



One Hot Summer!

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Please Excuse Our Growing Pains



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By William Gooden
 Publisher,
 Milwaukee Pride Life Magazine

Our first year in operation has been eye-opening, to say the least. While I have worked in printing, media and publishing for the past 15 years, I have never seen anything like what we are currently experiencing.

The pandemic, which has caused shortages and prices to skyrocket, has also affected the printing industry. With a national shortage of paper, ink and other vital printing supplies currently in effect, it has sent the cost of printing through the roof. Even at my daily job I have had trouble ordering most simple items like envelopes and paper to meet customers' projects needs. Even toner for our copiers and printers has become scarce and has sent prices soaring. While many other shortages we were facing have begun to alleviate, the paper shortage continues, as many of the plants that supply the United States are found outside our borders and are still shut down or have limited production output.

Thus, this has driven the cost of publishing this magazine each and every month sky-high. However, I understand

how crucial having an independent publication for the LGBTQ+ community here in Milwaukee is. As a result, we will be temporarily be shifting our platform to digital-only via our website mkepridelife.com and issuu.com, and its corresponding app.

I must also apologize for some of the tardiness and the occasional inconsistency of our publication's layout and production schedule. I have recently have had major surgery and it has subsequently ruptured systems of production. With pre-op planning, the surgery itself and multiple complications that have sprung up post-op, this has made rendered inconsistencies in content and distribution. Given these circumstances, such results where inevitable.

That said, isn't all bad news from A Little Bit Different Media. This month after much delay we finally launched our sister publication, *Midwest Leather Digest*, a pansexual, kink-positive and sex-positive publication that seeks to educate and highlight the great kink community that exists here in the Midwest. You will be able to find it online for purchase at issuu.com.

THE OPINION EDITORIAL

The Summer Of Our Gay Discontent



By William S. Gooden
 Publisher,
 Milwaukee Pride Life Magazine

The summer of 2022 should be by all counts a big one for the LGBTQ+ community. This was the first time we could celebrate Pride festivals, parties, runs, music festivals and other events with COVID-19 (for the most part) behind us - or at least with a relatively relaxed sense fear. Many were weary of masks and social distancing protocols and believed that another viral outbreak was impossible. However, as early as spring, cases of the Monkeypox virus began being reported, most notably after major LGBTQ-related events like CLAW (Cleveland Leather Annual Weekend) or IML (International Mr. Leather). Even in major cities with large gay male populations, cases of the virus began appearing as the weather moderated, pandemic restrictions slacked and (most notably) gay men began mingling in bars, events at parties and even just meeting for sex. However, much like the response to COVID-19, the response to Monekypox, in both the US and abroad,

has been slow to roll out. If a second threatening worldwide pandemic wasn't enough, things on the political front began heating up as well as conservative states in the spring. States like Texas and Florida began the processes of passing anti-Transgender and anti-LGBTQ legislation. Of note was the "Don't Say Gay," bill in Florida, which had many LGBTQ rights advocates up in arms. Political upheaval and drama didn't just limit themselves to traditional conservative states. In June, the United States Supreme Court officially overturned the longstanding *Roe vs. Wade* decision that granted the right of legal abortion to women in the US. This wasn't a huge surprise, as a letter between conservative justices was leaked a month or so earlier. Many have predicted that *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the case that made Gay marriage legal in the US, is next on the hit list as well, (as it was also mentioned in the leaked letter). Thus, this summer will be definitely be filled with protests and much campaigning before fall elections, making this season a rather contentious one for the queer community.



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Notice of Publication:
 Milwaukee Pride Life Magazine published monthly by **A Little Bit Different Media LLC.** in Milwaukee, WI 53207

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In The News

LOCAL & NATIONAL LGBTQ+ NEWS



Harvard Affirmative Action, Gay Rights Cases Are Next Up at Supreme Court

By: Sabrina Willmer

The US Supreme Court reshaped the legal landscape in dramatic ways in the past few months, and it may just be getting started.

When its next nine-month term begins in October, the nation's highest court is scheduled to hear arguments on the use of race in college admissions, on the intersection of free speech and gay rights and on a challenge to an environmental permitting law.

In the blockbuster court year that ended Thursday, June 30, 2022, conservative justices used their 6-3 majority to strike down federal abortion rights, remove some limits on gun permits, curb federal regulatory power and blur the line between church and state.

“Last term saw the fewest decisions from argued cases since the Civil War, and this term isn't on track for many more,” Shay Dvoretzky, head of the Supreme Court and Appellate Litigation Group at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP, said in an emailed statement. “So it's noteworthy that these controversial issues have made the cut, suggesting eagerness among some members of the court to revisit or remake precedent in significant ways.”

The upcoming cases come for an institution that is facing waning approval and internal strife that has spilled into



public view. The court is still conducting an investigation into who leaked a draft opinion of the abortion ruling in May, and justices have had to get added security as protesters picket outside some of their homes.

The court, which will include a Black woman for the first time, will consist of four members who've joined in the past five years. The new justices have shown they are not afraid to upend precedent -- long a key feature of American law and known as “stare decisis.” Chief Justice John Roberts warned his five fellow conservatives who voted to overturn the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that such a drastic reversal could cause a “serious jolt to the legal system.”

Some liberal scholars say upcoming decisions by the court could impact underrepresented groups.

“You have a court who is looking to push the needle and looking to move the law to the right in very stark ways,” said David Gans, a civil rights lawyer at the progressive Constitutional Accountability Center.

But others argue that the court has taken a more moderate approach.

“We have not seen the kind of radical revolution that some people are claiming occurred,” said Ilya Somin, a law professor at George Mason University.

With the exception of the abortion case, other decisions by the Supreme Court have been much more incremental, Somin said. For example, when the court struck down a New York law that required citizens to show a special need to carry a handgun in public, it made clear that a wide range of regulations

would still be permitted, he said.

The 2022-2023 court term includes several cases that will test the court's commitment to precedent. Among the cases to watch:

Race-Based Admissions

For years, universities have been able to take race into account in their admissions process, which the Supreme Court affirmed in a 2003 decision. But the current court agreed to take up challenges to admission policies at Harvard College and the University of North Carolina.

A special interest group called Students for Fair Admissions accused Harvard of favoring Black and Hispanic applicants over Asian Americans. Lawrence Bacow, Harvard's president, has said eliminating race as a factor would make it more challenging for the school to create a diverse student body. In the North Carolina case, the Supreme Court took the rare step of intervening before a trial judge's decision made it to the appellate level.

"The cases may offer additional insight into where the court is on stare decisis," said Greg Garre, a partner at law firm Latham & Watkins and a former solicitor general who successfully argued a 2016 case before the court upholding the race-conscious admissions program at the University of Texas.

Gay Rights

The court will hear an appeal from a website designer who said she refused to start creating pages for same-sex weddings because doing so would be at odds with her faith. The case bears similarities to a 2018 decision in which the justices sided with a Colorado baker who refused to make cakes for gay weddings, although the court avoided a



The extreme court: with a five-to-four conservative majority, the Supreme Court has shifted firmly to the right.

ruling that would allow business owners to turn away customers on religious grounds.

Lorie Smith, a Colorado resident, is challenging a state law that prohibits businesses from discriminating on a variety of factors, including sexual orientation. Smith, who lost the case on appeal, argued that the law infringed on her right of free speech because it required her to communicate messages that were at odds with her faith, and because it kept her from posting a statement that explained her beliefs.

While Smith has invoked her religious rights, the justices have indicated that their focus on her case will be free speech.

Environment

The first case that will be argued on Oct. 3 involves a couple that has put up a 15-year fight to build a house on property that federal regulators say is protected wetlands. A ruling in their favor

could let developers build more houses without having to get federal permits and give companies more flexibility on where they can dispose of pollutants.

A 2006 ruling by the court left ambiguity around when the Clean Water Act should be applied to wetlands. At the time, four justices, led by Antonin Scalia, concluded that the law covered wetlands only if they have a continuous surface connection to a river, lake or other major waterway. Justice Anthony Kennedy offered up a different standard that applied to wetlands with a "significant nexus" to one of those large bodies of water. The couple is asking for the Supreme Court to adopt Scalia's definition, after a federal appeals court judge last year ruled that the Clean Water Act governed their property.

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-06-30/harvard-affirmative-action-gay-rights-next-up-at-supreme-court>



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The U.S. May Be Losing the Fight Against Monkeypox, Scientists Say

Longstanding weaknesses in the public health system are giving the virus a chance to become entrenched.

By Apoorva Mandavilli

As epidemics go, the monkeypox outbreak should have been relatively easy to snuff out. The virus does not spread efficiently except through intimate contact, and tests and vaccines were at hand even before the current outbreak.

Yet the response in the United States has been sluggish and timid, reminiscent of the early days of the Covid pandemic, experts say, raising troubling questions about the nation's preparedness for pandemic threats.

The first cases of monkeypox were reported in May, but tests will not be readily available until sometime this month. Vaccines will be in short supply for months longer. Surveillance is spotty, and official case counts are likely a gross underestimate.

There are already at least 700 cases in the United States, but experts say the real number is likely to be much higher. There probably will be many more infections before the outbreak can be controlled, if at this point it can be controlled at all.

"Why is it so hard for something that's even a known pathogen?" asked Anne Rimoin, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who first warned of monkeypox outbreaks more than a decade ago. "How many more times do we have to go through this?"

With increasing travel and trade, new pathogens will emerge more frequently,



A monkeypox vaccination clinic in Montreal last month. The global toll has surpassed 8,100 cases, with about as many potential cases under investigation. Photo Credit: Christinne Muschi/Reuters

Dr. Rimoin said: "We've been hitting the snooze button on emerging diseases for decades. The alarm is going off, and it's time to wake up."

The obstacles to preparedness are systemic, at every level of government, rather than because of any one individual or agency, Dr. Rimoin and other experts said.

Even as the coronavirus pandemic drags into its third year, the public health system in the United States remains a hamstrung patchwork, an underfunded bureaucracy seemingly incapable of swift and forceful action. Its shortcomings have persisted for decades, through many administrations.

The United States estimated in 2010, for example, that in the event of a bioterrorist attack, 132 million doses of a vaccine for smallpox and monkeypox would be required for those who cannot safely take an older-generation vaccine with harsh side effects. Yet two months after the current outbreak began, the strategic national stockpile holds just 64,000 doses.

The situation "reveals the failure in the U.S. to take public health seriously," said Zain Rizvi, who studies access to medicines at the advocacy group Public Citizen. "Do we ever run out of fighter jets?"

(Continued next page)

It's often unclear which agency is ultimately responsible for a particular aspect of the response. The strategic national stockpile used to be under the purview of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example. The Trump administration handed it to a different agency, yet the C.D.C. still makes decisions about who should get the vaccine and when.

State and county-level health departments often set their own rules and priorities, sometimes at odds with federal guidance. "The machine is just so ossified," said Gregg Gonsalves, an activist and epidemiologist at the Yale School of

Public Health. The "house is on fire, and it's like everything is moving at sort of normal speed."

The global monkeypox toll has surpassed 8,100 cases, mostly men who have sex with men, and about as many potential cases are under investigation. Many of those patients cannot identify the source of their infections, suggesting that there is significant community transmission.

In the United States, the C.D.C. has found at least two versions of the virus, indicating at least two parallel chains of transmission.

"It's pretty clear that we need to rapidly scale up the ability to diagnose this now," said Jay Varma, director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response.

The first missteps in the U.S. response to monkeypox were in testing. As in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, samples from monkeypox patients are being funneled to the C.D.C. for final diagnosis, a process that can take days. Only recently have tests been shipped to commercial laboratories; one of them began offering testing on Wednesday, July 6, 2022.

A network of about 70 public health labs set up by the C.D.C. has the capacity to identify orthopoxviruses, the family that includes smallpox and monkeypox. But local doctors must first get clearance from a state epidemiologist, then somehow get the samples to one of the labs, the same process used in early 2020 to identify coronavirus infections.

Local health departments trace contacts only after a confirmed diagnosis, allowing the chain of transmission to continue in the meantime.

"We clearly identified this as a major mistake that allowed Covid to get its footprint in the U.S. and spread undetected for a month, without any of us knowing," said Angela Rasmussen, a research scientist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

"And now we're just doing the same thing all over again, because that's the way it's done."

The C.D.C. should have made testing rapidly available to glean the extent of the outbreak early on, she added: "Our failure to do that has almost certainly allowed the outbreak to become much bigger than it could have been, and now I have serious doubts about whether it can even be contained."

(Continued next page)

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In San Francisco, B, a 43-year-old medical writer who asked that his name be withheld for privacy reasons, found himself shivering uncontrollably with a high fever on June 14, eight days after he had multiple sexual encounters at a bathhouse in Chicago.

When a blister appeared on B's wrist on Friday afternoon, he suspected monkeypox. But his health care provider said the city's health department would not be able to pick up his sample till Tuesday, June 21, after the Juneteenth holiday.

No one reached out to him to ask about his contacts, or to offer vaccines to his roommate or partner. It was Friday, a week later, before the sample was picked up, and the following Wednesday — nearly two weeks after he had contacted his health care provider — before he was told he had tested positive for an orthopoxvirus.

By then, his lesions had healed, and he no longer needed to isolate. “The irony of this happening on the same day as receiving the first test result is not lost on me,” he said.

Even then, the health department told him it would likely be another week before the C.D.C. could confirm that he had monkeypox.

“Two blisters and a rash on my butt is not the worst I've had in my life,” B said. But given his experience, “I don't think we're prepared for another pandemic of something that's actually serious.”

A senior Biden administration official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal matters, acknowledged that implementation of monkeypox testing had not been as convenient nor fast as it needed to be.

Negotiations between government officials and commercial labs began in the third week of May, soon after the first cases were identified, he said. But it took time to settle contracts, scale up



test supplies and train personnel to handle the virus.

Still, the official noted, the C.D.C. published test procedures in early June, and the F.D.A. authorized additional test supplies to allow any interested lab to participate. The wait time for test results has dropped from 15 days to nine days from the start of symptoms, and is expected to drop further as lab capacity expands in July, he said.

Another barrier to containing a disease like monkeypox is a dearth of sexual health clinics, as Dr. Varma noted in a recent opinion article in *The New York Times*.

Monkeypox was thought to present as a body-wide rash, but in the current outbreak, most patients have developed only a few pox, primarily in the genital area. Patients with genital symptoms are much more likely to seek care at sexual health clinics, because they tend to offer confidentiality, convenience and free or low-cost care.

But funding for these clinics has dropped by about 40 percent since 2003, after accounting for inflation. Partly as a result of the decline, about one in five Americans had a sexually transmitted infection in 2018, according to a C.D.C. report, and those numbers have surged during the pandemic.

If monkeypox can't be contained, it may become a permanent threat, espe-

cially among men who have sex with men. “The fear is that this will become entrenched as an S.T.I., you know, just like, say, syphilis is, or H.I.V. for that matter,” Dr. Varma said.

“Without a lot of high quality sexual health services, you're never going to be able to control it, because you won't identify people fast enough,” he added.

The National Coalition of STD Directors has called for a minimum of \$30 million to strengthen sexual health clinics during the outbreak. “We still have no federal coordinated plan, and states and cities are largely on their own,” said David Harvey, the organization's director.

“I have one simple question for the administration: Where is the money, the resources, the training that is needed at the nation's S.T.D. clinics to respond to what is already an out-of-control outbreak?”

Public health in the United States generally is woefully underfunded and understaffed, said Janet Hamilton, executive director of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

Although Covid brought more money into public health coffers, those funds cannot be used for anything else. “We cannot function at the level I think that the public needs and expects us to if we're going to always be so categorically funded,” she said. “We're not learning this lesson for the first time.”

The experts did offer praise for one aspect of the administration's response: the messaging to men who have sex with men, which hews to the “harm-reduction” approach, urging caution while recognizing people's needs.

Rather than “stigmatizing them for wanting to have sex and enjoy themselves, you meet them where they are,” Dr. Varma said of the C.D.C.'s monkeypox messaging. “In terms of things that have gone well, that is among the best sort of harm reduction advice I've seen.”

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/08/health/monkeypox-vaccine-treatment.html>

Cordially Yours, Again!

YOUR MONTHLY DOSE OF WHO'S WHO AND WHAT'S HAPPENING



An Interesting Birthday, for this Country

Well whatever your political leanings are, you must admit it's a most disturbing time. Even though it's the heat of the summer and we're all reconvening from Independence Day weekend celebrations, we must acknowledge the power of the Vote. Come November, exercise your Constitutional right while you still have it, and elect the person/people who will best represent you. Change is inevitable... it's the results that are judged positively or negatively.

In last month's effort, I shared with you the ultimate thrill of a book "Legends of Drag – Queens of a Certain Age". The book is now out and about. It was SO POPULAR that it was on back order! You can now go to Boswell Books on Downer Avenue, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, or The Saint Kate Hotel and buy your very own copy. This collection of portraits and bios has gone beyond everyone's expectations, and it hasn't even been on the market two months!

I was thrilled to receive a book review from the authors (Harry James Hanson and Devin Antheus) that appeared in full color of *The New York Times*, Thursday, June 23, 2022! And, yes – it was most complimentary! I can't encourage you enough to purchase your very own copy and feel the enthusiasm.

Another option is visiting The Saint Kate Arts Hotel. **The MOWA (Museum of Wisconsin Art)** Gallery has portraits from the book blown up on exhibit through **Sunday, August 21st**. What an original concept in commemorating Pride month – and keeping the Pride alive all summer! A tip of the wig to The Marcus Corporation, **The Saint Kate Arts Hotel** and their entire staff! I have



By: Michael Johnston

had the pleasure of being a "VIP Guest", due to this publication, at the unveiling of the exhibition, The Ultimate Drag Show, and a book chat. Through each and every glittering event, The Saint Kate was grand, and they treated me, and everyone within eye and ear, grandly as well!

The weekend of the show, the hotel was sold out! A legendary hotel for legends? I'm excited about returning to **The Saint Kate on Sunday, July 17th, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.** when Michail Takach and B.J. Daniels host their book chat on their more specific view, a local take of – the Midwest, Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Madison and the surrounding areas on *Drag: A History of Milwaukee Drag: Seven Generations of Glamour*. WT-MJ's "Morning Blend" hosted B.J. and Michail on **Monday, June 16th**, and they provided a tantalizing teaser. Personally, I haven't seen the book yet, I will purchase it at this event and have it signed. To show you what generous pros these two are, profits from this book are going to: Courage Milwaukee

and all the good work Brad and Nick do for the LGBTQ Homeless teens/youths.

We are so fortunate in this community So many givers, besides Michail, B.J. Nick, and Brad from above – Andy Nunemaker once again helped out the Breast Cancer Research Fund (and Prostate Cancer) by once again allowing his new manor to be the **Wisconsin Breast Cancer Show House** for 2022. Due to COVID, for two incredibly long years there was no Show House, so the return had to be "magic", and it was! Andy's new place was formerly known as the UWM Alumni House, now the new mansion on East Kenwood Boulevard will once again be full of LIFE! I was soooooo impressed by the works of all the designers who go in, decorate a room at their own personal expense, showing what it ultimately could look like. Once again "starving artists" giving back! In alpha order, special applause and kudos go to: Optimist's Bazaar and Betsy Benes Peckenpaugh, Kelly Boecker of Peabody Interior's and the gentlemen of Residence Interiors Michael Patrick McKinley and Kerry Shannon. Your vision spoke to me! Of course it must have been in Mandarin, because of my passion for items from the far East.

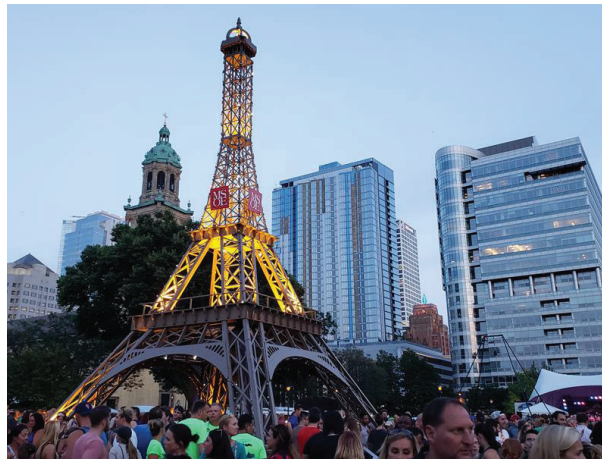
Angela Ingersoll sang her way into my heart! I will become the President of her Fan Club! **The Milwaukee Rep** was tres lucky to engage her for two months in "Get Happy Angela Ingersoll Sings Judy Garland" at **The Stackner Cabaret**. I am just one of her fierce fans who would love to see this become an annual show! Hey how about a Judy Christmas? Thank You Bill and Jody! I never saw Garland

in-person, after this concert - I feel as though I have. Truly unbelievable!

The Medical College of Wisconsin is still very busy working on so many research projects to make the world a better place. The current study that will have a major bearing in our community “*Booty Call* (Not that kind.)” The study of Anal Cancer and the prevention of it. Milwaukee, Houston, and Chicago are the three cities selected to be under the scope. I promoted this very important medical inquiry – with the monthly show I co host “*Bosom Buddies*”. I figured, if I were asking all of you to grin and bare it, so must I, and so have I. Trust me it’s no big deal, you take a test in the privacy of your own home, then you go to your local STD Clinic – Holton Street Clinic, Brady East Clinic, or Vivant Health, and they perform the same test you did at home. Both results are examined. Then six months later, off to Froedtert you go for the finale. Everything is done very professionally, painlessly, and you may be helping in saving lives – including your very own! For more scoop-age: www.MindYourBehind.org or call **414-882-0036**. This is how we beat Cancer!

It’s summertime and I don’t spend that much time outdoors; but with that being said, one place that is like the Garden of Eden is **Will’s Garden**. Will Radler is kind enough, yet another dear friend, that shares his Rosarium to non-profit organizations. The event entrance fees are determined by the designated non-profits who receive 100% of the funds! 2022 Garden events to be:

- Saturday, July 16th 9:00 a.m. - 12 Noon Greenfield Beautification Committee,
- Friday, August 19th, 6:00 pm – 9:00 p.m. Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens
- Friday, September 16th, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Street Angels MKE
- Sunday, October 9th, 12 Noon – 3:00 p.m. Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society.



Bombshell Theatre Company recently presented “*Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*” in the wild outdoors of **Hart Park** in Tosa. It was truly scrumptious, and so fun to see live theater el fresco! What a great commercial for the company and gift to the community! Tim and Eric of Bombshell at [www.BombshellTheatre.org/\(414\)622-0234](http://www.BombshellTheatre.org/(414)622-0234) have had an amazing first season!

I’m anticipating an exciting Season to come...**The Milwaukee Art Museum (MAM)** will take us to France! You have until **Sunday, October 16** “*Always New, Paris, the 1800s and the Posters of Jules Cheret*” will color our world! Ever so brightly, vividly, and Gay! Enjoy, my bon amis! The Baker/Rowland Galleries. The priceless posters, commercial art, visuals steaming up our season are compliments of Jim and Susee Wiechmann, again Patrons of the Arts, making Milwaukee Tres magnifique! .

Will You be storming the Bastille? It has returned, The Run, The Food, The Live Music, The Vendors, This Is It, Taylor’s - Viva La France! **Bastille Days** by East Town Association is on **Thursday, July 14** all the way to **Sunday, July 17**. And while everything you missed is returning, it will all take place on a new, clean slate of refurbished sidewalk, lawn, gardens, and updated walkways.

Jazz in the Park- 2022 will return following the ever-popular Bastille Day Weekend, **Thursday, July 21** through **Thursday, September 29th**. The weekly iconic happening offers a new timeline:

Happy Hour from 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., **Music** 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Any questions to (414)897-8589 or e-mail them at events@easttown.com.

It may be a while off, however one must plan ahead. The Grant Heffelfinger Memorial **Big Gay 5K Walk/Run** **Veteran’s Park/The Lake Front** on **Sunday, September 18th**.

. Sign In and Tee Shirt Pick Up is at **10:00 a.m.** At **11:00 a.m.** The Run Starts, followed with The Wall. Please Register at: www.milwaukeegay-sports.com/events.

Really enjoying the new vibe and energy at **Hotel Metro**. It’s still at **411 East Mason Street**, still looks the same from the exterior, chic boutique hotel. But I went in to see my Gal Pals Dita Von, Loretta Love Lee, Mercedes Benzova, and Marbella Sodi present a delectable **Sunday Brunch Drag Extravaganza**. While the Gurls were as Always in the finest of form, the hotel had had a much need and improved facelift. Time did not allow for a Room visit, I was totally bowled over with the lobby, bar, and restaurant. My meal – a very tasty brunch, a spicy Bloody, a very sassy Sunday escape! Highly recommended!

Speaking of Drag – The next “*Bosom Buddies*” Show at **La Cage** will be **Saturday, August 13th** at **5 p.m.** with Maple Veneer and Karen Valentine. Bringing Broadway to the Dairyland! Congratulations to Dave Wolz the New Owner/Proprietor of La Cage. He will keep the music and dancing going! And Thank YOU, George and Corey for a lifetime of Saturday Fevers and endless dances, and memories of unforgettable evenings.

Let go of yesterday, and deal with tomorrow, tomorrow – live in the here and now! Find the beauty in the moment! After all it’s the glamour, not the grammar as I remain Still Cordially Yours, Again!

Arts Life

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Brandi Carlile Is A Queer Icon —

And She's Making The Music Business Better, Too

When her career thrives, so does her activism — be it championing her causes through ticket sales, speaking up for rising artists or ensuring living legends (like Joni Mitchell) get their due.

By Taylor Mims

Brandi Carlile is happy to expound upon bad wine. Bad wine gives her a hangover. The pretension of wine culture leaves a bad taste in her mouth. “Without sounding like I’m judging wine as a concept, it’s annoyingly bougie and culturally hetero,” she says with a laugh. “It’s like golf.”

So when it came to developing her own boutique wine label, XOBC, she knew what she did want. It would be a wine for folks who are “a little left of center.” Something a bit rugged — maybe for a camping trip, to be sipped out of a Solo cup — “but it’s not going to give you a f—king headache.” And like everything Carlile does, it wouldn’t just be good — it would do good, too.

Because Carlile and her wife, Catherine Shepherd, started XOBC with their married friends Amy and Jeri Andrews, the company is entirely women- and LGBTQ+-owned. Its grapes come from vintners in her home state of Washington, where she still lives with Shepherd and their two young daughters, Elijah and Evangeline. It’s even inclusive of those who don’t drink alcohol: Because Carlile saw her father’s struggles with alcoholism throughout her childhood (he eventually got sober), she insisted on adding Misfit Mist, a hop-infused carbonated water, to XOBC’s offerings. In March, to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community, Carlile planned to release Proud Sparkling Rosé. Then, just three days before, the Florida state legislature passed the Parental Rights in Education bill — aka the “Don’t Say Gay” bill —



aimed at criminalizing classroom instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity for younger students.

As she recalls it today, Carlile’s mood turns sober. Recently, 7-year-old Evangeline was named student of the month and brought home a poster board to fill out about her family. She could write about how one of her moms is a non-profit savant who previously ran Paul McCartney’s charitable foundation and about how the other has six Grammy Awards. But “I suddenly realized,” Carlile says, “that whole thing was against the rules in Florida. I don’t want that to be the reality for my child — but I don’t think there’s a difference between my child and anybody else’s.” She knew what to do: The Proud release was delayed, and its profits are now 100% funneled toward LGBTQ+ organizations fighting discriminatory bills. “We’re blinded by this insatiable need to do the right thing,” says Shepherd. After all, she points out, Carlile’s fans “expect a certain level of thought that goes into ev-

erything Brandi lends her name to.”

From the moment her career began in the late 1990s, Carlile’s name has been inextricable from activism. The simple act of being an openly queer country artist was, at the time, radical, even in her hometown outside of progressive Seattle. But even then, Carlile never only championed herself: Following her breakout 2007 single, “The Story,” she harnessed her newfound fame to launch the Looking Out Foundation (LOF) with her lifelong bandmates, twins Tim and Phil Hanseroth, to raise funds for causes and organizations in need of a supporting voice as strong as her own. “[Her impact is] multigenerational, and it cuts across LGBTQ+, men and women, and all kinds of genres,” says Bonnie Raitt, one of Carlile’s heroes and a mentor when it comes to organically blending activism and art. “Her talent and her fire are unmistakable.”

As her profile rose and her albums made a slow-burn climb up the Billboard charts — reaching an apex with 2019’s *By the Way, I Forgive You*, which peaked at No. 5 on the Billboard 200; yielded her stunning ode to the under-represented, “The Joke”; and garnered six Grammy nods and three wins — Carlile also became an expert connector between generations in the artist community, supporting its elders (with Shooter Jennings, she produced Tanya Tucker’s Grammy-winning *While I’m Livin’* in 2019 — and powered a Tucker appreciation campaign in the process) and keeping its departed legends’ legacies alive. (She’s a constant presence at major tribute concerts, for everyone

from John Prine and The Everly Brothers to Chris Cornell and Aretha Franklin.)

“What impresses me about her is she still always finds time and a way to be there for things she cares about,” says Gregg Nadel, co-president of Elektra Music Group, where Carlile is signed. “Our whole label has this feeling of wanting to do right by her because it’s a two-way street — it’s a communal relationship.”

And at this point, Carlile’s business is so tightly woven to her beliefs that the more she thrives, the more her activist work does, too. Her consistently solid touring business has allowed her to donate \$2 from every ticket to organizations like The Trevor Project and the anti-police-violence platform Campaign Zero. The proceeds from her 2017 album, *Cover Stories* (on which the likes of Dolly Parton, Pearl Jam, Adele and Miranda Lambert covered Carlile’s songs), were entirely donated to War Child UK. A purchase of her recent single “Party of One,” featuring Sam Smith, still delivers a portion of proceeds to Children in Conflict. Even the XOBC wine label was created in part to benefit LOF — which it did just as the pandemic halted touring and, overnight, stripped the foundation of its main revenue generator.

Even then, Carlile didn’t turn her focus inward. At The Compound — the roughly 80 acres of land where she lives among family and friends in Maple Valley, Wash. — her team rallied to build a makeshift studio in Carlile’s barn and broadcast intimate solo acoustic livestreams to raise money for her crew and LOF. The Bramily, as Carlile’s fans are affectionately known, “were incredibly generous in times of need,” Shepherd says, “where you would think people would be panicking and keeping their resources to themselves.”

Carlile is able to do all this because her compassion has been a core part of her personality since day one. “Brandi is fearless with a strong, golden moral compass,” says Duffy McSwiggin of Wasserman Music, her agent of 20 years. “When you’re moving in the right direction, it contributes to that fearlessness.” But even that compass has, on occasion,



Brandi Carlile, pictured here with wife Catherine Shepherd and their daughters Evangeline and Elijah, said that "when same-sex parents are honest with ourselves, we worry deep down that we are depriving our children of a gendered experience. We have to work too hard to overcome it — that's a little planted seed we can now uproot."

faltered. In her 2021 memoir, *Broken Horses*, Carlile describes a protest over the 2017 “Muslim ban” where she had been asked to perform Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’ ” — and immediately felt questioning stares as the only white woman standing onstage among Muslim immigrant activists. “If you’re not cringing at this point in the story,” Carlile writes, “just picture me squeezed onto a mostly melanated, largely marginalized community’s stage ... in my cowboy hat holding an acoustic guitar.”

So she kept to the side of the stage and, when the speakers began experiencing technical difficulties, got on her hands and knees, untangling wires until others’ voices were properly ampli-

fied. Being an ally, she realized, “is more than stepping out of the way. It’s more than saying nothing,” Carlile says today. “It’s being willing to be embarrassed and willing to ask questions. It’s putting yourself in that crowd, taking that risk.”

Joy Oladokun remembers the moment she first met Carlile. At the 2021 Newport Folk Festival, the rising queer singer-songwriter was rehearsing for Allison Russell’s *Once and Future Sounds* set, in which she would be playing alongside Chaka Khan, when Carlile made a surprise appearance — and pulled Oladokun aside to praise her work.

“She didn’t have to take me aside and encourage my work and production, but she did,” Oladokun recalls. “She’s a champion of people through and through. That’s her power.” She and Carlile instantly bonded over their experiences of growing up queer in very religious places. “It’s like a tattoo on a young mind that you spend your whole life trying to impact,” Carlile says, adding that her activism was in large part inspired by feeling utterly rejected in the church community because of her sexuality. “You can’t do it alone.”

So Carlile found ways to build community elsewhere. Her trip to Newport was brief — she flew out expressly to support Russell and had to hop on a plane right after to visit longtime friend Elton John in Paris — yet she still insisted on gathering Russell’s cohort (including, briefly, Khan herself) for a post-set boat ride and oysters. For a Black, queer Nashville artist like Oladokun, that felt huge, and perfectly aligned with the many ways Carlile makes less well-known artists feel seen.

“When we’re not in the room together, I feel so confident that Brandi is advocating for me,” Oladokun says, noting how Carlile will regularly drop her name — as well as those of other up-and-coming artists she admires — on talk shows where she’s ostensibly promoting her own work. “[Oladokun] represents our community of activists in such a way that it’s undeniable that we’re making progress,” Carlile gushes. “I’m thinking about [that progress] all the time. That’s how I remember to name-check.”

She knows firsthand just how powerful that kind of platform can be: As an opener herself for many years, “My objective always was to show up at that gig and grab ahold of those fans and take them with me,” Carlile recalls. “I’ve done that in such a way that it’s going to last a lifetime.” Now that she’s a headliner, she’s determined to provide that kind of spotlight to others who need it, whether they’re talented younger artists (her tour support has included rising stars Amythyst Kiah and Katie Pruitt, as well as collaborators like Lucius and Lucie Silvas) or veterans deserving of their flowers while they’re still active (Mavis Staples has also opened for her).

One of the biggest platforms Carlile uses, no surprise, is one she created herself: her destination festival, Girls Just Wanna Weekend. Since its 2019 debut, thousands of fans have flocked to Riviera Maya, Mexico, as much to see Carlile as the vibrant, diverse group of women artists she introduces and often joins onstage — from Nashville innovators like Yola and Ruby Amanfu to outspoken stars like Margo Price and Maren Morris and trailblazing veterans like Tucker, Sheryl Crow and Indigo Girls. The 2023 festival has already sold out without a single artist announced.

McSwiggin, Carlile’s agent, brings valuable expertise from working on similar events with touring powerhouses like Dave Matthews Band and Phish; still, he says, putting together Girls Just Wanna Weekend each year takes a lot of “elbow grease” and depends upon the deeply loyal fan base that knows any Carlile show will be “a safe space to be yourself.” At the close of each weekend, Carlile can dependably be found right in the midst of the Bramily, tequila bottle often in hand. (She loves it almost as much as wine.) In shimmering leggings, headbands, high ponytails and other questionable ’80s get-ups, she, her team and her fellow performers let loose to the Ladies of the ’80s DJ set — or, as Carlile puts it: “I get totally sh-t-housed onstage and then usually end up dancing in a hot tub fully clothed without my shoes. That’s just tradition.”

Moments like that are Carlile to a tee, says Shepherd. “Brandi doesn’t like ex-



periencing any joy without sharing it with people,” she says. And those people don’t just include her fans and the other artists she can help, but the artists who’ve helped her, too. Ever since Carlile caught a guitar pick that said “No nukes” at a Raitt show as a teen, she has sought out meaningful relationships with the artists she considers her teachers.

“Bonnie’s activism is action-based, but it’s also philosophical,” says Carlile, who wrote Raitt a letter early on in her career as a fan and has stayed close with her since. “She lives her activism.” Likewise, John — whose own foundation focuses on the global AIDS epidemic — is a hero turned friend. Before she ever heard his music, Carlile says, “I knew about his heart and his activism and how intertwined it was with his music. My young mind was wrapped around that concept before I was an artist or an activist.”

“There’s not really anyone else I can think of that is the den mother for musicians and causes the way Brandi is,” says Raitt. “One of the great joys of the last few years has been growing our friendship through her incredible help with Joni Mitchell — organizing salons at Joni’s house to help Joni come back from her brain aneurysm [in 2015].”

Since meeting Mitchell at the retired singer’s 75th-birthday party, Carlile has helped organize and invite musicians to these “Joni Jams.” Despite not publicly performing anymore, Mitchell was eager to put her home full of instruments to good use and has since hosted stars like Raitt, John, Parton, Herbie Hancock, Harry Styles and Jacob Collier. Each night, Carlile says, includes some

“headache” wine, a home-cooked meal by Mitchell’s friend Chef Steph and time to ask Mitchell questions; then everyone heads to the living room to pass around Mitchell’s instruments, play and occasionally hear Mitchell sing both her own songs and covers. “She has even gotten to know some of the lyrics to my songs,” Carlile marvels, “so she pipes in on mine, which is surreal.”

“I love her!” Mitchell says of Carlile. “She’s my ambassador.”

Sometimes, Carlile will visit on her own to run new music by Mitchell, who’ll sit and play solitaire. “She is back to mentoring, and she has found a way to make the things that have happened to her a blessing for other people,” says Carlile. After two decades in the music industry, Carlile has done plenty of mentoring, too. Yet she still sees herself as the kid at the knee of legends, intent to make sure everyone in her tribe remembers where they came from.

“Culturally, I think we discard our elders. I don’t want to call them ‘elders’ because some of them could beat me in a footrace — but ageism is real,” says Carlile. “I want to make sure everyone remembers the foundations of the things we enjoy so we don’t become untethered to our way-pavers.”

Mid-May is shrimping season in Washington — and when it comes to shrimp, Carlile is dead serious.

Each day, she’ll write a note to her girls’ teachers excusing them from class so they can assist in the endeavor. “I need their limit,” Carlile protests with a laugh, explaining there’s a limit of 80 shrimp per person, and “the kids are people!” So she’ll prop Evangeline and Elijah on the bow of the boat, drop pots down and take home upwards of 200 shrimp per day for Compound-wide barbecues.

Carlile, who just turned 41, admits that her wife is “constantly rolling her eyes at how much time I want to be with [the kids]. When I was younger, it used to be work, work, work. I’d get to the end of these tours, and I’d be all strung out on sleeping medication and steroids and having panic attacks and not knowing why I was so unhealthy,” she continues. “I had no footing.” Now she’s

determined to savor the little moments of family life: building fires in their old wood-burning stove, making dinner at night, trick-or-treating (most recently as a Legend of Zelda-themed quartet).

That's easier said than done. Between recording, touring and running a wine label and a foundation, the business of being Brandi Carlile is 24/7. She built a career by saying yes to everything, and she works as hard as she asks anyone to work for her. "I have an addict mentality that I probably got from my dad," Carlile figures; if she's not on the road or with her family, she's out fishing in her hip waders or wielding a power drill for someone's remodel on the Compound. It's the same work ethic that took her from busking under the clock at Seattle's Pike Place Market to hitting that high note in "The Joke" at the Grammy Awards. And so, "despite every therapist's wish for me," Carlile says, "I'm doubling down on it because it feels like my lane."

Red Light Management's Will Botwin was president of Columbia Records in 2004 when the label signed Carlile based off a handful of songs she played at a showcase. (She moved to Elektra in 2017; five years ago, Botwin rejoined Carlile's team as a manager.) He didn't anticipate it would take nearly two decades for her breakout success with *By the Way, I Forgive You*, but he did see the commitment it would take.

"She is a throwback artist in terms of the way she has developed," says Botwin, who still recalls the days when Carlile would play "every night in any club that would have her." Growing her fan base, songwriting talent and public persona organically for years meant that "when her moment started arriving, she was ready."

In 2019, Carlile took home the best Americana album Grammy for *By the Way*, two additional trophies for "The Joke" — and a much wider audience after her on-air performance of the song. "I don't know an artist who has ever been more present and more joyful doing a song like that on a big show, and it resonated with people," says Botwin.

After that, the doors swung wide open



for Carlile and, as the saying goes, the rising tide lifted all boats. According to Billboard Boxscore, between 2018 and 2019 — pre- and post-Grammy night — Carlile more than doubled her average concert attendance from 2,385 to 5,557 per show. Even with a limited number of shows in 2021, that average spiked again to more than 9,000. And triple the number of tickets sold meant triple the donations to LOF.

"You notice the donations increasing anytime she's in the spotlight, whether she is delivering a message of activism or not," Shepherd says. Shepherd has led LOF since 2012, when she left her position as McCartney's charity coordinator to move to the United States with Carlile. During her decade with McCartney, she saw how grown men consistently lost their cool, dropping their briefcases to stand next to him — and how he never let the "Beatle effect" go to his head. "He was really good at reminding people he was just a normal person who likes bagels for lunch," says Shepherd, "and Brandi is really good at putting people to ease in that respect."

Carlile's gratitude for the Grammys and how they furthered her activism was boundless until last year, when the Recording Academy announced that her 2021 single "Right On Time" would be slotted into the best solo pop performance category, not Americana. "The Grammys changed my life. They gave

me the most life-changing opportunity, not just for me but for a lot of people," says Carlile. But being moved out of the Americana genre "pissed me off," she says.

"I can't even begin to express how important it is to me to stay with [the Americana community]," Carlile continues, "even if it means levels of success that I'll never reach." She had decided long ago that achieving pop stardom wasn't nearly as important as making change in her small corner of the industry — and suddenly, she found herself far from it. "When the Grammys made that decision for me," she says, "it felt like I had been taken out of my space that I wanted to be in."

Olivia Rodrigo took home the award, and Carlile's frustration has since subsided. She's quick to acknowledge that the categorization was also "a great compliment. I had to look at the juxtaposition of those two issues and come to a peaceful place with it," she says. There was something cool, she admits, about being "in pop with all them kids."

And even with that category relocation, she still managed a very Brandi Carlile 2022 Grammys. She garnered four other nominations: two more for "Right On Time," one for best American roots performance for her feature on Brandy Clark's "Same Devil" and a song of the year nod for her Alicia Keys collaboration, "A Beautiful Noise." In true Carlile fashion, "A Beautiful Noise" was recorded to encourage voting in the 2020 election and created by an all-female songwriting team. And thanks to that, two of the writers got their first-ever Grammy nomination, including Ghana-born artist Amanfu — a Girls Just Wanna Weekend alum. Carlile hopes artists will one day be able to define the categories in which they're placed. In the meantime, she'll keep helping them do so far from awards show stages.

"Communities are so important," she says. "You should be able to choose which one you're a part of."

Source: <https://www.billboard.com/music/features/brandi-carlile-billboard-cover-story-2022-interview-1235080226>

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A SHORT GUIDE TO LGBTQ + MILWAUKEE



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414-Oh-Fluid/(414) 643-5843

<https://fluidmke.com>

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<https://www.facebook.com/kruz.kruzbar>

La Cage Niteclub ♦

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<https://www.facebook.com/ToDoPostresOfficial/>



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Milwaukee, WI 53215
(414) 672-1353
<https://sschc.org>

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Beloit, WI 53511
tel: (608) 361-0311
www.chsofwi.org

Compassionate Clinical Services

Provides private therapy and counseling services by Ryan Larkey, LCSW, SAC
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Milwaukee, WI 53204

Planned Parenthood

(414) 839-1821
<https://www.compassionateclinicalservices.com>

Vivent Health (formally ARCW)

HIV/AIDS health center that provides medical, dental, counseling and social service help
820 N. Plankinton Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53203
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<https://viventhealth.org>



Cream City Foundation

Not-for-profit that funds LGBTQ+ outreach organizations
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Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 225-0244
<https://creamcityfoundation.org>

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LGBTQ+ health and advocacy group
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Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 390-0444
<https://www.diverseandresilient.org>

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Racine, WI 53403
(262) 664-4100
<https://www.lgbtsewi.org>

Milwaukee LGBT Community Center ♦

Community center with many programs for LGBTQ+ groups
315 W. Court St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 271-2656
<https://www.mkelgbt.org>

Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Networking and resources for LGBTQ+ business
5027 W. North Ave.
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