everyone.

MJ: What is your biggest or proudest accomplishment as US ambassador?

RN: My proudest moment was securing nearly a billion US dollars for the region from the Export-Import Bank of the United States, which is a US agency that lends money to governments around the world.

Although the caveat is they must purchase from US companies, \$500 million was secured for Barbados, and \$300 million for St. Kitts and Nevis. This was the largest amount of funding the US had put aside for regional development in decades. These are great US allies who unfortunately are still economically underdeveloped. Thankfully these funds can be used by countries for many uses, including energy transition, humanitarian efforts, etc. Both prime ministers of Barbados even personally thanked me for securing this funding.



MEETING WITH LGBTQIA ACTIVISTS AT THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE IN BARBADOS COURTESY NYHUS



Seattle Kraken showcase local LGBTQ+ artist Kelly Bjork during Pride Night game

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

KELLY BJORK WITH ART AT CLIMATE PLEDGE ARENA
HANNAH SAUNDERS

The Seattle Kraken isn't your average hockey team: it has a philanthropic branch and programming to promote inclusivity, unity, and growth both on and off the ice. As part of the team's commitment, the staff worked with local LGBTQ+ artist Kelly Bjork to showcase their work during the Pride Night game on January 6 against the New Jersey Devils.

"I have found it so exciting, and I am inspired by Pride Night," Kyle Boyd, senior director of fan development, told the SGN. "It's about [highlighting] voices that haven't been at the forefront of our community."

Boyd leads Kraken Common Thread, the organization's program to promote inclusivity in hockey. It started five years ago, Boyd said, but staff developed their own framework this past summer, adding that the partnership with Bjork allows the Kraken to celebrate LGBTQ+ people and their talent.

Bjork told the SGN that it was both exciting and overwhelming in a fun way to see their design throughout Climate Pledge Arena. The Kraken Pride Night jersey was the first sports jersey Bjork had designed, and the game was the first hockey match they'd ever attended.

"[Kraken Common Thread] reached out to me about a year ago — just cold calls through my website and I thought it was spam, so it was very fun to realize it was something that was going to actually happen," Bjork said.

The most challenging aspect of this project, they said, was the initial phase. Since Bjork hadn't designed a jersey before, they brainstormed with a group of friends, which they found to be beneficial.

"We landed on disco being a focus, because of discos being such a big refuge for the LGBTQ+ community to go and express themselves and be accepted," Bjork said. "Once we decided that, then I went from there to my sketchbook to figure out the exact design."

Bjork's design features a twinkling disco ball with an "S" in the foreground, full of vibrant colors and animal prints.

"The colors and patterns and the 'S' are actually from a painting I did a few years ago of a Pride dance party. I thought it would be fun. I wanted it to be really colorful," Bjork said. "I didn't want to just do the normal rainbow, because I feel like it's used a lot, and I wanted to try something else. And also throwing in animal print is always really fun."

The response to Bjork's design has been abundantly positive, they said, adding that direct messages from strangers on Instagram about their work led to unexpected emotions: joyous tears.

A more welcoming space

While sports spaces, particularly hockey arenas, have traditionally been dominated by cis-het men, Boyd and Bjork believe Pride Night and the artistic collaboration helps crack that strong association.

"I know that hockey is a pretty straight sport, but I'm sure that it's really, actually not," Bjork said. "I think having the representation really lets people know — just [seeing] that — it opens it up to more people, and creates a connection that might not otherwise happen."

Bjork hopes the Kraken's Pride Night of 2025 encourages people to feel comfortable being themselves in traditionally unwelcoming spaces.

Each year, Kraken Common Thread picks different local LGBTQ+ artists, and Bjork said they have a long list they will send the staff's way.

"The experience has been so good, I want so many other people to have it," Bjork said. "I love that the Kraken have been doing this with all of their different themed nights. I think those are really important, and I think as long as that continues, then more people will feel comfortable coming out and being themselves in this space."

Game recap

The Kraken lost to the Devils by 3-2 on Pride Night. It was a slow start for the home team, but goaltender Philipp Grubauer prevented many pucks from reaching the net. (Grubauer, a German national, was also spotted wearing Pride tape during the match.)

The Devils scored the first goal, but the Kraken caught up during the first period, with body-checking in full swing from both teams. New Jersey took the lead with

just seconds left in the second period. The Kraken tied it up on a power play early in the third, but the Devils answered 37 seconds later with what turned out to be the winning goal.

Other Queer elements

Queerness was sprinkled in throughout the event, with DJ Orion blasting remixes of Gay pop icons Britney Spears, Chappell Roan, and Sabrina Carpenter. Bjork also made an entrance on the ice, and Kraken staff highlighted their talent.

The Kraken nominated Steven Thompson and Joey Gale of the Seattle Pride Hockey Association as the night's "Heroes of the Deep" for their work to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity in hockey. The Kraken Unity Fund in this way honors people conducting transformative community work. The One Roof Foundation (ORF) is the philanthropic leg of the Kraken and Climate Pledge Arena, and focuses on hockey access, youth homelessness through a long-term partnership with YouthCare, and environmental justice. The ORF works with the Heroes of the Deep to select a nonprofit that will receive \$32,000 from the Kraken Unity Fund.

Specialty jerseys of Bjork were auctioned off online, and proceeds are to go to the ORF and Lambert House, an LGBTQ+ community center for youth.

For the remainder of the season, the Seattle Kraken will host various other themed nights to spotlight the city's diversity.





Epic opera, epic performance: *Les Troyens in Concert* at Seattle Opera

BY SHARON CUMBERLAND AND ALICE BLOCH

J'NAI BRIDGES (L) AND KELLEY O'CONNOR (R)
DAVID JAEWON OH

Les Troyens in Concert
by Hector Berlioz
Seattle Opera premiere
McCaw Hall, Seattle Center
January 17 and 19, 2025

Those lucky enough to be at Seattle Opera for one of only two concert performances of Hector Berlioz's *Les Troyens* saw something truly spectacular: 80 Seattle Symphony musicians filling the stage, with the 60-member opera chorus rising like the Fates behind them.

It was a properly dramatic setting for mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges and tenor Russell Thomas to embody a key episode of Virgil's *Aeneid*, about the betrayal of love and the founding of Rome. Led by conductor Ludovic Morlot, a specialist in Berlioz's complex and demanding music, the performance was so satisfying that it was hard to imagine how sets and costumes could have improved it.

Both principal singers have truly heroic voices. Bridges, in particular, was compellingly tragic as Dido, the betrayed Queen of

Carthage. Her powerful, expressive voice covered the full range of emotions as Berlioz's music flowed through the opera like an ocean of sound. Kelley O'Connor, making her debut as Dido's sister Anna, was a gentle counterweight to the intensity of passion driving the tragedy.

The most famous highlight is the love duet between Dido and Aeneas, "Nuit d'ivresse et d'extase infinie!" ("Intoxicating night and infinite ecstasy!"), a full six minutes of nuanced harmony buoyed along on orchestral waves. The temptation is to belt out the passionate parts, but Thomas, singing the role of Aeneas for the first time, matched Bridges' nuanced moods throughout the duet's challenging length.

Two Seattle Opera regulars, soprano Tess Altiveros and bass Adam Lau, sang beautifully in the relatively small but important roles of Aeneas' son Ascanius and Dido's adviser Narbal, respectively. Tenor John Matthew Myers made an impressive debut as Iopas, whom Dido summons to the stage to sing an aria honoring Ceres, goddess of the harvest.

A rare opportunity

In a preperformance talk, dramaturg Jonathan Dean told audience members that *Les Troyens* is performed so rarely that this concert production was likely to be a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." There are good practical reasons: when fully staged, *Les Troyens* is prohibitively long (seven hours!) and expensive, with an even larger orchestra and chorus and a number of ballet sequences and battle scenes. In addition, the opera is full of gorgeous music but short on dramatic tension, so an abridged concert version is ideal.

When an opera is presented in concert — stripped of sets, costumes, dancers, and supernumeraries — attention is focused on the music and the few visual cues that balance a potentially overwhelming presence of sound. In addition to being able to watch Morlot's eloquent conducting and the rhythmic physicality of the musicians, the audience experienced a sublime light show reflecting the moods of the drama. Director Anderson Nunnelley and Lighting Designer Robert Aguilar deserve credit

for the clever use of light and shadow that made a minimal stage into an ocean of shifting colors and silhouettes.

The stage, extending over the orchestra pit, was covered in a shallow blanket of metallic confetti that reflected different colors with the shifting moods of the drama — blue, red, purple; anxiety, passion, despair. As the singers moved about the stage, the confetti swirled in little clouds that suggested the godlike quality of myth. Evocative shadows were cast onto the wings as the performers advanced and parted from each other, as though haunted by their own fates.

Praise is deserved all around for a concert version of *Les Troyens* that was as fascinating and as elegant as anything Seattle Opera has done in the past. *Chapeau bas!* (Hats off!) Stay tuned for another treat coming in February: a clever new staging of a Mozart favorite, *The Magic Flute*.



ANDREW POTTERIN (L) AND TESS ALTIVEROS (R)
DAVID JAEWON OH



RUSSELL THOMAS (L) AND J'NAI BRIDGES (R)
DAVID JAEWON OH



Mx. Pucks A'Plenty leads the charge to create spaces for Seattle's fat and Queer performers

BY MADISON JONES

COURTESY MX. PUCKS A'PLENTY

Kia Puckett aka Mx. Pucks A'Plenty, a performer with a boisterous personality, goes by many titles, such as “the Michelle Obama of burlesque” and “the femme daddy your mother didn’t even know to warn you about.” They are also a strong advocate for the inclusion of all body types in burlesque.

Through their own production company, aptly labeled Puckduction, Mx. Pucks has over the past few years founded and run both Fat Con and Fatlesque Fest Northwest, which have also been the targets of right-wing media attention and harassment. That, however, has not slowed down Mx. Pucks’ momentum with overcoming struggles of running fat-focused events, or their celebration of fat, Trans, and Nonbinary burlesque performers.

How they got their start

Mx. Pucks, who came to the Seattle area and its burlesque scene eight years ago, told the *SGN* that the art form has been instrumental to exploring their Nonbinary gender identity. Despite the creative space burlesque offers, there still has been pressure to conform to cis-normative beauty standards, they explained.

“I am high femme on stage because that is what sells as a Trans person, but my

actual style is more Janelle Monáe circa 2019. I would [prefer to] wear suits all the time,” Pucks said.

This is what partially inspired Pucks to start their own “puckduction” company to create a welcoming space for performers whose bodies and gender expressions do not conform to beauty standards.

Inspiration for Fat Con and Fatlesque came to Pucks in July of 2017 at the Bucks and Blaze fat burlesque show in Austin, TX, where they recalled the positive feelings of hanging out with other performers in the green room. Pucks started first by forming a BIPOC-centered burlesque show called “What the Funk.” It wasn’t until 2020 when Pucks approached Fuck Yes Bodies, a plus-size lingerie company, with the idea to launch Fat Con. Together, they ran it for the first time in 2023 as a joint venture, selling out all its shows at Madame Lou’s. Pucks reported there were even people packed all the way up the stairs wanting to watch.

Far-right media backlash

Despite its popularity within the community, 2024’s Fat Con became the target of far-right harassment. Pucks explained that before the event had begun, “a right-wing group found out about it online and lost

their minds. Our Instagram page and email box were all inundated with fat hate.”

It wasn’t long after that Pucks began noticing right-wing media requesting access. In particular, Pucks pointed out the actions of the *Daily Mail*, saying that it wanted to send a photographer, not a reporter, indicating it was not interested in the event but rather the spectacle of it. Tomi Lahren, an anti-LGBTQ+ talking head at Fox News, also brought up Fat Con on her show.

Even though all these groups were denied press access, some decided to send people anyway. Pucks also found several groups of men harassing attendees outside the venue. It was surmised that the negative attention Fat Con received from right-wing media is how they found out about it.

And although it was distressing at first, Pucks has since found solace in protesters’ discomfort, admitting “it has become my fetish to watch these men lose their minds over it.”

Standing in defiance

The hateful targeting has only emboldened Pucks as an artist, driving them to host events that are opportunities for people to experience fat joy and find loving comfort as a radical act of defiance. “Soci-

ety is hell-bent on us being disgusted with ourselves,” Pucks exclaimed.

Pucks also discussed the connections between being fat and being Transgender. Trans masc people seeking top surgery are often turned away if their BMI is too high. “It is brutal to watch people suffering [from] body dysmorphia be told to deal with that first,” Pucks said.

Pucks also highlighted the similar plight both groups currently face in popular culture: “It is low-hanging fruit to dunk on someone who is fat. Same with being Trans.”

Pucks asked that allies recognize the spaces being created for these people, and to do what they can to keep those spaces open and accessible by donating money and supporting fat friends.

The third Fat Con will run from Jan. 31 through Feb. 2 at the King Street Ballroom at Embassy Suites in downtown Seattle. More information about the event and ticket sales can be found at <http://www.fat-con.org>. Fatlesque Fest Northwest is running Jan. 30 through Feb. 1 at The Triple Door; find more information at <https://www.fatlesquefestnw.com>.



COURTESY LAUREN YEE

What does Mother Russia tell us about ourselves?: An interview with Lauren Yee

BY MIRYAM GORDON
SPECIAL TO THE SGN

Nationally known playwright Lauren Yee has a tight connection with Seattle, as she and the Rep get ready for the world premiere of her latest play, *Mother Russia* (or *Periods of Collapse*). Not only have two of her previous works premiered here first, but also years back, she would periodically visit Seattle to hang out with acclaimed director Desdemona Chiang, using her house as a kind of developmental Hedgebrook.

Prior to *Mother Russia*, our city has been privileged to have major productions of Yee’s *Cambodian Rock Band*, *The Great Leap*, *King of the Yees*, and *Ching Chong Chinaman*. She has won awards and now writes for shows on Apple+ and Netflix.

Before her burgeoning success, the 22-year-old Yee envisioned a modest lifestyle. “[I imagined that] by day I’d work at an arts nonprofit, probably a theater, in development or marketing,” she told the *SGN*. “In the evenings, I’d write and maybe I’d have a show at a small theater... I think about what I have achieved, and what I’ve been lucky enough to enjoy has far outpaced what I imagined when I was coming into this world professionally.”

As for *Mother Russia*’s plot: Two men find jobs surveilling a former pop star in

1992, after the fall of the Soviet Union. As they bumble their way through the assignment, spy work and life under capitalism prove harder than they thought.

“At a time when Russia was in this great moment of change [toward] capitalism and democracy, this whole new system was being thrust upon them, and people were saying, ‘You’re free. Now you’re free to buy a cheeseburger from McDonald’s,’” Yee said. “I think the play interrogates these periods of great change. Many Western people would be saying, ‘How, how did this not work out for you? How did Russia kind of fall back into [communism/dictatorship]?’”

Yee said people saw this change as the next evolution forward, and that many thought Russia would be enlightened due to capitalism and democracy.

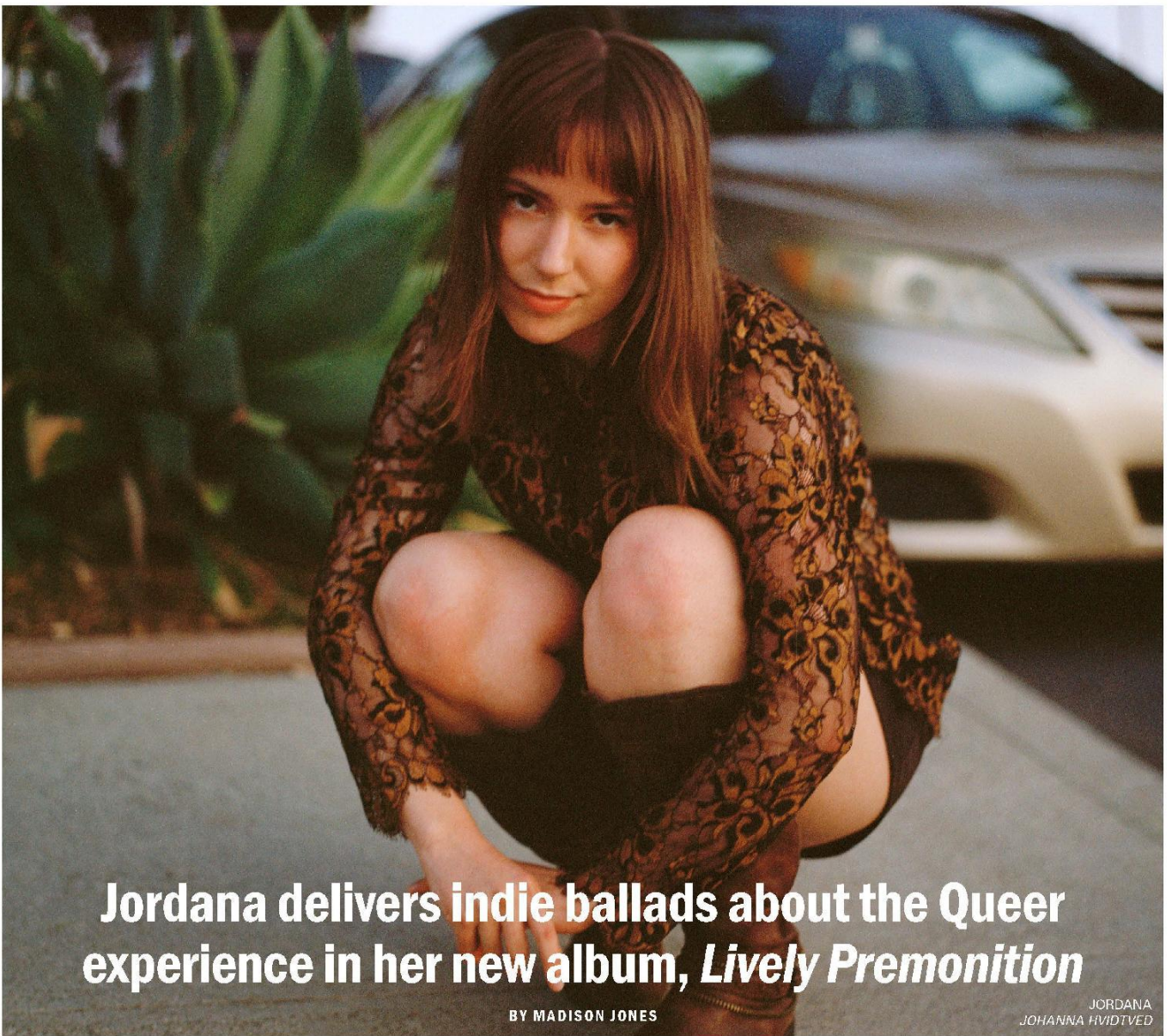
“I have over the years been subconsciously writing a cycle of plays about communism in Asia in the 20th century,” Yee added. “You have Cambodia in the ‘70s, China in the ‘80s, Russia in the ‘90s. I’m always interested in communism and the collision with Western culture, because I think it’s a way of understanding American identity through a different lens.”

Yee is a writer who excels in inserting humor even into the darkest stories. *Cambodian Rock Band* details the history of one of the darkest times in our world’s history, yet even there, Yee sparks laughter. And this latest play definitely sounds like it has quite a bit.

“I just use humor in life,” she said. “That is part of my DNA. In dark, bleak, difficult, challenging circumstances, my brain tends to go to what is absurd or funny or strange to find a way to make sense of it. I love making people laugh. I think it’s just a gift. And also, a way to get people off guard, or get them on board with something that they may feel anxious about.

“I think it just feels very human, right? For us to try to make sense of it. To try to find some way, to fight, to find the thing that still feels like alive. And to make sense of it all.”

For more articles and reviews, go to www.facebook.com/SeattleTheaterWriters. Subscribe at <https://MirryamsTheater-Musings.blogspot.com> to get articles sent directly to your inbox.



Jordana delivers indie ballads about the Queer experience in her new album, *Lively Premonition*

BY MADISON JONES

JORDANA JOHANNA HVIDTVED

Jordana Nye, an indie musician based out of Los Angeles known professionally as Jordana, incorporates a wide range of sonic influences into her work. Her most recent project, *Lively Premonition*, released last October, explores different tales of the Queer experience, touching on themes of heartbreak, toxic romantic attachments, party culture, and newfound sobriety.

In light of her upcoming tour promoting the album, she agreed to an interview with the *SGN* to talk about her experiences as a Queer musician.

Madison Jones: Is it your first time touring or visiting Seattle? Is there anything you like or dislike about the music scene here compared to LA, where you're now based?

Jordana Nye: I have toured in Seattle before and visited a few times. I have a couple of friends who are from there, and they have taken me out to places before. But funnily enough, it was not until 2023 when I got around to visiting the Space Needle. It was not really as tall as I was expecting.

I don't know much about the music scene in Seattle, but I do have some tea to share about an artist I was once the opener for. I won't say who he is, but he was a high-profile artist from Washington state... He was a total dickhead, and I have already done the full nine yards on my Instagram story.

MJ: How was your coming out experience? What was it like growing up in Maryland, and how has life in LA differed?

JN: It has been a lot different. Maryland gives a red-state vibe even though it is blue.

I grew up around a bunch of hicks along the Chesapeake Bay about an hour outside the DC metro area.

I did not spend a lot of time out in Maryland, not until I decided to move to Wichita, KS, to be with my girlfriend at the time. It has gotten a lot better in Maryland since I left though.

I have always not given a fuck about what others think of me, thankfully, and I think a lot about how I have it good right now because of the hard work LGBT activists have done so that I can be myself proudly.

MJ: What impact did your experiences as a Queer person have on the creation of *Lively Premonition*?

JN: "Raver Girl" is about a girl and the party life, which I am not involved with anymore. I like to tell stories about stuff like that, even if I haven't experienced it personally.

"Like a Dog" is a made-up scenario that I wasn't actively feeling at the time of writing it. But now I honestly kind of am. I never really learn from my mistakes.

"Anything for You" is a breakup song about an actual experience. It is about being in a mindset of "I have done all that I can, but it still isn't good enough for this person." It gets to where you just give up and reach your breaking point.

MJ: Do you have any favorite LGBT spots in Seattle you like to visit?

JN: I actually do not! When we have gone on tour, certain friends we meet up with will take me out to places like Dick's, which is kind of hard to do with being vegan. I have just been on the strip where

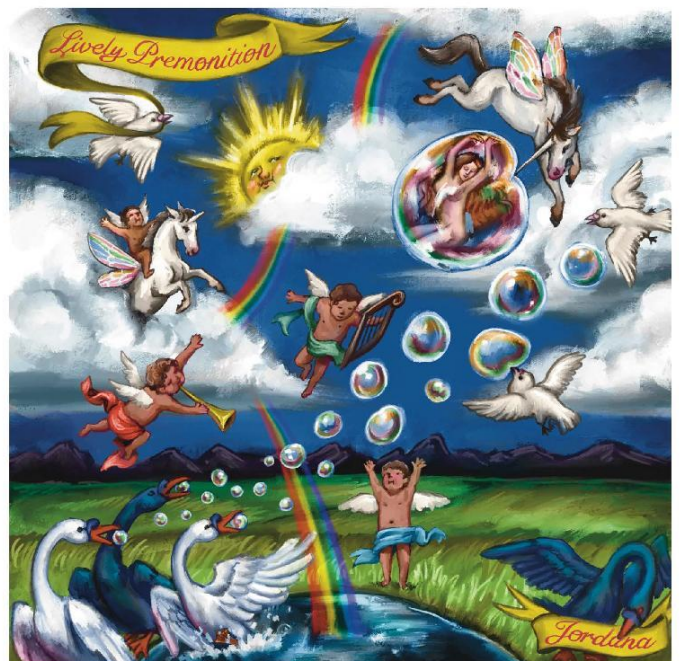
Neumos is, but I do like this one thrift shop that's nearby. But I would love recommendations, especially some vegan ones.

MJ: You should check out more spots in Capitol Hill. Wildrose is our historic Lesbian bar, and it just celebrated its 40th anniversary. There is also this really good vegan ice cream place,

Frankie and Jo's, around the corner too.

JN: Thank you! I will definitely check those places out.

Jordana will be on tour in Seattle for her new album, *Lively Premonition*, at *Madame Lou's* on Feb. 12. Details at <https://www.thecrocodile.com/madame-lous>.





Student Nurse band sounds off once again after so much silence

BY ANDREW HAMLIN

HELENA ROGERS LED STUDENT NURSE
MIKE MITCHELL

Before grunge, before SoDo stadiums, and before Seattle as a “world-class city,” the Student Nurse band insistently plied their brand of participatory weirdness. They’re back now with a new lineup and new music. Leader Helena Rogers recently took some questions from the *SGN*.

Andrew Hamlin: How long has the band been back together? Who’s in the lineup now?

Helena Rogers: We re-formed the band on a bit of a lark back in May of 2022. Eric Muhs and Dennis White put together a 28-song compilation from 1979 to 1984 called *Think for Yourself*. We were invited by Larry Reid of Fantagraphics to play a few songs to commemorate the release.

The current lineup is David Ehrich on guitar, James Lord on drums, Eric Muhs on bass, and myself on lead guitar and vocals.

AH: How does playing live now compare and contrast with the old days?

HR: Playing live now is incredible; I feel way more intentional and can own my power as a musician much more easily. Also, putting the gigs together has been so much easier, no more cold-calling and a lot less scrapping in general!

AH: You were always butch, or at least a nonfemme, in your presentation. How has your treatment in public and private changed over the years?

HR: I am and have always been oblivious to this, then and now. I don’t have the time or the inclination to be other than who I am! No one comes up to me and says, “They you, tone down that butch thing” or “Why don’t you wear a skirt once in a while?”

However, lately I have been thinking that perhaps, just perhaps, people do have internalized opinions, and I may rub some people the wrong way. But as a septuagenarian, do I really need to give a rat’s ass? To put it in Muhammad Ali’s words, “I float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.”

AH: How has the acceptance of your

out-and-proud stance changed over the years in the Seattle music scene?

IIR: Again, I am too busy living to contemplate this issue. I, probably like many people, have struggled with group acceptance, before and after coming out as Queer, so I just row my own boat and hope it doesn’t spring a leak!

AH: What are your favorite and least-favorite things about the current Seattle scene, LGBT+ and otherwise?

HR: It is much harder to identify LGBT+ folks these days. Everyone looks a bit Queer to me, and that’s kind of the way I prefer it. Labels, separatism, group affinity — not my cup of tea.

I do have a certain respect for the folks out there who have remained LGBT+ activists and keep the ball moving forward, even if it has become a bit more of an uphill climb. Thanks for that, you know who you are!

AH: You took up painting about a decade ago. Who are your favorite paint-

ers, and how do they influence you? How do your painting and your music influence each other?

IIR: Seeing Vincent van Gogh’s work in Amsterdam left me haunted by the ability of someone [to squeeze] goop out of a tube onto a piece of board or cloth and [transform] it to a living, vibrating entity. I will never forget that experience. For me, without music, there would be no painting. The transitions back and forth are ethereal in nature to my sense of being.

AH: What’s in Student Nurse’s future, gigwise and recordwise?

HR: We are currently planning a record for early 2025. We have the material for it, but first we need to repair a couple of body parts, which will mean a couple months of rest. Gig invitations are starting to roll in for late spring!

Student Nurse will play Tim’s Tavern in White Center on February 1. Doors open at 4:00 p.m.

“I’m just here to pee, man”: Trans comedian brings protest tour to Seattle

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

The 160 anti-Trans laws proposed in the first month of 2025 have many feeling bleak about the future. However, one man sees an opportunity to educate, advocate — and urinate. Colorado-based comedian Ren Quillian Dawe will kick off the first leg of his national comedy tour, “Here to Pee,” in March, with stops in Seattle, Portland, and Boise.

By going to every state, Dawe is making history, becoming the first Trans performer to do so. He’s also partnering with local nonprofits to donate the proceeds from ticket sales to the Trans communities he visits.

At first, he planned on hitting the most Transphobic states. “I originally wanted to go to all the states that had [anti-Trans] legislation proposed, and then when we looked... it was most of them,” he said in an exclusive interview with the *SGN*. “It seems silly to go to 42 out of 50 states, so we were like, you know what, what if we just did all 50?”

He solidified the plan after nearly getting assaulted in a public bathroom in Colorado. “That was surprising ... in the place I live. It was frightening to be in a sketchy situation,” he said. “I was lucky someone walked in at the right time.

“That shook me and made me want to hide away, [but] it also made me realize that I see so much change in people when they are exposed to Trans people, Trans stories, and Trans opinions. I also saw just how physically dangerous it can be when people are [prevented] from hearing those stories, experiences, and points of view. That can escalate to physical violence.

“And, man, I’m just here to pee.”

Other performers

When the tour was just a blurb in Dawe’s journal, he decided to reach out to some of his favorite comedians. “I had a dream lineup: who are the funniest people in the country I know about?” he said. “And I hit up five people: Juno Men, Charlie Girard, Carlos Kareem Windham, Joe John Sanchez, and Dahlia Belle. Within a day, they all got back to me, and every single one of them said yes. That was a sign from the universe that this is meant to happen.”

Dawe is proud of the artists who have agreed to participate, including documentarian Joe Raffa, who will film it. “Trans creators are taking this so seriously. People are putting their careers and lives on the line to make jokes about current affairs [and] raise money and awareness.”



COURTESY REN QUILLIAN DAWE

While Dawe’s been featured on NPR, Broadway, and Hollywood, Dawe is incredibly excited to return to Seattle. “It will not take you long to realize [the PNW lineup] are probably some of the best comedians in the country at this very moment. I feel superbly lucky to work with them,” he said.

Dangerous work

Here to Pee will be at the Rendezvous in Seattle on March 7, Portland on March 10, and Boise on March 6. All proceeds from the Seattle show will go to the Gender Justice League. Additional donations can be made directly to a bail fund for performers who may face fines or jail time for using public bathrooms in certain states.

“Whenever bathroom legislation has been passed, we are going out of our way to break those rules,” Dawe explained. “We had to figure out ... bail money for our performers, which is the first time as a producer I’ve ever had to do that.”

While Trans Americans are facing many dark times ahead, Dawe hopes that *Here to Pee* can help them financially and spiritually, with a bit of laughter. “I know we are looking at an intense administration and a lot of hurdles, especially for the Trans community,” he said. “So we should be doing anything we can to fortify ourselves and build our resilience. The best way I know to do that is to laugh, to make jokes about it, and come together and alchemize what we know to be hateful and amusing and empowering for our community.

“I hope people can buy tickets and come out and support us, support these amazing nonprofits [and] performers, and each other, as we’re about to go into something kind of heavy. I believe laughter saves lives. I believe it to my absolute core, and we’re hoping people can come out and laugh.”

For ticket information, go to <https://www.renquillan.com/heretopee>.



With 13 nominations, Trans musical *Emilia Pérez* makes Oscar history — but should it have?

BY SARA MICHELLE FETTERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

KARLA SOFÍA GASCÓN
COURTESY PATHE

There's plenty to talk about regarding the 97th annual Academy Award nominations, most of it the usual hullabaloo over perceived surprises (Jeremy Strong for Best Supporting Actor! Coralic Fargeat for Best Director! *Nickel Boys* and *I'm Still Here* for Best Picture! *Wicked* for Best Original Score!) and snubs (No Marianne Jean-Baptiste for Best Actress!! No *Will & Harper* for Best Documentary! Nothing for *Challengers* or *All We Imagine as Light!*).

But the biggest news is France's Mexican-cartel, Trans-centered musical *Emilia Pérez* scoring a whopping 13 nods, including a history-making Best Actress nomination for Karla Sofía Gascón.

Something of a critical and awards darling ever since its May 2024 debut at the Cannes Film Festival, director Jacques Audiard's topical endeavor has still left some viewers — especially Trans and Mexican audiences — wondering what all the fuss is about. To call it polarizing would understate things considerably. Some critics, like Danielle Solzman, have called the film “dangerous for transgender representation,” while others, like Gabriela Méza, have labeled it “visually striking but culturally tone-deaf.” But, considering the current political

climate and recent attempts by the Trump administration to marginalize and silence Transgender and immigrant communities with an onslaught of noxious executive orders, do the picture's cultural and representational flaws matter? Or is it better to have a prestigious body like the Academy Awards proclaiming Audiard's opus one of the year's best pictures, even with its notable imperfections?

There are no quick or simple answers. Gascón, a multitalented actor who started her career on television and has become an international icon, is the first openly Trans performer to be nominated for an Academy Award. Her performance as Emilia/Manitas is undeniably impressive, growing in intensity and gravitas as her character inches closer to her inevitably tragic face-off against violent forces.

However, instead of busting stereotypes, Audiard and his creative team have seemingly — and it appears unintentionally — reinforced them instead. Manitas, the former head of a powerful Mexican drug cartel, hires Rita (Zoe Saldaña), an ambitious lawyer, to secretly facilitate his disappearance and transition into Emilia, the woman he longs to be, leaving wife Jessi (Selena

Gomez) and two children clueless.

That's not great in and of itself, but fast-forward to Emilia's clandestine return to Mexico from abroad. Not only does she force Rita and her children to live with her without knowing her true identity (she convinces them she is Manitas' estranged sister, who now feels it is her duty to take care of them), she also attempts to make herself something of a saint by helping grieving families who have lost loved ones to cartel violence to discover what happened to them.

Couple that with the rightwing political debate that Transwomen are nothing more than sexual and antifeminist predators who put on “woman drag” to secretly invade women-only safe spaces, about which Audiard's hot-button drama says precious little. For those who want to purposefully read the picture's themes in the absolute worst light, Emilia's actions, whether they are intended to be or not, clearly appear to be predatory to the casual viewer, and this by itself makes the production the very definition of “problematic.”

Yet there is something to be said about having Trans representation up there on the Oscar stage at the Dolby Theatre that is unavoidably significant. There is power in

seeing Gascón being part of the Best Actress lineup alongside Cynthia Erivo (*Wicked*), Mikey Madison (*Anora*), Demi Moore (*The Substance*), and Fernanda Torres (*I'm Still Here*). This is momentous, to be certain.

More than that, with 13 nominations overall, the production is at worst assured to walk home as a winner in a handful of categories. Recipients will likely give speeches recognizing and thanking the Trans community, and I wouldn't be shocked if some even went further than that, slamming the Trump administration by name for its repressive, insensitive, downright evil, fascist machinations.

I don't know. I think *Emilia Pérez* is a bad movie for a multitude of reasons, most of which have little to do with the Trans pieces of its narrative. But it is those culturally sensitive aspects everyone is going to be talking about for the next few weeks as we inch closer to the Academy Awards ceremony on March 2, and it will be those elements that will continue to lead the conversation far into the foreseeable future whether the film wins a single Oscar or not. While those potential upsides are noteworthy, I still find all this nonetheless exhausting.

Whannell's *Wolf Man*:

A familial tragedy of devolutionary body horror terror

BY SARA MICHELLE FETTERS
SGN STAFF WRITER

WOLF MAN
Theaters

When his father is pronounced dead years after going missing in an Oregon forest, unemployed writer and stay-at-home dad Blake Lovell (Christopher Abbott) makes the trek back for the first time in 30 years, joined by his journalist wife Charlotte (Julia Garner) and young daughter Ginger (Matilda Firth). The trio hopes the trip will help the semi-estranged parents rediscover the love they once shared that is now starting to feel like a distant memory.

But there is something in the woods surrounding their isolated destination. Having forced their truck off of the road, it appears

to be more human than animal, but apparently will not rest until it has feasted on their flesh. Now, trapped inside a crumbling house, with their options dwindling by the minute, the family must heal old wounds and work together as a unit if they ever hope to live to see a new dawn unscathed.

Much like he did with 2020's superb *The Invisible Man*, director and co-writer Leigh Whannell reinvents the classic Universal Monster cinematic lore with *Wolf Man*, a stripped-down, decidedly modern take on lycanthropic lore. Owing more to Native American mythologies involving human-to-animal shapeshifting than to either Lon Chaney Jr., Curt Siodmak, or even John Landis, at its core this is a tragic family



CHRISTOPHER ABBOTT
COURTESY UNIVERSAL PICTURES

saga that cuts deep and leaves a lasting scar.

Here, the true danger may be lurking inside the house. Blake was injured during the group's confrontation with the creature, and now he's questioning his sanity as his physical shell betrays him. In something of

a cross between a David Cronenberg body-horror yarn (like *The Brood* or *The Fly*) and the legend of the Algonquian Wendigo, this devoted father starts to lose the core of who he is. Blake sees himself becoming something almost primeval as Charlotte

and Ginger look on in befuddled terror, and the emotional carnage this causes is understandably massive.

The first half of the film is marvelous. Starting with an effectively tense prologue with an adolescent Blake (Zac Chandler)—deviously foreshadowing the coming dangers before quickly shifting gears to the present-day melodrama—Whannell and co-writer Corbett Tuck do a fine job of setting a firm foundation. Extra emphasis is given to the relationship between father and daughter, whose bond borders on psychic and is the key to this endeavor's shattering intimacy.

Things shift into high gear early, during the mysterious creature's initial attack on the family. The truck crash, subsequent escape from the wreckage, and perilous sprint to Blake's empty childhood residence is a nerve-racking Rube Goldberg

scenario reminiscent of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* or James Cameron's *The Abyss*—just one calamitous event after another. Whannell winningly stages every twist, turn, and close encounter with invigorating joie de vivre.

The second half isn't nearly as strong, mainly because there aren't that many surprises. Once the threat is thrust into the moonlight in all its fanged, furry glory, there just certain places Whannell and Tuck can take things. This is an audience-friendly rollercoaster ride of mayhem and monsters, and while the familial elements ground the feature in a universally personal way, I still can't imagine that anyone will be shocked by the conclusion.

But that's okay. Whannell does such a grand job of orchestrating the increasingly chaotic events and keeping the drama centered

on Blake, Charlotte, and Ginger's reactions that it doesn't matter that the film isn't nearly as innovative or inventive as the marvelous *The Invisible Man* was. This is still a deliciously enthralling monster mash, with the added benefit of putting its characters and their development first and the vigorously engineered thrills and chills a laudable second.

It also helps that Abbott is outstanding. His performance is a finely calibrated stunner, one that gets more fascinatingly personal and multifaceted the more his character loses his ability to function and communicate. From Blake initially not realizing just how much of himself is starting to vanish, to his tearful frustration that he can no longer speak for himself or even understand human speech, Abbott makes this devolution magnetically horrifying.

This is coupled with stupendous practical makeup effects that give this iteration of our wolflike creatures a look and feel that's somewhat similar to the great Rick Baker's masterful designs in Mike Nichols' undervalued 1994 gem, *Wolf*. Yet they are also utterly unique. There is a disheveled, feral quality to the creatures' designs by artists Jane O'Kane (*The Meg*) and Arjen Tuiten (*Pan's Labyrinth*).

After getting his start working in tandem with James Wan on the likes of *Saw*, *Dead Silence*, and *Insidious*, Whannell is quickly proving himself a creative force in his own right. If that wasn't already apparent with the one-two punch of *Upgrade* and *The Invisible Man*, it certainly is now. His films have bite, and I for one can't wait to greedily nibble upon whatever story he wants to share with us all next.

SGN BOOKS



WHEN THE BAND PLAYED ON
The Life of RANDY SHILTS,
America's Trailblazing
Gay Journalist
MICHAEL G. LEE

When the Band Played On:

A complicated biography of Shilts and the book that made America pay attention to AIDS

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

MICHAEL G. LEE
DANI WERNER

WHEN THE BAND PLAYED ON: THE LIFE OF RANDY SHILTS, AMERICA'S TRAILBLAZING GAY JOURNALIST

MICHAEL G. LEE
© 2025 Chicago Review Press
\$30.00
282 pages

Born in 1951 in small-town Iowa, Randy Shilts was his alcoholic, abusive mother's third of six sons. Frustrated and drunk, she reportedly beat Shilts almost daily when he was young; she also called him a "sissy," a name that "seemed to follow Randy everywhere."

Perhaps because of the abuse, Shilts had to teach himself social graces, while

also developing "adultlike impassiveness" and "biting sarcasm," traits that featured strongly as he became a writer. He was exploring his sexuality then, learning "the subtleties of sexual communication," sleeping with women before fully coming out as Gay to friends.

Nearing his 21st birthday, Shilts moved to Oregon to attend college and "allow [himself] love." There, he became somewhat of an activist before leaving for San Francisco to fully pursue journalism, focusing on stories that were "mostly unknown to anyone outside of gay culture."

In both Oregon and California, Shilts reported on Gay life until he was well-known to national readers and Gay influencers. After San Francisco supervisor

Harvey Milk was assassinated, he was tapped to write his biography.

By 1982, Shilts was in love and had a book under his belt, a radio gig, and a regular byline in a national publication reporting "on the GRID heat," an acronym later changed to AIDS. He was even under contract to write a second book.

But Shilts was careless. Just *once*. "In hindsight," says author Michael G. Lee in his new biography of Shilts, "...it was likely the night when Randy crossed the line, becoming more a part of the pandemic than just another worried bystander."

Perhaps not surprisingly, there are two distinct audiences for *When the Band Played On*. One type of reader will remember the AIDS crisis and Shilts's seminal

book about it, *And the Band Played On*. The other is too young to remember it but needs to know his place in its history.

The journey may be different, the result is the same: Lee tells a complicated, still-controversial story of Shilts and the book that made America pay attention, and it's edgy for modern eyes. Lee clearly shows why Shilts had fans and haters, and keeps some mystery in the tale: Shilts had the knowledge to keep himself safe but he apparently didn't, and readers are left to wonder why. There's uncomfortable tension in that, and a lot of hypothesizing to be had.

For scholars of Gay history, this is an essential book. For anyone too young to remember AIDS as it was then, *When the Band Played On* hits the right note.



The Bookworm's best from 2024

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Once the holidays are over, you may look around you at a floor full of spent wrapping paper and sad ribbons and wonder, "What's next?"

A whole new year, that's what, and a dozen great books worthy of reaching back to find. Here they are, in no certain order:

Fiction

If you're a fan of best-selling novels, you won't be surprised to see *Extinction* by Douglas Preston (\$29.99, Forge) on this list. It's the tale of a high-level vacation spot run by a big-money corporation and scientists determined to bring back certain kinds of long-extinct animals. Problem is, someone — or something — is hunting the lodge's guests...

For the mystery lover who likes a bit of mysticism and some true-life in their novels, *Spirit Crossing* by William Kent Krueger (\$28.99, Atria) is a great pick. When the body of a Native American teen girl is discovered, Cork O'Connor's son-in-law hopes it solves a missing-persons case. Or *cases*. This book is part of a series, but it can be read alone; just know that you'll want them all once you've finished this.

Terror, tech, and trouble — what could go wrong? In *William* by Mason Coile (\$27.00, Putnam), a geeky scientist builds a robot who goes out of control and takes

over. The scientist's pregnant wife seems distant and cold, especially when she's near his laboratory. Could the robot be at fault? Mix horror, robotics, and a twisty ending, and you'll be happy.

Inheritances always come with certain feelings, don't they? In *Fallen Fruit* by Shawntelle Madison (\$28.00, Amistad), one woman receives property that the locals tell her is a place where no good happens. Along with it, she inherits a no-good trait that befalls the offspring of one of her ancestors, an inheritance that she can prepare for but cannot escape. And that makes for a *very good* tale.

Based on a true-ish story, *The Bullet Swallower* by Elizabeth Gonzalez James (\$26.99, Simon & Schuster) is a tale of a book, a heritage, and a curse. It's a western, so you can expect horses, gunslings, bad guys, and dusty trails — and sitting in one spot for an entire afternoon until you've finished it.

Nonfiction

Over the holidays, you learned a thing or two about your relatives and their politics. *Good Reasonable People* by Keith Payne (\$29, Viking) is the tome to reach for now. Payne makes sense of the divide that plagues America, in a way that helps you understand both sides. Read it soon, before

family barbecue season hits.

Pets in the City by Dr. Amy Atlas (\$25, Putnam) is a memoir, but one that animal lovers will devour. Atlas is a veterinarian in New York City, tending to the beloved pets of the rich and famous, but she also writes about the other half: dogs, cats, and critters that she knew, loved, and cared for, owned by everyday New Yorkers. If you have a pet, this is your book.

Now that the holidays are over, if you need a way to pay for all those gifts, you'll be happy to read *Selling the Dream: The Billion-Dollar Industry Bankrupting Americans* by Jane Marie (\$29, Atria). It's a deep, thorough, but personal look at multilevel marketing (MLM) schemes, the people who fall for them, the chances of success (slim!), and how to avoid getting involved in them in the first place. The price of this book may save you thousands...

When Women Ran Fifth Avenue by Julie Satow (\$32.50, Doubleday) is one of those books that'll satisfy a range of readers: History lovers will enjoy the narrative about the department stores of years past. Business-minded readers will like the stories of retail gone by. Women's history fans will like the tales of female executives in the last century. All in all, this book's a winner.

If you're a collector, you know how much you like talking about your accumulations

and meeting like-minded people. In *The Witch's Door* by Ryan Matthew Cohn and Regina M. Rossi (\$30, Chronicle Prism), you'll read about one couple's odd collections: skulls, shrunken heads, and stuff that might creep you out just a little bit. But wait: this book is also part memoir, part romance, and fun. Anyone with a curious mind, a collection of oddities, or membership to a museum will love this.

Kids

Readers ages 8–12 will enjoy *Telephone of the Tree* by Alison McGhee (\$17.99, Rocky Pond/Penguin), a story of loss and hope that affects an entire neighborhood — but especially one young girl who misses her best friend. This is a beautiful book, somewhat of a tear-jerker, but for the right reader, it glows.

For the teen who wants something absorbing, a little flippant, and funny, *How to Win Friends and Influence Fungi* by Dr. Chris Balakrishnan and Matt Wasowski, illustrations by Kristen Orr (\$30.00, St. Martin's Press) is a great way to spend that bookstore gift certificate. It's a little bit trivia, a whole lot of fun science, and a good dose of smart-aleck. Perfect.

If you're looking for these books or something like them, or if you're starting your own best-of list, check with your librarian or bookseller to help you decide what's next.

Community • Planning Trends & Inspiration • Equality • Love

RainbowWeddingNetwork's
Seattle LGBTQ+ Wedding Expo
Sunday February 16th, 2025 • 12:30-3:30pm



Embassy Suites Seattle Downtown-Pioneer Square • 255 South King Street • Seattle, WA 98104

FREE Tickets at RainbowWeddingNetwork.com

Seattle LGBTQ+ Wedding Expo
Feb 16 • Embassy Suites

Radiant Reflections: Celebrating the Beauty of the African Diaspora

Date: Friday, January 31-February 23
Time: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Venue: Brainbridge Island Museum of Art, 550 Winslow Way E., Bainbridge Island, WA
Admissions: Free

Pancy Vargas, Guest Curator, conceived this group exhibition to explore, celebrate, and elevate the beauty and radiance of Blackness as an experience. This exhibition aims to present a multifaceted portrayal of Black identity, culture, and experience, and showcase the complexities, resilience, richness, and joys that define the African diaspora.

The Rumba Kings - An ECA Special Engagement

Date: Friday, January 31
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Venue: Edmonds Center for the Arts, 410 4th Ave N, Edmonds, WA
Admissions: \$42 - \$72

The Rumba Kings defy expectations with their captivating live performances. Although their name suggests a focus on rumba, the band's repertoire extends far beyond that genre. Their music draws from a wide range of influences, resulting in a diverse and enchanting experience.

sex, lies, and videotape [In-Person Only]

Date: Friday, January 31-February 2
Time: 7 p.m.
Venue: Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Ave, Seattle, WA
Admissions: \$14 General Admission \$10 Student/Child/Senior \$7 NWWF Member

Bad Girls Brunch

Date: Saturday, February 1-23
Time: 1-2:30 p.m.
Venue: Julia's on Broadway, 300 Broadway E, Seattle, WA

Rainbow Elder Breakfast

Date: Saturday, February 1
Time: 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Venue: Great American Diner and Bar 212 Front St N, Issaquah, WA

We cherish our LGBTQ+ elders and believe that magical and meaningful connections can happen at any age. These breakfasts give folks 50+ a chance to connect with each other, eat good food and enjoy a morning boost of community that the Eastside has been long overdue for. We meet on the first Saturday of each month at different locations on the Eastside from 10:30am-12pm. February's event will be at the Great American Diner & Bar in Issaquah. This is a free to attend event with food and drink available for purchase, but not required! To RSVP and get 1 week out text reminders for each breakfast with the location information, please text (971) 380-5873!

THUNDERDOME Drag Competition

Date: Sunday, February 2-23
Time: 8-9 p.m.
Venue: Queer/Bar, 1518 11th Ave, Seattle, WA

Every Sunday in January and February, welcome to the drag THUNDERDOME! 10 Queens + Kings will duke it out over the course of 8 Weeks for the \$5000 Grand Prize and a guaranteed booking at @queerpridefestival 2025! Join your host @janedont.jpg and our rotating weekly panel of Guest Judges to see these queens slay the weekly themes! Audience Vote each week will help to determine the outcome of the Finale, so gather all your squirrel friends to support your favorite diva! \$5 Suggested Cover to pay the Competitors

Queer Munch

Date: Tuesday, February 4
Time: 7-10 p.m.
Venue: A/stir 818 E Pike St, Seattle, WA

Meet other kink-minded or kink-curious Queer humans. The primary goal of this munch is to socialize and meet people. You can safely assume these people are at least a little bit kinky, so you don't need to bring up those conversations - Just come say hi to colorful humans and enjoy the venue space.

Neon Brush: A Glow-in-the-Dark

Painting Experience
Date: Thursday, February 6
Time: 6-7:15 p.m.
Venue: River, 1927 3rd Avenue, Seattle, WA
Admissions: \$38.00

Neon Brush is a one-of-a-kind painting experience where everyone, from experienced artists to the creatively curious, can let loose and get artsy. No need to worry if you're not the next Picasso; we've got everything you need to tap into your creative genius. With a canvas, glow-in-the-dark paints, brushes, and great tunes, all you have to do is show up and have fun. Plus, drinks are available for purchase to keep those creative juices flowing!

The Last Five Years

Date: Saturday, February 8-28
Time: 7:30-10 p.m.
Venue: ACT Theatre, 700 Union Street, Seattle, WA
Admissions: \$0.00 - \$114.00

The winner of two Drama Desk Awards, this modern musical takes a devastatingly honest look at Cathy and Jamie and their journey of falling in and out of love over five years. Through clever storytelling and sharp lyrics - Cathy's songs start at the end of the relationship, while Jamie begins at the start of their love affair - Jason Robert Brown's cult favorite is a raw and intimate window into two perspectives of one relationship. This acclaimed musical is an unforgettable chronicle through the joy and ache of love.



Lisa Koch Big-Ass Birthday Bash!
Feb 27 • The Triple Door

Drag Bingo hosted by Nemesis!

Date: Wednesday, February 12
Time: 7 p.m.
Venue: The Kraken Bar & Lounge, 5257 University Way NE, Seattle, WA
Come celebrate Valentine's Day early with Nemesis!! Bingo, Drag, Booze and Sexy Prizes!! Purchase cards at 7pm, Bingo starts at 8!

Gay Singles at the Belmont

Date: Wednesday, February 12
Time: 7-9 p.m.
Venue: The Belmont, 518 E Pike St, Seattle, WA

Looking to meet new people and enjoy engaging conversations? Join us for the gay singles event at the Belmont, 518 E. Pike St. Step into a fun atmosphere where mingling is effortless, cocktails are expertly crafted, and laughter fills the air. Cheers to good times and new connections!

ECKB Presents: Lovers + Kings

Date: Friday, February 14
Time: 7 p.m.
Venue: Cafe Skylark, 3803 Delridge Way SW, Seattle, WA
Admissions: \$20-\$25

Are you looking for something to do this Valentine's Day? Haven't made plans with your date yet? Maybe you and your friends are having an Anti-Valentine's? Perhaps you're even looking to meet other cool queer people? Lovers + Kings is the event for you! Masks are encouraged for this event!

Love Stinks

Date: Friday, February 14-15
Time: 7 p.m.
Venue: Anchorhead Coffee & Bakery, 1115 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA
An anti-valentine's karaoke party

Loves A Drag (King Show!)

Date: Friday, February 14
Time: 9-10 p.m.
Venue: Lumber Yard Bar, 9630 16th Ave SW, Seattle, WA
Les Dance Presents... Loves A Drag (King Show!) Enjoy Valentines Day with a night of Fun & Sexiness!

Sasha Colby MX Valentine's Day Show

Date: Friday, February 14
Time: 9-10:55 p.m.
Venue: Queer/Bar, 1518 11th Ave, Seattle, WA
Everybody say LOVE! Queen Mother Sasha Colby is gracing the MX stage this Valentine's Day for an unforgettable show with your favorite local legends! All Booth and High Top purchases come with Meet & Greet and VIP Table Service. 8 PM - RPDR S17 Viewing Party 9 PM - Meet & Greet 9:30 PM - Show

Seattle LGBTQ+ Wedding Expo

Date: Sunday, February 16
Time: 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Venue: Embassy Suites Seattle Downtown, 255 South King Street

Admissions: Free
JOIN US JUST AFTER VALENTINES DAY for a unique & lively event!

You'll have the chance to mingle at your leisure with wedding vendors of all kinds: Officiants, Venues, Photographers, DJs, Caterers, Bakers, Jewelers, Travel Experts, Transportation Companies, Videographers & more.

Ask questions of experienced wedding pros, gather info & helpful planning tips, sample food & dessert delectables... Tour the magnificent Embassy Suites Seattle Downtown Pioneer Square, relax with a cocktail, connect with other local couples also in the planning stages, and join in the fun with fabulous raffles!

Kickstart your wedding planning, or find those last polishing touches!

Lisa Koch Big-Ass Birthday Bash!

w/Barbara Highbie & David Lange
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2025
Time: 7:30pm-10:00pm
Venue: The Triple Door 216 Union Street Seattle, WA
Admissions: \$25.00 to \$35.00

"Tina Fey meets Randy Rainbow with Joan Jett guitar chops." Singer/comedian Lisa Koch returns for her annual Big-Ass Birthday Bash, with multi-instrumentalist Barbara Highbie, accordion guru David Lange, singer-songwriter Alicia Healey, and a pile of talented pals. Snort-inducing comedy and fabulous music "Hearing Seattle's Lisa Koch is one of life's wickedest pleasures..." --Curve Magazine

For more events
visit SGN's
online community
calendar!



BOND IS BACK! Page 21

Seattle Gay News
 FEATURES: LOST WOODS • ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

VICTORY!

Washington approves R-74, marriage equality for all

Shawn Krutzel
 26 Associate Editor

Bar will make that the love and...
 The Washington state legislature...
 The bill passed with a 61-40 vote...
 The bill will take effect on...
 The bill will take effect on...
 The bill will take effect on...

PRIDE

Lesbian wins landmark case against Army

Compiled by the 2014 Staff

The Army regulation...
 The Army regulation...
 The Army regulation...
 The Army regulation...
 The Army regulation...

the gay community calendar
 may legend

GAY AND PROUD 75

DANCE SPONSORED BY
 QUEEN CITY BUSINESS GUILD
 AND
 GAY COMMUNITY CENTER

Exhibit Courtesies of University of Washington Libraries

WWU Conference

Students from Washington state colleges and universities will be meeting in Bellingham April 22-23 at Western Washington University to address the problems facing sexual minority students in higher education.

The two-day conference, the first of its kind in Washington, will seek to form an ongoing series of annual conferences to keep students and student organizations informed of new problems and progress.

Mama Tits kicks ass

The creator of the dress that wowed Pride 2012 speaks her mind

By Shawn Krutzel
 Staff Associate Editor

I wouldn't be in Pride on Seattle without costumes. Land...
 I wouldn't be in Pride on Seattle without costumes. Land...
 I wouldn't be in Pride on Seattle without costumes. Land...

Five things you can do for full marriage equality now

By Shawn Krutzel
 Staff Associate Editor

1. Write to your legislators...
 2. Contact your local LGBTQ+ groups...
 3. Sign petitions...
 4. Attend community events...
 5. Support LGBTQ+ businesses...

Feb. 12 Gay/Lesbian Pride Day 1984

Parade March Planning Begins

The first community meeting to begin planning the 1984 Gay/Lesbian Parade March will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the Seattle Community Center, 1200 1st Avenue, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Feb. 12

Think locally, Queer globally

The best way to travel? Queerly.

By Shawn Krutzel
 Staff Associate Editor

Traveling is a great way to see the world...
 Traveling is a great way to see the world...
 Traveling is a great way to see the world...

50 YEARS

1974 **SGN** 2024

ANNIVERSARY

Seattle Gay News Celebrates 50!

WWU Viking Union Gallery
January 13th - February 20th
Weekdays 11am-5pm
Saturdays 12-5pm

Opening reception: 1/14 5-7pm
Closing reception: 2/20 5-7pm

The Seattle Gay News, one of the longest running LGBTQ+ newspapers in the world, is officially 50! Explore the history of a newspaper that has served the Seattle gay community since March 1974, reporting on arts, culture, health, politics, civil rights, and more.

For disability accommodation(s), contact amp.gallery@wwu.edu.
 Advanced notice is appreciated and sometimes necessary

Gay Cops In Seattle? - Maybe

By Shawn Krutzel
 Staff Associate Editor

Seattle Police Chief Robert Rosen...
 Seattle Police Chief Robert Rosen...
 Seattle Police Chief Robert Rosen...

4,000 Gays March in Seattle

Gay Activist Alliance

"Someone in Your Life is Gay"

By Don Heinzelman
 Washington, D.C.

...referendum campaigns long after that...
 ...referendum campaigns long after that...
 ...referendum campaigns long after that...

Seattle Men's Chorus

Shopping Cut

Lesbian Blood Protests 13

...protests...
 ...protests...
 ...protests...

WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HERE

QUEER LOVE THROUGH THE AGES

By Shawn Krutzel
 Staff Associate Editor

Queer love has existed since...
 Queer love has existed since...
 Queer love has existed since...

SGN QUEER LOVE

...love...
 ...love...
 ...love...

SEATTLE GAY NEWS

Staff:
 Editor: Debra Dragovich
 Managing Editor: Katherine Grant-Bourne
 Art Director: Debra Dragovich
 Copy Editor: Malcolm Mitchell
 Photographer: Bill Albert
 Photo Editor: Bill Jacobson
 Production Manager: Bill Jacobson
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Pride Parade!

Grand Marshals:
Megan Rapinoe & Sue Bird

June 30th 11am
 4th Ave, Downtown Seattle

Earth Gay 2012

Seattle Men's Chorus

Shopping Cut

Lesbian Blood Protests 13

...protests...
 ...protests...
 ...protests...