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TORONTO'S GAY & LESBIA

#748 JUNE 27-JULY 10, 2013

PRIDE 2013

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AT TREEHOUSE**

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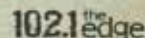
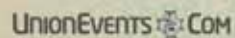
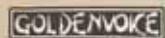
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Going Global

AN XTRA SPECIAL REPORT ON GAY RIGHTS AROUND THE WORLD

Hamed, a gay refugee from Iran, lives with his sponsors outside Winnipeg. LISA VARGA

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COVER PHOTO OF CHASE HOSTLER BY MARCO OVANDO

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Being Superqueer



EDITORIAL
DANNY GLENWRIGHT

A lot has changed in Canada since the 1970s, when a columnist at one of Toronto's major dailies claimed gays and lesbians orchestrated Gay Pride Week to seduce children. That tidbit is one of many we've recently discovered while digging through the *Xtra* and *Body Politic* archives for our Pride issue.

Back then, Toronto's gay-pride events would have included just a few hundred brave souls — not out to recruit, but instead paving the way for the massive Pride celebration (and the many human rights) we now enjoy.

Most queer youth won't have heard of many of the sponsors of the 1989 Pride Day in Toronto. The list includes establishments long closed — such as The Rose Café, Club Colby's and Boots & Buds — and some, like the Toronto Women's Bookstore and The Barn, more recently lost. Just a few Pride sponsors from almost a quarter of a century ago, including *Xtra* and The 519, remain open for business.

Compare that collection to a list of sponsors for 2013 Pride, which comprises governments (federal, provincial and the City of Toronto), media (CP24 and CTV) and big business (Bud Light, Viagra, Loblaw's and Sheraton).

Some might say that what we've won in support and acceptance (and a recognition of our spending power) has been at the expense of a strong sense of community and thriving queer-owned small businesses. But much of the queer world looks to Canada as the destination on a journey they're only beginning — and many others risk their lives to get here.

When we welcome members of our global community to Toronto next year for WorldPride, it's important that we remember to market our human rights and legislative successes along with our hotels, beer and consumer goods.

Our Pride issue also looks beyond Church Street and Toronto, to many of the gay rights struggles in progress around the globe. From the former

Soviet countries — where governments have been cracking down on Pride events and gay rights — to Uganda, where brave women and men like Frank Mugisha, of Sexual Minorities Uganda, fight to block the passage of the notorious “kill the gays” bill.

And despite what appears at first to be a compendium of dire setbacks, activists in places like Russia and Uganda are also celebrating this year, aware that they're part of something bigger than one anti-gay bill or one police truncheon.

“It's dangerous, but it's life,” Ukrainian activist Olena Semenova tells Kaj Hasselriis of her participation in several gay protests that turned violent (see page 32). “I love being an activist. I'm motivated by a human rights hunger.”

A few years ago I met a group of gay men in Sierra Leone who suffer the daily effects of crushing poverty and discrimination. Many live closeted lives, unable to consider the idea of telling family and friends about their sexuality. Yet every dry season they find their way to a private strip of beach near Freetown, slip into sexy bathing suits, set up a makeshift bar, blast dance music and create a damn fine kiki.

That's the spirit of Pride. While queer people here in Canada and all around the world may never be free from hatred and homophobia, we're also never going to roll over and play dead.

A new immigrant in Brampton begs out of a family function to attend Toronto's Pride parade. An activist in Kiev faces down a religious protester shouting hateful slurs into a megaphone. A group of West African gays host a secret beach bacchanal.

Each, in its own way, is a daring act of Pride. Each says I'm here, I'm queer, get used to it. This year's Pride theme is Superqueer — so let's take it up to the next level. Let's give the media something to write about 25 years from now. Let's give our friends around the world something to look up to. Let's take stock of our challenges and celebrate our triumphs. And let's have a party!

.....
Danny Glenwright is Xtra's managing editor.

FEEDBACK

Sex-ed updates

How did a bunch of Catholic bishops gain control of a 100-percent publicly funded institution [“Coalition Demands Updates to Sex Education,” *Xtra* #747, June 13]? When the bishops pay for their own school system, they can do what they want. They can teach divine stork theory if they want. They can teach that STDs come from Satan's pitchfork. They can teach courses on how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. But *they* must pick up the tab. In the meantime, 93 percent of Ontarians want an updated sex-ed curriculum in the school systems that *they* pay for. Let's do it.

RICHARD
TORONTO, ON

Vandalized Village marker

Vandalism is not a sign of “frustration” or “desperation” — it's a sign of criminality [“Village Gateway Marker Vandalized,” *xtra.ca*, June 17]. I've never understood idiots who use sidewalks and newspaper boxes to spray-paint their promotions. I wonder if the person responsible was planning to come back on June 29 (the day after the march) to erase the graffiti; I'm doubtful.

RYAN
TORONTO, ON

Unfortunately, the article doesn't show photos of myself and other organizers cleaning the mess up, nor does it explore the possibility that this might have been the work of someone looking to discredit the trans community, or examine the “bad faith” miscommunication and misinformation that continues to emanate from Pride Toronto. Instead, there is yet another “plug” for a discredited route that Pride Toronto continues to try and jam down our throat. The trans community — not just a handful of activists — has rejected this route. Yet again, we are characterized as ingrates and as irrelevant. This is the definition of marginalization and erasure, and it is not acceptable.

NICHOLA (NICKI) WARD
TORONTO, ON

“Vandalism is not a sign of ‘frustration’ or ‘desperation’ — it's a sign of criminality. I've never understood idiots who use sidewalks and newspaper boxes to spray-paint their promotions.”

RE: VANDALIZED VILLAGE MARKER



This may not have been a bright move on the person's part, but the paint came off with household cleaner. This is hardly anything to get worked up about, people. Don't we have better things to get riled up about? Who cares about some stupid paint on an (ugly) sign? It's not like it was a hateful message.

GLENN CRAWFORD
OTTAWA, ON

Missing men from Village

This is an odd case [“Missing,” *Xtra* #747, June 13]. The cops have ruled out murder or serial killing to date; they say there's “no evidence” of that — or even of “foul play.” Secretly gay ones? Could be kidnapping or hiding for some reason. Obviously, the cops need all intelligence they can get from anyone — even small pieces of information, like when last seen and where, to piece it together. I hope they are alive and well!

JAMES DUBRO
TORONTO, ON

Gays and beauty

Thanks to Brad Fraser for his latest column [“Just Like Us, Only Beautiful,” *Xtra* #747, June 13]. I agree wholeheartedly. One oth-

er thing might make those of us who aren't so beautiful feel better: when you are a beauty, people fall all over themselves to help you, give to you, do for you. But if you are average-looking, as you grow up you develop the social skills to attract people to you for reasons other than physical beauty. The “less than perfect” evolve personalities that attract. Here's the result: if you are a world-class beauty, wait 20 years and you won't be. Those of us who are attractive for other reasons are still attractive 20 or more years later.

DAVE WICKETT
TORONTO, ON

Vancouver

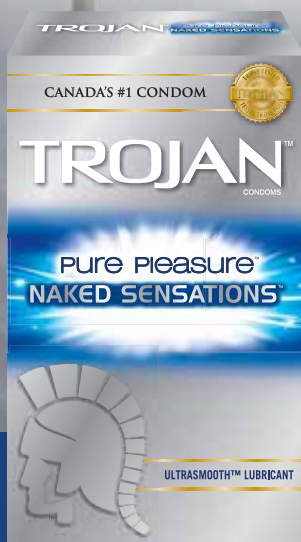
I first moved to Vancouver in 1992 as a very young guy from the Prairies [“Travel: Vancouver,” *Xtra* #747, June 13]. It was a haven! There was Doll and Penny's, Rocks, Hamburger Mary's — all 24-hour gay restaurants in the Village to supplement the many gay bars at the time. The rents were cheap and the streets even cheaper; the bars were friendly and fun, people even friendlier. It is now a dead gay area barely hanging on to the little life it has left. It is now an area that has had so many immigrants with money moving from China that they had an anti-gay marriage rally at the Art Gallery because it's against their culture. What's left of Vancouver's gay scene will be gone in five years if we're lucky. Vancouver had its heyday a long time ago; now, it's a homogenized, boring city that's fun to explore the two months it's sunny and depressing as hell from September to June, when it rains every single day.

KYLE
TORONTO, ON

The outcome that we seek is this — gay and lesbian people daring together to set love free.

Xtra is published by Pink Triangle Press, at 2 Carlton St, Ste 1600, Toronto, M5B 1J3.

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Jubilee Queen

Name of a luxury
Toronto cruise ship
built in 1986.

1986

The year
Amanda Bynes
was born.

**'I'm only going
to be in music videos
from now on I never
want to be
in movies again!'**
A tweet from Bynes
about her latest
career move.

Waka Flocka Flame
Rapper apparently
tapped to produce
Bynes' first
rap album.

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Amount pornstar
Memphitz claims
Waka was
offered to star in
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nightclub in Atlanta.

Banjee Girl Friday
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party at My Sister's
Room.

Paris Is Burning
Voguing film in which
Banjee Realness is a
competition category.



FROM THE PTP ARCHIVES
15 YEARS AGO

XTRA #356, JUNE 18, 1998

Ali Drummond and Brian Francis flee from the
monstrous Christy Cameron, aka Dirty Babette.
Writer Arif Noorani explores the pros and cons of
a corporate Pride in this 92-page Pride monster
issue. Turn to page 16 for more Pride tidbits.



**“If you're a boy or if you're a girl
I love you just the same
Whenever you go, all over the world
A rose by any name.”**

— from the new Blondie/Beth Ditto single,
“A Rose By Any Name”

#PRIDEMEMORIES

**“I got a booty-call
while walking down
Church Street from a
guy who was only in
town for Pride. I said
to my friends,
'I will meet you
guys at TD —
I just need to
quickly take care
of something.'
I ran behind the
Steamworks back
alley, met the guy,
hooked up in a
Porta-Potty, and
got to TD before my
friends got there.”**

— DEVINE DARLIN

#PRIDEMEMORIES

**“I built a giant shoe
to put atop a TTC bus
that we designed for
the parade in the
style of Priscilla,
Queen of the
Desert. I put a
blow-up doll in the
shoe. I didn't realize
the heat would cause
the doll to deflate
itself, and it was
sagging out of the
shoe like a sloppy,
boozed-out fairy. It
was dragged down
the street.”**

— DONNARAMA

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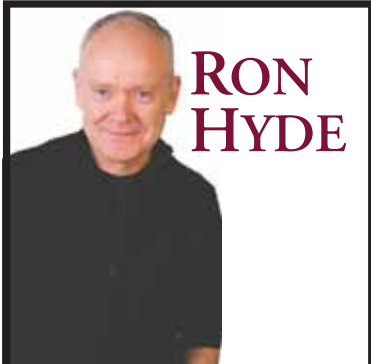
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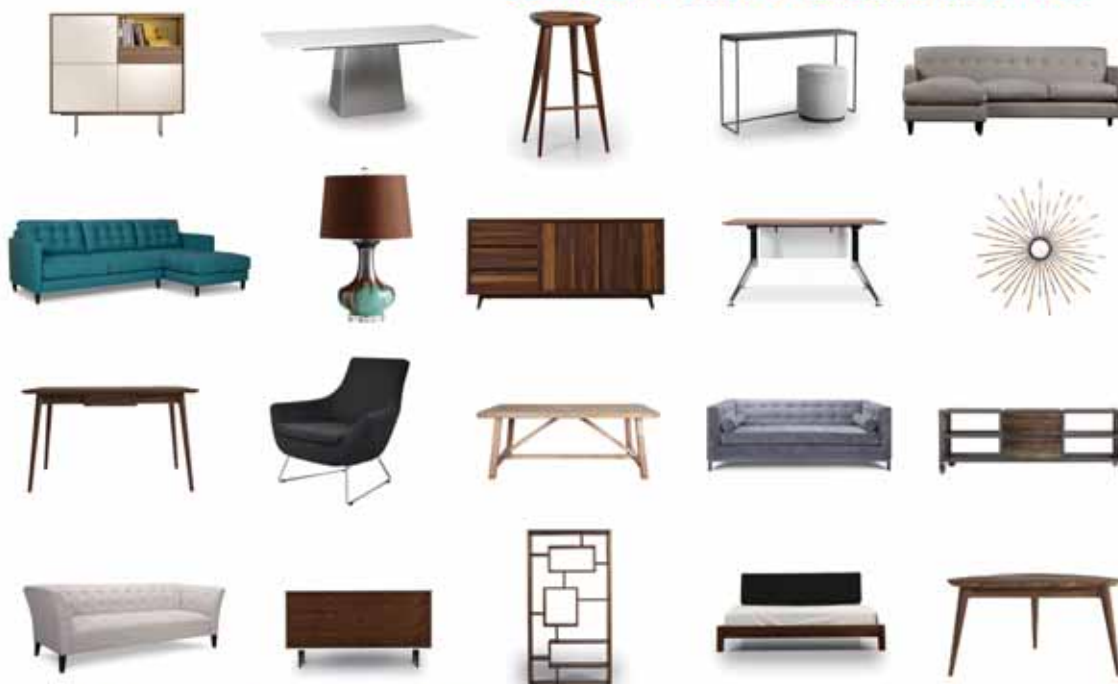


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Dykes on wheels

Bicycles meet motorcycles at Pride

PRIDE NEWS
ANDREA HOUSTON

A new group of fierce femmes on two wheels will be at the front of the 2013 Toronto Pride Dyke March: meet the dykes on bicycles.

Christy Shapley and Susie Jones, who work at the do-it-yourself shop Bike Pirates, will be riding the Social Tandem, a gold animal-print masterpiece that allows two friends to ride side by side, towering over the road. They are also organizing a contingent of queer women and allies on bicycles to walk or ride in the march.

Traditionally, the Amazons — Toronto’s gang of “badass bitches” on bikes (as in hogs) — have led the march. Dyke March team leader Laura Krahn says the Amazons aren’t going anywhere. The lineup for the march has not been finalized, but for safety reasons, she says, the motorcycles must remain at the front, otherwise the bikes will stall.

She says bicycle activism is near and dear to urban queer people, who have been vocal advocates in recent campaigns, such as the fight for the Jarvis Street bike lanes in 2011.

“Queer people and biking, these issues all go together,” Shapley says. “We want bike infrastructure. We want things that are better for the environment.”

But there’s no ill will toward the roaring engines of the Amazons. For Shapley and Jones, the Amazons represent a legacy of queer women challenging conformity and breaking free of traditional gender roles. “Motorcycles are so sexy and powerful. I’d love to be that tough,” Shapley jokes.

Jones says there’s room for all kinds of dykes on wheels. “Maybe this is representative of changing ideas and a new generation of queer women.”



Christy Shapley and Susie Jones will be riding the Social Tandem in this year’s Dyke March. ANDREA HOUSTON

Motorcycles also make a powerful political statement, Shapley says. “It was very political for a woman to be driving a motorcycle in the ’60s and ’70s. You didn’t see that. Women were always seen on the back, with their arms wrapped around a big guy.”

Since 1981, the Toronto Amazons have led the Pride parade and the Dyke March. The local group is often mis-

takenly referred to as Dykes on Bikes, a chartered lesbian motorcycle club in the United States with 22 chapters.

Susan Wells, the founder of the Amazons, started the group 35 years ago with a few others as a way for gay women who love motorcycles to get together and ride. She designed and sewed the patches herself. The group has had about 80 members over the years. “We

welcome anyone to ride with us,” she says. “We’re not just dykes on bikes. We’re queers on bikes.”

April White says she joined the group to meet new people, feel less isolated and build confidence. As a trans person, she appreciates the feeling of safety and support she gets from like-minded women, she says. “No one’s gonna screw with us as a group.” X

QUEER WOMEN ON THE ROADS & IN THE BIKE SHOPS

In the last few years, bike shops across the country have been dedicating more space to the queer community and women to answer demand for safer places to work on their bikes. The goal is to empower them to ask questions, access tools and repair their own bikes, all while getting a break from the traditionally male-dominated atmosphere of most shops.

“It’s often a sea of men and only a few women — and that can be really intimidating,” says Leanne Kavanaugh, of Our Community Bikes in Vancouver.

In Toronto, Bike Pirates has hosted women-and-trans Sundays for the last three years, and the Community Bicycle Network has offered a bike mechanics course for women, called Wrenches with Wrenches, since 2002. In Vancouver, the UBC Bike Co-op offers a women-and-queer night; Our Community Bikes hosts Women on Wheels; and Kickstand runs the Grls, Queers and Gears program. In Montreal, the Flat Bike Collective offers a women, trans and queer night, and Right to Move hosts Girls’ Night In.

Bike Pirates volunteer Christy Shapley says people still try to access the space or even get angry when they’re told only self-identified women and trans people can use the shop on Sundays, which, she says, highlights why it’s necessary to continue the program. But sexism doesn’t exist only in shop settings. Driver hostility toward cyclists is common and often shows itself in homophobic and sexist ways, cyclist Astrid Idlewild says.

“I’ve been called a ‘fucking dyke’ more times than I can count,” she says. “I mean, they’re right, I am a dyke, but they mean to somehow hurt me by calling me the D-word.” — Andi Schwartz



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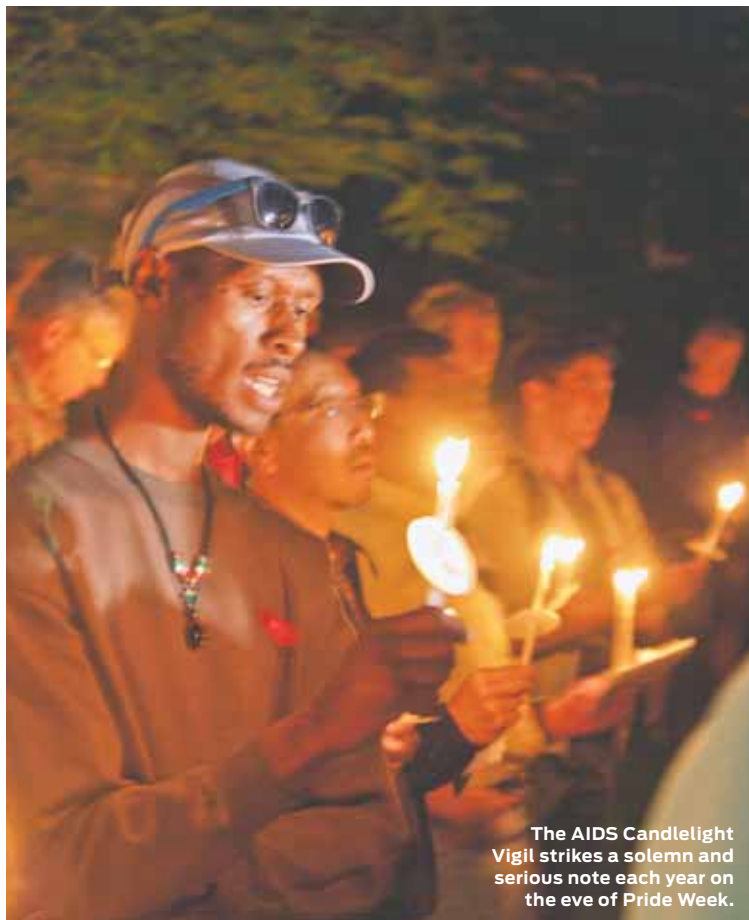
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The AIDS Candlelight Vigil strikes a solemn and serious note each year on the eve of Pride Week.

AIDS Candlelight Vigil marks another year

A candlelight vigil marked the addition of 22 names to the AIDS Memorial June 20. The annual event at Cawthra Square once again drew hundreds of people to the park as dusk settled on Toronto.


Claudia Medina, of the Prisoners with HIV/AIDS Support Action Network, and physician Alan Li hosted the event. The theme of this year's vigil was friendship; it was highlighted by performances of odes to friendship from popular music, including "Stand By Me" and "That's What Friends Are For."

Medina and Li meditated on the role that friends can play as chosen family and on the friendship offered by staff at AIDS service organizations. "Without fanfare and photo opportunities, these families, friends and

lovers remain the most immediate source of compassion," Li said.

A performance by Naomi Abiola struck a defiant note, calling on the audience to take action on issues from HIV stigma to youth education. The piece was greeted by rowdy applause.

The Toronto AIDS Memorial is a row of pillars overlooking a garden in the centre of Cawthra Square Park, beside the 519 Church Street Community Centre. The names of 2,500 people who have died from AIDS-related causes are etched on brass plates on the pillars. The AIDS Candlelight Vigil marks the addition of new names to the memorial each year. —*Marcus McCann*

 Go to xtra.ca for more photos from the vigil.

Village gateway marker vandalized

Trans March organizers have cleaned up after someone decided to promote the event by defacing the Church-Wellesley Village gateway marker between Alexander and Wood streets. March organizer Nicki Ward was saddened to learn that "Trans March June 28" had been scrawled in black paint on the marker.

"We don't know who did it," she says. "We can't figure it out. Obviously we don't approve, but you can see the frustration from the person who did it. It makes me feel very sad. It's a sign of desperation."

Similar tags were posted on the window of the shuttered Church Street Coffee Time store, on a Village bulletin board and on an *Xtra* box at Alexander and Church streets. Ward and trans activist Melissa Hudson cleaned the paint off the gateway marker June 17 with the help of members of the Church Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area. Ward says the paint wiped off with a household cleaner.

Architect Claudio Santon, who designed the markers, told *Xtra* in April that the markers are "vandal-proof."

BIA co-chair Liz Devine declined to comment and asked that *Xtra* forward questions to the 519 Church Street Community Centre, which she says has taken over all BIA communications. However, The 519 communications department did not respond to *Xtra*'s request for comment.

Ward says she doesn't approve of the defacing, but she understands the motivation behind it. "It was absolutely not the organizers," she says. "And yes, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth."

She says Trans March organizers have been pushing for Pride Toronto to do more to promote their march and to help get word out that the route has changed. Local trans activists — who have been fighting for three years to hold the annual march on Yonge Street — won a victory against the city this year: in response to pressure from activists, police granted a permit so they could march on Yonge. Unfortunately, it wasn't the route activists wanted.

The permit allows marchers to travel south on Yonge from Charles Street to Wood Street following a rally at George Hislop Parkette. Activists have decided they will not turn off Yonge at Wood and will continue to march south to Carlton Street, then head east to Allan Gardens. Trans activists took out their anger on Pride Toronto after it was confirmed that the *Pride Guide* will reflect the route allowed by the permit, not the route chosen by activists.

Ward suspects a community member frustrated by this decision may be responsible for the graffiti. —*Andrea Houston*



The southern Church-Wellesley Village gateway marker was defaced.

Pride Toronto names 2013 honorees

The Pride Toronto honoured group for 2013 is Casey House. The first HIV/AIDS hospice in Canada, it has been providing care to people living with HIV and AIDS for 25 years.

This year's honoured dyke is Paola Solorzano, former president of Hola, a Toronto group for queer Latinos. Solorzano also served briefly as a Pride Toronto board member but stepped down for personal reasons. She was born and raised in Mexico and moved to Canada 10 years ago, where she has been a vocal advocate for queer newcomers and refugees fleeing violence.

The Dyke March honoured group is Shape Your Life (SYL), a boxing program for women and trans people who self-identify as survivors of violence.

The Trans March honoured individual is Kyle Scanlon, the former 519 Church Street Community Centre's trans support worker who died by suicide last year. The fallen, a group representing all trans people who have been murdered or died by suicide, is the Trans March honoured group.

The international grand marshal, announced last month, is Argentine human rights defender Marcela Romera, the director of Argentina's Association of Transvestites, Transsexuals and Transgender Persons. —*Andrea Houston*

Toronto PFLAG's Irene Miller to lead Pride parade

Toronto PFLAG president Irene Miller says she always tries to represent the mother that every queer youth wishes he or she could come out to: a parent who loves and accepts unconditionally. This year, Miller will march for all the mothers at the front of the Toronto Pride parade as grand marshal.

As the local spokesperson for PFLAG, Miller is often described as a force of nature — someone who speaks with incredible warmth and often brings people to tears.

"For a lot of people that come out, their moms are gone; they never had the opportunity to be elevated to the experiences I have had," she says. "Maybe given more time, and under different circumstances, their mom could have been more supportive. I always hope that people remember, in the end, we love our kids."

"My son lives his whole life completely out and proud. I am doing this at 63. He was doing it as a teenager. That, to me, takes guts and courage." —*Andrea Houston*

 For more on these stories, go to xtra.ca.



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Toronto council votes to fund Pride

Rob Ford walks out during vote

PRIDE NEWS
ANDREA HOUSTON

Funding for Toronto Pride, which began officially June 21, was secured for another year just over a week before the event's launch.

The motion to fund the 10-day event passed 32 to two in a Toronto City Council vote on June 13. Councillors Mike Del Grande and David Shiner voted against the motion.

Rob Ford was not present for the vote. "The mayor got up and walked out during the vote on Pride's funding," Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam says.

Pride Toronto's 2013 grant was boosted to \$140,000, up about \$16,000 from last year. The extra money came from revenue generated by the city's billboard tax.

Wong-Tam says that Ford returned to his council seat in time to vote against the \$7 million cultural grants package for the city's other festivals, including the Toronto International Film Festival and Luminato. Del Grande and Shiner also voted against that package.

Councillor James Pasternak, who was absent for the vote, says the Pride parade "will be watched" closely this year. He warns that if the Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) group marches, funding for WorldPride will be at risk. "If QuAIA marches again this year, there will be stronger

resolve on council," he says. "It's assumed that the same demonization will take place for WorldPride, so it could affect the funding for that."

Pasternak, who won't confirm whether he plans to march in the city council contingent this year, says QuAIA has no place in the Pride parade.

But Pride co-chair Francisco Alvarez says QuAIA is not the first activist group with an international cause; it just has the highest profile. Over the years there have been a number of groups that have marched in the Pride parade in protest against various anti-gay positions that are political and religious, such as homophobia in the Vatican, Catholic school boards, fundamentalist Islam and evangelicals in Africa. "In the past there's been groups against policies in South Africa; this year it could be Russia," he says. "Controversial issues will always be there."

Alvarez says Pride will allow any group to march that is not in violation of the city's anti-discrimination policy. For the past two years, the city manager has determined that Pride Toronto does not contravene city policy and any further complaints should be directed to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. In April, three new city staff reports determined, once again, that the use of the term "Israeli apartheid" at city-funded events is not a criminal offence and does not contravene any city policy.

Justine Apple, the executive director of Kulanu Toronto, a queer Jewish cultural organization, says that last year her group marched behind QuAIA peacefully and without incident.

QuAIA's Tim McCaskell says that the mayor, Pasternak and Shiner are being manipulated by the "pro-Israel lobby," which has an anti-gay agenda to attack Pride. Behind the scenes, anti-gay groups continue to lobby councillors, he says.

One email obtained by *Xtra*, which was sent to some councillors after the May executive committee meeting, states that the issue is of growing concern to "fundamentalist Christians." The email came from EthicScan, "a Toronto-based, consulting, corporate responsibility research house and educational resource centre" with a mission to "help organizations and individuals behave more ethically."

"We can't rely upon the outspoken Jewish Councillors, Pasternak and Shiner," the email states. "We need to contact the large group of non-Jewish Councillors in the middle. You need to tell them this issue is important to us, and fundamentalist Christians, and other voters."

The author of the email, David Nitkin, who is president of EthicScan, was at city council June 11 but refused to speak to *Xtra*. When phoned by an *Xtra* reporter prior to the council meeting, Nitkin confirmed he is the author but promptly hung up.

Alvarez says the pro-Israel lobby's interest in Pride is clear. "Fundamentalist Christians are anti-gay," he says. "So they don't support funding for any queer event whatsoever. And I think that's a really shaky alliance."

McCaskell reminds that fundamentalist Christians have a reason for supporting Israel. "They believe that as soon as all the Jews return to Israel, then Armageddon happens and Jesus Christ returns . . . But [it also] serves their other interest. They want to attack Pride because they are anti-gay."

Justine Apple, the executive director of Kulanu Toronto, a queer Jewish cultural organization, says that forming alliances with fundamentalist Christians has disturbing implications. In previous years, as Kulanu's spokesperson, Apple has been vocal in her opposition to QuAIA's participation in Pride, but she was quick to distance herself from the EthicScan email and says Kulanu has stepped out of the Pride debate completely this year.

She says Kulanu members are instead focusing on organizing their contingent to march in the parade. "We don't want to be sidetracked by QuAIA," she says, noting that in 2012 Kulanu marched peacefully behind QuAIA. "We actually didn't encounter any problems last year, which was good."



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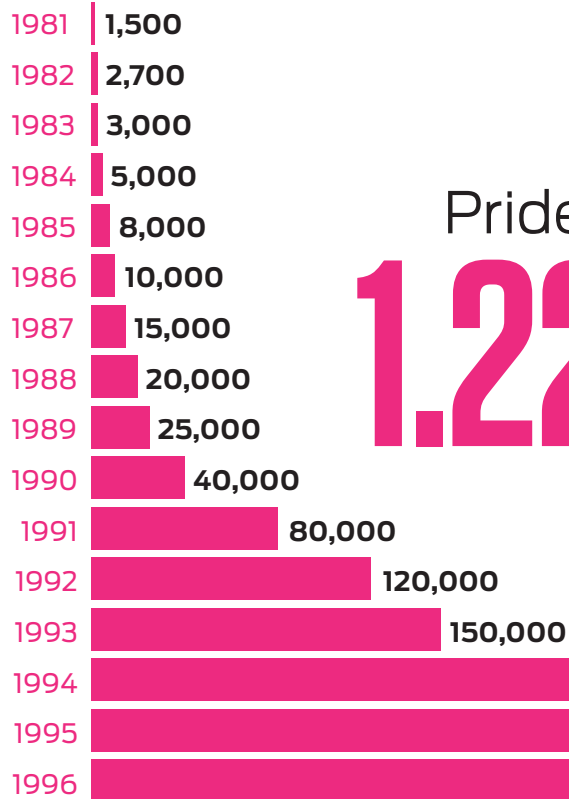
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PRIDE FACTS

Compiled by JP Larocque

BIG NUMBERS

Attendance figures for Pride for the first 15 years after records were kept.



Pride attendance in 2012

1.22 MILLION

LOOKING BACK



"Thrilled with pride and solidarity we march through City Hall Square ... and then along Queen St back to the CHAT Centre."

—Hugh Brewster, *Body Politic* #6, 1972

1971

Toronto's first "Gay Day Picnic" is held at Hanlan's Point on Sunday, Aug 1, as a fundraiser to send activists to Ottawa for a second anniversary march marking decriminalization.

1972

On July 9, the second annual Gay Picnic is held as part of a series of events for the first Gay Pride Week. The week includes a festival, film night, Pride Dance, a rally and a march to Queen's Park. Activists present a brief to the Ontario government.



Poster for the 1973 Gay Pride Week, organized by the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT).

BIG NAMES



2008
Cyndi Lauper
Sandra Bernhard
Spice Girl Mel C

2009
Deborah Cox
Kelly Rowland

2012
Corey Hart
Bif Naked
Keisha Chante

2013
En Vogue

SOURCE: PRIDE TORONTO

#PRIDEMEMORIES

“So piss drunk, thinking I was at Remington’s waiting for my friends, while actually an hour later realized I was at Zanzibar!”



— ANAHÍ BATISTA

“Last Pride I had just broken up with my boyfriend. Me and my roommate got completely tanked, ended up breaking into the Christie Pits pool together, swimming in our undies and getting chased out by the security guards. I (later) got back together with my ex-boyfriend by kissing him in front of the main Pride stage the very next night. (We broke up for good a month later ... heyyy, Pride 2013!)”



— JUDY VIRAGO

“During my first Pride in NYC, I wandered onto a little street (off Christopher Street) where there were men having full-on sex in broad daylight. I was in day drag, and there were folks reaching and grabbing. Unbeknownst to me, an old friend of mine was videotaping my entire walk through this live sex show. As I came out the other side, he showed me the video. I had a visible hard-on through my sundress!”



— JADE ELEKTRA

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Sunday July 1 • 1pm
Cawthra Square Park,
519 Church Street

• **ENTERTAINMENT:** This year's line-up includes Ariene Mantle, the Gayap Rhythm Drummers, David Roche and Sky Gilbert, Anna Gutierrez, Lim, Faith Nolan and much, much more.
 • **AUCTION:** Guest Auctioneer Alderman Jack Layton will be presiding over the bidding on items including •Houseboat weekend for eight •Dinners for two •Branches and Bar tabs •Works by Toronto gay artists (oils, glass, pottery, photo) •Theatre tickets •A ride with the Amazons and more. We suggest you bring cheques or credit cards so you won't miss out on the deals in this Pride Day Fundraiser!
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 • **ADMISSION:** Free. Music of BRATTY.

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 PRIDE DAY COMMITTEE

1984

On July 1, 5000 people participate in Gay Pride Day in Cawthra Square Park. Organizers recouped \$7000 spent, with a little left over "to get next year's Pride Day on the road."

1991

City Council declares Pride Day for the first time, after the previous year's complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

1995

New Police Chief David Boothby allows four lanes on Yonge Street to close for Canada's second largest parade, which takes over three hours. MPs Svend Robinson and Bill Graham, and Mayor

Barbara Hall, speak on the stages and walk in the parade.

1996

5,000 participate in the first Dyke March. The number grows to 10,000 in 1997 and 12,000 in 1998.



An aerial view of the 1987 Pride Parade.



The start of the 1997 Dyke March.

FREE YOUR MIND

EN VOGUE PRIMER

- Have received seven MTV Video Music Awards (more than any other female group in history), five Soul Train Awards, six American Music Awards and seven Grammy nominations.
- Spent more than 2,800 weeks on the Billboard charts.
- Biggest hits are "Hold On," "Free Your Mind," "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)," "Giving Him Something He Can Feel," "Don't Let Go (Love)" and "Whatta Man" (with Salt-n-Pepa).
- In the 1995 film *Batman Forever*, the group appears as a group of prostitutes who want to seduce Batman (Val Kilmer), but they are disappointed when Robin (Chris O'Donnell) shows up instead.
- Three current members (Terry Ellis, Cindy Herron, Rhona Bennett), three previous members (Maxine Jones, Dawn Robinson, Amanda Cole).
- In 2012, after a brief reunion of the original line-up, members Maxine Jones and Dawn Robinson split from Terry Ellis and Cindy Herron and attempted to form a second group, also to be called En Vogue. They went to court and the judge ruled in favour of Ellis and Herron.
- Robinson and Jones have continued to try and form their own group, and in 2013, Jones started touring with Alison Carney and Maria Freeman under the name "En Vogue to the Max."



LOOKING FORWARD

1.9

2013 Pride parade distance, in kilometres

31

Events taking place outside of the Village

100

Port-o-potties

200

Performances

1,200

Volunteers

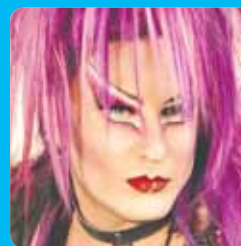
“I was riding in the Proud FM car during the Pride parade when I looked up at Church and Wellesley and saw David Hawe's place, and he was having a party. I looked up and David threw a Timbit from the window three storeys up. I stood up in the car and caught the Timbit in my mouth. Don't mess with a hungry drag queen.”

— MISS CONCEPTION



“I dragged this grizzly piece of punk trade into a Porta-Potty for some privacy at the Alterna-Queer stage. I started to gag on the stench in the cubicle, but he took this as a struggle against his girth, pushing my head down further. I vomited on him, thereby messing up my dress, my wig and my lipstick!”

— JENNA SYDE



“A couple of Prides ago, myself and some folks saw Sandra Bernhard and Cyndi Lauper perform at Massey Hall. When Cyndi came on, she ventured out into the audience to sing, and she came into the row directly in front of me. She asked me to help her up onto the seat so she could sing to us all. She gave me a kiss.”

— FAY SLIFT



Health Canada cracks down on poppers

HEALTH NEWS
ROB SALERNO

A month after Health Canada issued a warning about alkyl nitrate products – commonly known as poppers – the department has cracked down on sales nationwide, effectively pushing the market underground.

Health Canada says that alkyl nitrates are classified as a drug under the Food and Drug Act and cannot be sold for human consumption without a licence. Poppers are inhaled as a narcotic to increase sexual pleasure but are often marketed as leather cleaners or room deodorizers. But the department says it is not aware of any non-recreational use.

“A serious complaint was made to the department in February 2013 concerning a ‘poppers’ product on the Canadian market, which sparked the initiation of a Health Canada health risk assessment,” says Sean Upton, a spokesperson for Health Canada.

The department has already issued recall and stop-sale notices for Rush, Rochefort and Amsterdam Special, as well as other brands containing alkyl nitrates. The agency issued public alerts after halting sales of the products at



Inhaled to enhance sexual pleasure, poppers dilate the coronary arteries and create a sensation of lightheadedness.

the Saints N Sinners store in Calgary and Adult Temptations in Whitehorse.

The department has also issued stop-sale and recall notices to distributors, including Lockerroom Marketing in Delta, BC; SD Variations in Laval, Quebec; and Discount DVD Depot in Mississauga. It is also working with the Canada Border Services Agency to block imports of alkyl nitrates.

Upton says that Health Canada has taken action to block sales of poppers in

Canada in the past when it’s been made aware of the products on the market. He says the department will continue to block sales of alkyl nitrates as it is made aware of new outlets for them.

“If Health Canada identifies or is made aware of poppers being sold by additional retailers or via the internet, Health Canada will take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of Canadians,” he says.

Although poppers are not consid-

ered a narcotic in Canada, and possession of alkyl nitrates is not illegal, they are considered a drug and their sale is regulated by the Food and Drug Act. Unauthorized sales of the drug can be punished with jail terms of up to three years and fines of up to \$5,000.

The agency says its concerns include the potential for overdose or misuse, since it is difficult to control how much is inhaled, and swallowing alkyl nitrates can be fatal. Poppers can also cause low

blood pressure and irregular heartbeat, especially when used with erectile dysfunction drugs or over a long period. Other side effects include liver and kidney damage and potential complications for pregnant women.

The crackdown comes shortly before Pride festivities kick off across Canada. Stores in Toronto’s Church-Wellesley Village are no longer selling the products openly, although at least one is doing so under the table.

A sales associate at the Stag Shop on Church Street says lots of customers have been asking about poppers, which have been off the shelves for two weeks.

Calls to Priape’s and Stag Shop’s head offices were not returned before press time.

Health Canada’s investigation at Saints N Sinners also led the department to issue notices about ExtenZe, an unauthorized male enhancement drug that contains ingredients that require a prescription and can cause medical complications, and Stiff Nights and Stiff 4 Hours, unauthorized male sexual stimulants that contain prescription erectile-dysfunction drugs. All three products have been removed from the store’s shelves. X

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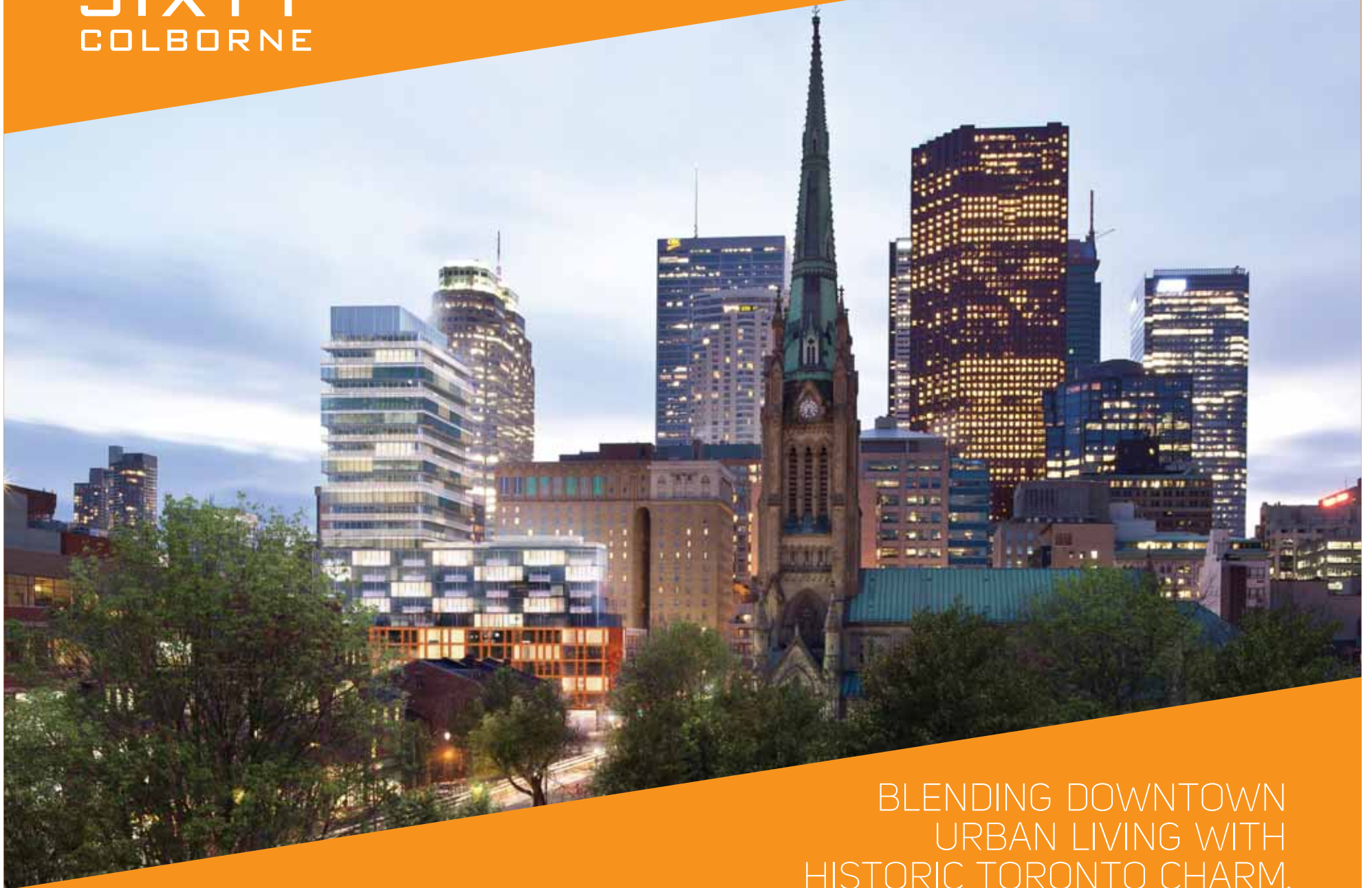
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Fly saved from wrecking ball?

Owners negotiating new nine-year lease

LOCAL NEWS
ANDREA HOUSTON

The future is still up in the air, but for now, Village nightclub Fly and Fire on the East Side restaurant will stay put.

Owner Keir MacRae says the landlord of 8 Gloucester St has put a nine-year lease on the table. MacRae says he and his co-owners haven't yet accepted the deal. There are still some negotiations to do with the property owner, but it's very likely the club and restaurant will not be demolished, as had been reported previously.

"We've known for about 10 years that a condo development is expected on the site," MacRae says. "So, there will be a condo at some point in the future, but the owner doesn't seem to be in a rush to develop a condo, so that gives us some time to stay there."



Fly nightclub, at 8 Gloucester St.

The application for rezoning was approved by city council in May. That means the proposed development of a 29-storey, 211-unit condominium proj-

ect can go forward, Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam says.

Xtra could not reach the owner of the property for comment. X

FEDERAL POLITICS

Liberals, NDP ready for by-election battle in Toronto Centre

Toronto Centre MP Bob Rae announced his surprise resignation from politics at a press conference June 19. Rae has represented Toronto Centre as a Liberal since 2008, when he won a by-election to succeed retiring Liberal MP Bill Graham. Despite huge growth in the NDP vote in 2011, Toronto Centre has been considered one of the few safe Liberal seats remaining in the country, and party activists say they will fight hard to keep it in the fold.

Many Liberals are saying that the nomination battle is George Smitherman's to lose. Smitherman, who is openly gay, represented the riding provincially from 1999 to 2010, when he resigned to launch his failed bid for mayor of Toronto. Smitherman says he is considering running but hasn't made a firm decision yet.

Rumours are also circulating that former *Canada AM* host and out gay man Seamus O'Regan may seek the Liberal nomination. Other names being mentioned as possible candidates include Pascal Dessureault, who is

chair of the 519 Church Street Community Centre and a former member of the board of the Liberal Party's Quebec wing, and political columnist Zach Paikin.

But the federal NDP is not rolling over. While traditionally it has polled poorly in Toronto Centre, in 2011 the party saw its share of the vote in the riding grow to 30 percent from a previous high of 24 percent. Toronto Centre is the only downtown Toronto riding south of Bloor that is not held by the NDP.

"I think this is a riding that's in play," says Vince Cifani, president of the Toronto Centre NDP riding association. "We've been canvassing on a wide range of issues, and the welcome has been monumental. People are excited to vote NDP."

NDP activist Jennifer Hollett, a journalist and former MuchMusic VJ, confirmed to *Xtra* that she is "considering" making a run for the NDP nomination. Another possible candidate is trans activist Susan Gapka, who sits on the board of the NDP's riding association. Gapka, who ran unsuccessfully for city council in 2010, says she "could be talked into it" but denies she is organizing. —Rob Salerno

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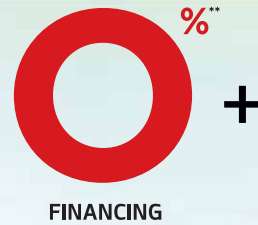


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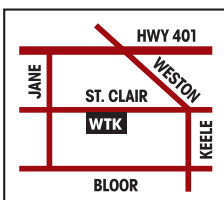
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Exodus to shut down

Ex-gay ministry Exodus International, which for more than 30 years claimed that people could rid themselves of homosexuality through prayer and therapy, is closing its doors, its leader apologizing yet again to gay people for causing “hurt and pain.”

“Exodus is an institution in the conservative Christian world, but we’ve ceased to be a living, breathing organism,” president Alan Chambers said. “For quite some time we’ve been imprisoned in a worldview that’s neither honouring toward our fellow human beings, nor biblical.”

He said the organization’s board of directors voted unanimously to close Exodus International and begin a separate ministry. “This is a new season of ministry, to a new generation,” he added. “Our goals are to reduce fear (reducefear.org) and come alongside churches to become safe, welcoming and mutually transforming communities.”

In a June 19 statement titled “I Am Sorry,” posted on the Exodus website, Chambers, who is married to a woman and admits to having “ongoing same-sex attractions,” says it is “strange to



Exodus International president Alan Chambers.

be someone who has both been hurt by the church’s treatment of the LGBT community, and also to be someone who must apologize for being part of the very system of ignorance that perpetuated that hurt.” — *Natasha Barsotti*

Brazilian protesters oppose bid to revive gay-cure therapy

Following a Brazilian congressional committee’s recent approval of a bill that would remove a 1999 ban on treating homosexuality, queer activists joined ongoing protests against economic conditions and corruption to object to a gay-cure bill in the South American country.

The bill will be subject to debate in other committees before it heads to the full chamber and Senate for a vote.

Queer advocacy groups and their allies issued a call for protesters to bring attention to the measure in nationwide demonstrations focused on transportation, high taxes and the amount of money being spent on World Cup preparations. In São Paulo, Brasilia, Rio and João Pessoa, in northeastern Brazil, protesters answered the call, denouncing the “Cura Gay” bill as misuse of public funds and an attack on the “secular character of the state,” a *Gay Star News* report says.

In João Pessoa, protester Elton Apollo is quoted as saying he is worried about the “increasingly powerful” evangelical lobby in Congress,

representing a “growing homophobic movement which many do not want to speak of.” — *Natasha Barsotti*

Ugandan lesbian’s deportation order stopped at 11th hour

The deportation order of a lesbian asylum seeker in the UK was cancelled June 18, mere hours before she would have boarded a flight back to her native Uganda, *Pink News* reports.

Human rights advocates said Happy Rwehobuganzi, who had been detained for four months, faced homophobic persecution if she returned to the African country. According to the report, Rwehobuganzi made several applications and appeals to the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the High Court that were turned down because there was not enough evidence to prove that she is a lesbian. In appealing on Rwehobuganzi’s behalf, her supporters cited the case of another lesbian asylum seeker, Jackie Nanyonjo, who died in Uganda after she was deported to her country in January.

According to *Pink News*, spokespeople for Movement for Justice by



Lesbian asylum-seeker Happy Rwehobuganzi.

Any Means Necessary said Nanyonjo, who died on March 8, strenuously fought her deportation order, became ill in the process, and did not receive timely medical attention when she was handed over to Ugandan authorities at Entebbe International Airport. The UKBA and the Home Office have denied human rights advocates’ claims that they frequently deport gay asylum seekers who face persecution in their countries of origin, *Pink News* says. — *Natasha Barsotti*

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Reaching out to HIV-positive youth

HIV/AIDS NEWS
JUSTIN LING

A new campaign from the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) is reaching out to a group that hears a lot about prevention but doesn't hear much of what it's like to live with HIV/AIDS.

PozYouth is aimed at the hundreds of young Canadians who have been diagnosed — and those who haven't, yet. The group aims to expand on the increasingly common trope that "it isn't a death sentence anymore," explaining to those who fear they have nothing to look forward to that "it isn't a death sentence for your sex life, either."

ACT has published a book, *My Sex Life*, that addresses the ins and outs of having a healthy sex life while being positive. "It can be hard to find trusted information that affirms our sexual and romantic desires. This resource addresses that challenge," the introduction reads.

From 1985 to 2009, more than 500 Canadian children under the age of 15 and about 1,000 aged 15 to 19 tested positive for HIV. Meanwhile, 12,000 people between 20 and 29 tested positive, which is about a quarter of the total reported cases. (The Public Health Agency of Canada reported that approximately 3,000 did not give their ages.)

For HIV-positive youth, few resources exist to lead them through the bewildering and terrifying situation — and there are certainly none to show them that sex doesn't end after learning that you're positive. This guide, which is also available in French, is supposed to change that.

"The guide tackles topics young people living with HIV are dealing with and thinking about in their lives,"

came from the reality that HIV is still a largely stigmatizing issue in the world, even here in Toronto," Schneider says. He highlights the need for "having a resource that is both culturally appropriate and a trusted, affirming, up-to-date source for information."

The book ends by tackling the thorny question of disclosure, noting recent changes that allow HIV-positive

“The importance for this project came from the reality that HIV is still a largely stigmatizing issue in the world, even here in Toronto.”

MICHAEL SCHNEIDER, ACT'S YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

says Michael Schneider, ACT's youth program coordinator. He hopes that the guide, which was written by positive youth, helps others in "navigating the waters," especially when it comes to sex.

With a look at everything from how to protect a negative partner to having sex with someone with the same HIV status (serosorting), the book is a brass-tacks look that doesn't sugarcoat the language.

"The importance for this project

people to not disclose if their viral loads are low and they use condoms but underlines that the penalties can be stiff if they do not disclose in other circumstances.

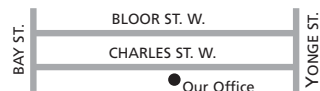
"You may not like what the law says and you may not agree with it. But it's still the law and the consequences can be severe," it reads. "We hope the law evolves in a direction that is less stigmatizing for people living with HIV. We want to be able to protect ourselves and still have hot consensual sex." X

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LGBT HEALTH

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LGBTQ PARENTING NETWORK: VISIT US AT THE FAMILY PRIDE AREA - JUNE 29 & 30

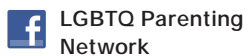
Family Pride is a kid-friendly zone at Pride Week with activities and entertainment geared to kids and families. **Church Street Public School, Saturday and Sunday, June 29 and 30, 10:00am - 5:00pm.**

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To address the growing demand for the Dykes Planning Tykes course, we are offering a once a month Dykes Planning Tykes drop-in session. Information, resources and support for lesbian/bi/queer women and trans people who are considering parenthood. *TRANS WOMEN/TRANS MEN WELCOME* Facilitated by Nila Gupta. **No registration required. Sherbourne Health Centre, July 8, 6:30-8:30pm.**

WANT TO KEEP UP WITH THE PARENTING NETWORK?

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Supporting Our Youth (SOY) seeks to improve the quality of life for LGBT youth (up to 29) through the active involvement of adults working together with youth. Working within an anti-oppression framework, SOY develops initiatives that build skills and capacities, provide mentoring and support, and nurture a sense of identity and belonging.

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An unlikely hero

The life and lies of author Bruce Chatwin

HISTORY BOYS
JEREMY WILLARD

British author Bruce Chatwin (1940–1989) no longer disappoints me the way he did when I first encountered him in Grade 12. Living in a rural, potato-obsessed town north of Toronto, it surprised me when my English teacher responded to my saying “I’m gay” with an enthusiastic “Oh, you should do an essay on Chatwin!” I was on the lookout for gay role models at the time, and as I got to know Chatwin by reading his books and the biography *Bruce Chatwin* by Nicholas Shakespeare, I realized he wasn’t the hero I was hoping for.

Before becoming a travel writer, Chatwin worked at Sotheby’s auction house. He was hired in his late teens to sort objects in the works-of-art department and was made partner by age 26. His success came in part because of his quick wits, but, as I was dismayed to learn, it was probably due more to his good looks and deceitfulness. Part of his job was to spot fakes and forgeries, and he was great at it, but when he got into his “It’s a fake” mood, everything became a fake (whether it was or not). He also regularly engaged in illegal dealings: he once altered a Francis II cabinet from the mid-1500s to make it seem less valuable, bought it (probably under a false name, as was his habit), and then restored it to its original condition and value.

He appeared occasionally in the press, and with his impressive reputation and budding writing skill, he was hired by *The Sunday Times Magazine* in 1972. His interview with 93-year-old architect and designer Eileen Gray in Paris was pivotal for his career. Gray had two maps of Patagonia she’d painted hanging on her wall. They reminded Chatwin of his boyhood fascination with an object in his grandmother’s cabinet: a supposed piece of brontosaurus skin sent home by a relative living in Patagonia. When Chatwin told Gray he’d always wanted to go to Patagonia, she said that at her age she’d probably never get there and famously told him, “Go there for me.”

Patagonia is a region in southern South America shared by Argentina



ERIC WILLIAMS

Chatwin’s success came in part because of his quick wits, but, as I was dismayed to learn, it was probably due more to his good looks and deceitfulness.

and Chile. While the area is now more developed and dotted with posh tourist destinations, in Chatwin’s day it was made up mostly of a few disconnected German, Welsh and Boer settlements. Chatwin had a fascination with nomads and went to Patagonia hoping to meet people with stories about wandering. What came out of the trip was his wildly popular first book, *In Patagonia* (1977). The reputation it earned him as a travel writer would result in extensive world travel (until his early death from AIDS; he was one of the first prominent British men known to have died of the disease).

Chatwin’s book was resented by Patagonians, because when he wheedled

them for their personal stories, he often didn’t bother telling them he was going to use them for a book. He also told half-truths about the people he met, basing his descriptions on quick impressions. I recently read the memoir *With Chatwin* by Susannah Clapp, who was Chatwin’s editor for *In Patagonia*. In it she admits that *In Patagonia* “[dangles] the reader between fact and fiction,” but she defends Chatwin by saying (among other defences she provides) there’s no deception in the book since it doesn’t claim to be totally true.

When I was in Grade 12, Chatwin seemed like a shabby con man. Heroes aren’t supposed to lie and fake their way into positions of importance, right? It didn’t help that Shakespeare’s biography led me to believe Chatwin was a repressed gay man hiding from his sexuality in a heterosexual marriage (Clapp disabused me of this belief, writing that he was bisexual and more or less honest about it with his wife). A decade later, I’m no longer desperately searching for heroes, but even if I were, I suspect I wouldn’t be as let down by Chatwin as I once was. My definition of “hero” no longer includes “perfect, tall-building-bounding person.” I can glean more lessons from the life of a real person like Chatwin, who somehow muddled his way through life and, like me, was all too human. X

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Our government insists it's leading the way in helping persecuted queer people get to Canada, but local activists beg to differ

From Far & Wide

by Kaj Hasselriis

A secluded home in southern Manitoba, surrounded by spruce and ash trees that climb 25 metres into the sky, seems like an unusual place for a queer safe house. But that's where you'll find Hamed, a 28-year-old gay Iranian refugee. He lives there with his kind-of Canadian family, a middle-aged healthcare manager named Horst Backe and his partner, Mark Rabnett.

A few years ago, Backe and Rabnett got together with three men in Winnipeg and formed a Group of 5 or G5, a Citizenship and Immigration Canada category under which five or more Canadians can sponsor a refugee. They pooled together \$15,000 and promised the federal department that they would essentially adopt a gay refugee for up to a year. At first, Backe worried about what he was getting himself into. "It ended up being not that much work at all," he says.

When they got the okay from Immigration, the group went to Winnipeg's James Armstrong Richardson Airport and met Hamed, a friendly, educated, easy-on-the-eyes guy who couldn't speak much English but didn't take long to learn. At first, Hamed lived with another couple in Winnipeg, but after a while, he decided he preferred to be outside the perimeter. "I'm not a city boy," Hamed says in his new language. "I like the woods and the trees. I feel like I have privacy around here. It gives me a good feeling."

It's a much better feeling than Hamed

had in Iran after his boyfriend's family found out about their relationship and threatened to kill Hamed. "The last week in Iran was the worst week of my life," he says, noting that he thought he was going to have a heart attack. Instead, he crossed the border into Turkey, introduced himself at the Canadian embassy in Ankara, and waited 17 long months for his refugee claim to be accepted. After that, he flew to Manitoba. Within a few months, he got a driver's licence so that he can commute into Winnipeg and be a support worker for people with physical and mental disabilities.

Meanwhile, Backe has helped start a fledgling rights organization, called Reaching Out Winnipeg, to put out the word about queer refugees and encourage others to form Groups of 5. Many similar organizations have popped up across Canada in the past few years, including an even newer one in Halifax. Slowly, the federal government has also started getting involved in the issue. Yet the safe arrival to Canada of refugees like Hamed is still barely a trickle.

One of the first Canadian groups to help queer refugees, Rainbow Refugee, was formed in Vancouver 13 years ago. Originally, it had the same intent as Reaching Out Winnipeg — to help sponsor refugee claimants like Hamed who had escaped their home countries but hadn't yet been accepted into Canada. But when the Vancouver group held its first meeting, most of



“The more groups around the country that are willing to take this on, the better.”

**RAINBOW REFUGEE CO-FOUNDER
CHRIS MORRISSEY**

PHOTO BY LEAH BROMLEY

the people in attendance were refugee claimants who had already arrived here on their own, either on tourist or student visas or illegally. The newcomers needed help making claims to stay — in the form of emotional support, legal advice and so on — so that became the focus for Rainbow Refugee.

According to the group's co-founder

Chris Morrissey, they had no choice. "We really have no money," she says, "and we're totally lacking in infrastructure." Still, Morrissey estimates that, so far, Rainbow Refugee has helped about 800 newcomers win the right to stay.

But for every gay refugee who manages, against all odds, to leave a homophobic country and get to Canada (for an especially daring tale, see the accompanying sidebar about Moe Sonko), there are many more who don't have the means to leave dire situations — either because they can't get out of their home countries or because the neighbouring countries where they need to file refugee claims aren't any safer.

For years now, Morrissey has been receiving at least one email plea per week from desperate gay people who want to get out of Africa, the Middle East, Russia or some other anti-gay hotspot. "The problem," she says matter-of-factly, "is A, we're all volunteers and B, we cannot financially afford all these people." Then, two years ago, Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney offered to help. Kenney promised that if persecuted queers could make it safely to another Canadian embassy and if Rainbow Refugee organized groups to sponsor them to come to Canada, the federal government would cover their expenses for the first three months.

Kenney's plan is a \$100,000 pilot project with a huge string attached. Rainbow Refugee isn't allowed to use any of the money for infrastructure or advertising, which means it's been a huge challenge for the volunteer group

Hamed, a 28-year-old refugee from Iran, now lives in small-town Manitoba with his Canadian sponsors.
LISA VARGA



to get the word out to Canadian gays and lesbians and organize people who want to be sponsors while at the same time continuing to do its main job — helping refugees who are already here. In a statement to *Xtra*, Citizenship and Immigration Canada makes no excuses. The partnership with Rainbow Refugee, it says, is an “unprecedented program” that “showcases grassroots support” and “is not intended to provide infrastructure assistance to organizations.”

Over two years into the pilot project, the government says that “applications to sponsor five refugees have been submitted by the Rainbow Refugee Committee,” but Morrissey says that the group has sponsored only three people so far: a lesbian couple from a country Morrissey doesn’t want to disclose, as well as a man from Iraq who’s on his way. “It’s clearly a drop in the bucket,” she says.

According to Toronto immigration lawyer Michael Battista, the drops in Canada’s immigration bucket are becoming fewer and fewer. He says the federal government is dramatically limiting the number of refugees of all kinds that it allows into Canada. Battista is the head of a Toronto organization called Rainbow Railroad that is helping a gay man from Afghanistan who fled for his life to India. The man is trying to be sponsored by a Group of 5 at the Metropolitan Community Church, but the odds are severely stacked against him. This year, Canada plans to accept only 50 refugee claimants from India.

“You can see what we’re up against,” Battista says. “The overseas refugee resettlement program has really been scaled back. For all of Jason Kenney’s expressions of interest in helping refugees, the results have been disappointing.” In its statement to *Xtra*, Citizenship and Immigration Canada says it “aims” to increase resettlements by 20 percent every year. But recently, the Canadian Council for Refugees charged that the country resettled 26 percent *fewer* refugees in 2012 than 2011, the second lowest number in more than 30 years.

With so few refugees getting approval from Canadian embassies, Battista’s group focuses mostly on making contact with persecuted gay people in their home countries, then raising enough money (about \$2,000 each) to help them escape. Since forming in 2006, Rainbow Railroad has assisted about 50 queer refugees, mostly from Iran and Jamaica, where the group has reliable on-the-ground contacts.

Battista’s group is also stepping up its fundraising. This past spring, Rain-

Moe’s journey

Want to hear an incredible story of queer resilience? Moe Sonko escaped from West Africa and came to Canada via the United States with a fake passport — and he started the journey as a teenager. Now that Sonko is safely in Vancouver (for now), the young refugee claimant is shockingly modest about it. “You gotta do what you gotta do,” he shrugs.

Sonko was born 27 years ago in The Gambia. From a young age, Sonko’s family viewed him as weird — and not in a good way. Essentially, the teen was flaming, considered “unnatural,” and his dad sent him to a voodoo doctor in a faraway village to be cured. “I didn’t have a choice,” Sonko says. “My dad thought I was mentally ill.” Sonko had his gay lisp practically beaten out of him.

It could have been worse. The Gambian president once said he would “cut off the head” of any gays he found in the country. Officially, homosexuality is illegal there and punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

When Sonko turned 18, he scored a three-month tourist visa to the United States. He boarded the plane with no intention of ever returning.

Sonko’s life in America started in New York, but eventually, he made his way west to Seattle, where he worked illegally as a nursing assistant. There, he got the idea to seek

refugee status, but one lawyer after another told him the same thing: you won’t make it here. Go to Canada.

So, last fall that’s exactly what Sonko did. With a friend’s American passport in hand, he boarded the train to Vancouver and hoped that customs officials wouldn’t be able to distinguish one black man’s face from another. “It was the longest three hours of my life,” he says of the train trip. “I was terrified. I couldn’t even talk.”

When Sonko arrived in Vancouver, his only contacts were a couple of volunteers from Rainbow Refugee who had given him advice while he was still in the States. Four days later, Sonko applied for refugee status. Seven months later, he’s still waiting for a hearing date. For now, the African who loves Britney Spears and bow ties is living on welfare — \$670 per month — with four roommates. He’s about to get a work permit, though.

“I’m surviving and I’m happy,” he says. Except for one thing. The uncertainty of his situation (will he be allowed to stay?) is causing him to lose sleep every night. “I’m tired of waiting and not knowing what’s happening,” he says. “I worry about not having a positive hearing.” If Sonko doesn’t, he could be right back where he started, in the country where he swore he would never return. — *Kaj Hasselriis*

bow Railroad held a cocktail party that attracted 100 supporters and brought in \$15,000. “Our goal is to hire a staff person, at least part-time, to respond to requests,” Battista says.

Even though there is less than a year to go in the federal government’s \$100,000 pilot project, Citizenship and Immigration Canada tells *Xtra* it’s “premature to speculate on the future of the program.” Morrissey hopes the funding will continue, even though the vast majority of the money remains untapped and Rainbow Refugee hasn’t yet succeeded (with its limited resources) in convincing more people to sponsor queer refugees. “The more groups around the country that are willing to take this on, the better,” she says. “We can’t do it all here.” There’s no cross-country umbrella organization focused

on helping gay refugees, and, so far at least, Egale hasn’t taken on the issue. Queer community centres aren’t making it a priority, either. “They’re mostly focused on the needs of people living in those cities,” Morrissey points out.

In Manitoba, Backe convinced Winnipeg’s Rainbow Resource Centre to tackle the issue of refugee resettlement and start accepting charitable donations on behalf of queer refugees. He also helped organize a second Group of 5 that is hoping to sponsor another gay refugee from Iran. But three months after the new group sent their application to the Department of Immigration, they still haven’t had a response.

Backe and his partner were gay rights activists in the 1980s, when AIDS first struck. But no issue has motivated them since then like the systemic challenges faced by persecuted queer people in

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other countries. “Our immigration system is designed to keep people out,” Backe says. “We keep claiming we have the most generous refugee policy in the world, but it’s not true.”

In its statement to *Xtra*, Citizenship and Immigration Canada claims that it’s increasing its resettlement target for Turkey so that more Iranians like Hamed can escape persecution in their home country. “Our government has made it clear that we will accept any and all gay Iranian refugees that the United Nations Human Rights Commission refers to us for resettlement,” the statement says. The government also claims that, in spite of those recent figures by the Canadian Council for Refugees, “we have one of the most fair and generous immigration and asylum systems in the world, accepting one in 10 resettled refugees — more than almost any other country.”

Backe and Rabnett’s generosity toward Hamed continues. It’s been more than a year since the Iranian arrived in Manitoba, plus he’s now financially independent, so the couple is no longer obliged to look after him. Yet the relationship continues. “I have a bunch of very good people around me,” Hamed says. “I can’t imagine leaving Horst and Mark and being alone here without the groups of people I’ve met.”

Backe wishes that more queer people in Canada would volunteer



“You can see what we’re up against. The overseas refugee resettlement program has really been scaled back.”

**IMMIGRATION LAWYER
MICHAEL BATTISTA**

PHOTO BY ADAM COISH

to sponsor refugees like Hamed. “We live in one of the most privileged countries in the world,” he says, tearing up. “When we learn about people in intolerable situations, we have a responsibility. And if we don’t step up as individuals, we can’t expect anyone else to, either.” X

How to help

There are many ways you can help a gay person from a homophobic country seek refuge in Canada. One way is to get together with a few other people and sponsor them, like Horst Backe and his partner did. To ask Backe for advice on how they did it, email reachingoutwinnipeg@gmail.com. Rainbow Refugee’s Chris Morrissey is also a fountain of information and advice on this topic, especially in regard to how you can take advantage of funds from the federal government. You can reach her by emailing sponsorship@rainbowrefugee.ca.

Traditionally, churches have also been very involved in helping to sponsor refugees. The United Church and the Metropolitan

Community Church have both worked with queer organizations to become sponsorship agreement holders with Immigration Canada and to sponsor gay people from other countries.

If you’d like to assist persecuted gay people in their home countries and help them get to Canada without direct government support, contact Rainbow Railroad at info@rainbowrailroad.ca.

Refugee claimants need lots of support when they arrive in Canada. All the organizations mentioned above, and a few others across Canada (many of them affiliated with queer community centres), need your help in assisting newcomers. Seek them out and lend a hand.

On the frontlines in Africa

In a place as enormous and diverse as sub-Saharan Africa, it’s difficult to make any general claims about the status of gay rights. But despite the hard work of local activists across the continent, homosexuality remains a largely uncomfortable topic of discussion in even the most stable African democracies — particularly in the media.

“It’s as though gay rights are the last taboo,” says Rachel Pulfer, executive director of Journalists for Human Rights, or JHR for short. “It is a very touchy subject matter.”

Toronto-based JHR works on a wide range of issues, but primarily it has provided mentorship and resources for already existing media outlets in several African countries for more than 10 years. North American trainers exchange skills with African journalists and together produce stories about the human rights issues relevant to the local context, from witchcraft allegations in Ghana to female genital mutilation in Sierra Leone.

However, two former JHR trainers received international attention in March 2012 when they publicly grilled Nobel Peace Prize recipient and Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf about the possibility of decriminalizing homosexuality. “Voluntary sodomy” continues to be illegal in Liberia and punishable with up to one year in prison, but Sirleaf insisted she would



Ghanaian radio journalist and former JHR Ghana country director Ato Kwamena Dadzie presents a workshop in Ghana.

veto any legislation that discussed homosexuality. Former British prime minister Tony Blair sat quietly beside Sirleaf during the interview.

Bonnie Allen, who was one of the reporters pressing both leaders on their positions on the issue, realizes that even asking this question was bold given the context. “One of the tricky parts of reporting on LGBT issues in Liberia is that it can actually raise the issue and create a backlash that might not have existed otherwise,” Allen says, explaining that homophobic violence increased

in Liberia after Hillary Clinton declared to the United Nations that “gay rights are human rights.”

“One gay Liberian man told me he wished the media would leave it alone so he could live quietly in peace,” Allen says.

Indeed, tackling gay rights head-on is not always a sensible tactic for JHR trainers.

“In Uganda, for instance, I don’t know if it would be advisable to go after legislation of that kind with prominent politicians in that way,” Pulfer says, giving consideration to the seemingly unending threat of the notorious “kill the gays” legislation there. “It would be dangerous.”

Pulfer and other JHR trainers seem to agree that working with media organizations to ground their reporting in a broader human rights mandate creates the kind of environment where African journalists can tackle gay rights more explicitly. Allen remembers doing a workshop with students about the universality of human rights, including gay rights. Despite a little discomfort, the conversation was successful because it was among Liberians. “It was so much more effective than me standing in front



A typical newspaper headline in Ghana.

frica

by Jonathan Valelly

Toronto-based Journalists for Human Rights works with African media to shine a light on local issues



Above, former governor general Michaëlle Jean visits a JHR project in Ghana. Above right, Ghanaian media has a long way to go on gay rights. Left, JHR trainer Robin McGeough presents a workshop at the African University College of Communications in Accra.

should cover this in a way that respects the rights of those involved.”

Allen says that appealing to journalistic standards, such as those outlined in the Africa-wide Windhoek Declaration in 1992, is often also an effective way to align gay rights with human rights. “One argument that works well in Liberia is freedom of expression, because Liberians take that very seriously,” she says.

Robin McGeough, a JHR trainer who worked in Tamale, Ghana, also found that gay rights were best discussed in the context of a broader journalistic ethic. “The first time I brought it up, we were talking about bias and how to avoid it. I just put the topic on the table and let the students pick it apart,” McGeough says. “It was really well received.”



“One of the tricky parts of reporting on LGBT issues in Liberia is that it can create a backlash that might not have existed otherwise.”

REPORTER BONNIE ALLEN

McGeough later designed a workshop on bias and presentations of queer issues in the media for other JHR trainers to use. In the workshop, racist North American headlines from the 1950s and 1960s are compared to homophobic headlines from today. Despite his willingness to introduce questions about gay rights in his work, McGeough, like many trainers, made the personal decision not to disclose his own homosexuality. “I didn’t want my personal life to affect the work I could do with the project,” he says.

Danny Glenwright, *Xtra’s* managing editor, was a JHR trainer in Namibia and Sierra Leone from 2006 to 2008. He made the same decision to play straight. “I didn’t push it at all; I went back into the closet,” he says. “I didn’t incorporate too much about LGBT issues into my training, and when I did, the reception was not very good. It was always laughed at. I left that to the other trainers who weren’t gay, as they weren’t putting themselves at risk by pushing it.”

Gay visibility in the African media can be dangerous for anybody, gay or straight. Defending gay rights automatically subjects the speaker to scrutiny.

Ato Kwamena Dadzie, a Ghanaian radio journalist who now lives in Canada, was the country director for JHR in Ghana from 2005 until 2008. After some hesitation, he became one of few straight voices standing up for gay people in the media. “I had to speak out very forcefully. I got a lot of very negative reactions to it, but I was fortunate that it created debates and got new perspectives on these issues,” he says.

However, despite dialogue on the radio and a relatively lively gay culture in Ghana, Kwamena Dadzie says that fear of being exposed prevents the conversation from opening up through other media platforms. “No gay person wants to come on television to defend gay rights; it would be a very stupid thing to do,” he says. “It’s a safety issue. It’s about employment, about social standing and acceptance. But at least on radio and in the newsroom, it’s now a safe issue to deal with.”

Of course, in relatively peaceful democracies such as Ghana or Namibia, local journalists and activists have more room to work on these issues than in countries like Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of Congo, where basic training and resources are far more crucial than social issues.

“As a gay person who lived in Sierra Leone, I can say there are so many other things to worry about,” Glenwright says.

Part of JHR’s mission, therefore, has to be adapting the kind of support it can build to each specific community. Unlike many non-profits, missionary projects or “voluntourism” companies, JHR seeks to build the capacity for long-term structural changes in each community through extended collaboration with local organizations. For this reason, JHR stays in a community for about five years, and trainers work for a six- or eight-month minimum. This kind of extended and specific project means accommodating different cultures and paces of progress.

“It’s a collaborative effort, and I think that grants an element of sustainability,” Kwamena Dadzie says. “JHR is very nimble. They are a force for change. Sometimes those changes come in leaps and bounds, and sometimes they come in tiny crawls, but you just need to be patient.”

of a classroom and preaching, because they can dismiss everything I say simply because I’m a ‘white woman from Canada’ and ‘it’s different there,’” Allen says.

The tension between a universal understanding of human rights and a necessary respect for culturally specific values seems to underlie the difficulty

surrounding this conversation. JHR is constantly negotiating that line. “Be respectful of local norms up to a point,” Pulfer says. “But if a story is being covered in such a way that gay rights, or any human rights, are being abrogated, then it is the responsibility of the trainer to hold the line on that and to say, ‘We

For more information on Journalists for Human Rights, go to jhr.ca.

Gay pride despite setbacks
in the former Soviet Union

Risky. Business

by Kaj Hasselriis

Go ahead: take part in this year's Toronto Pride parade, but there's probably no way you'll feel as frightened, or as proud, as Olena Semenova did at the Pride march last month in Ukraine.

Semenova, a 35-year-old lesbian who makes sports equipment for a living, helped organize the first Pride march ever to be held in her hometown of Kiev. To do it, she stared into the face of danger. Last year, the first attempt at a march couldn't be stopped. They moved the march a few kilometres away, to a 500-metre alley. There, they were joined by representatives from Kiev's sister city, Munich, including its deputy mayor, as well as Amnesty International. "They saw with their own eyes how endangered we were," Semenova says of her group's supporters. "They were really brave to be with us." Like last year, about 100 people showed up for the march, as well as more than 1,000 protesters shouting, "You will be punished by God" and "Gay shame, leave Ukraine." But this time, the police came, too.

"Until the last moment, we were wondering if the police would really protect us," Semenova says. They did, and everyone finished the short march safely. "It was an unbelievable feeling," Semenova says, "a feeling of great victory, because it was the very first gay protest march in Ukrainian history. It was an important and exciting moment, and everyone in the crowd felt it."

"Until the last moment, we were wondering if the police would really protect us," Semenova says. They did, and everyone finished the short march safely. "It was an unbelievable feeling," Semenova says, "a feeling of great victory, because it was the very first gay protest march in Ukrainian history. It was an important and exciting moment, and everyone in the crowd felt it."



For queer activists in Ukraine and the other 14 countries that used to be part of the former Soviet Union, this spring has been a time of setbacks and success. About 50 people in Chisinau, Moldova, safely pulled off their first Pride march, too, but in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi (just over the border from Sochi, Russia, where next year's Winter Olympics are taking place), a huge tragedy was barely averted. There, two dozen human rights demonstrators, mostly women, were attacked on May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia, when they held up pro-gay signs in a central square. Angry protesters led by priests from the Georgian Orthodox Church spat in their faces and hurled bottles at them.

Even after police hustled the Georgian human rights demonstrators into a yellow minivan, the mob didn't stop. In fact, it surged in strength until it numbered in the thousands. This is how the scene is described by demonstrator Mariam Gagoshashvili on the website of Identoba (Identity), a Georgian human rights NGO: "The counter-protesters attacked us from outside, broke windows, tried to drag us out, threw stones, bit us, grabbed our hair and bodies, threw bottles, spit at us and swore. The crowd gathered

against us was more than ready to tear us apart and kill us."

Gagoshashvili adds, "Needless to say, everyone is shocked and psychologically devastated." Since that day, Identoba has counted dozens of other violent incidents against queer people in Georgia.

In Russia, the recent setbacks to the gay-rights cause are a little better known. There, Parliament passed a law against so-called gay propaganda by an absurdly lopsided vote of 434 to zero (with one lonely abstention). Brave demonstrators in Moscow staged a kiss-in to protest the law's passage. Meanwhile, other former Soviet states, including those known as the Stans (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and others), are still years away from having any public gay-rights presence. Homosexuality is legal in most of the region, but it's far from being socially accepted.

What is it about Russia and its surrounding countries that makes the region so homophobic, and what can be done about it? When asked the first part of the question, Identoba leader Irakli Vacharadze laughs at how long the list is: "The Soviet totalitarian past when homosexuals were criminalized...



“Russia doesn't need alliances, so it's very difficult to influence the human rights situation there.”

**BORIS BALANETKII,
ILGA-EUROPE**

Above left, Kiev's 2013 Pride march had a heavy police presence. Above right, anti-gay protesters attacked human rights demonstrators on May 17 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

cultural isolation during Soviet times ... invisibility of LGBT communities ... homophobic politicians ...” The list goes on.

Semenova adds two other key causes of homophobia. First, she says, governments in the region use gays as scapegoats, blaming them for bad economic times or, at the very least, trying to distract voters by debating ineffectual laws against gay propaganda (Ukraine's Russian-style legislation is still to be voted on). Secondly, people in her home and neighbouring countries “don't understand what human rights are about, what they include or who they're for. They don't understand what we want.”

But the main influence of homophobia in the region is the usual one — religion. Boris Balanetkii, who monitors the former Soviet states for ILGA-Europe (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) says the powerful Orthodox Church is somewhat different in every country but essentially follows the same stream. “They promote homophobia to reach their goals, and they ally themselves with far-right politicians and neo-Nazi organizations,” says Balanetkii, who is originally from Moldova but now works for ILGA-Europe in Brussels. “In order to achieve its goals, the church is ready to make alliances with organizations they're supposed to condemn.”

Vacharadze adds that, in the Soviet era, the KGB controlled the church, and today its ties to government agencies remain strong. “Priests get rich and influential,” Vacharadze says,



“and invent gay internal enemies.”

Balanetskii sees hope in the fact that European funding agencies are successfully pressuring many of the countries he monitors to respect gay rights. Moldova, for instance, has rejected almost all the bills against gay propaganda introduced there. But, Balanetskii adds, “Ukraine is torn in two directions,” between Russia and Europe, and Russia is so powerful on its own that it can’t be influenced by anyone else. “They don’t need alliances,” Balanetskii says, “so it’s very difficult to influence the human rights situation there.” That could soon change, though, if Russia continues to face criticism from human rights organizations ahead of next year’s Winter Olympics.

In the meantime, Vacharadze says gay people in his country and others continue to meet in a few gay-friendly cafés and party at private homes, all the while plotting the next show of public gay pride. It’s not easy, though. “We’re all concerned about our safety,” Semenova says, especially because the region’s few leading gay-rights activists have their names and faces prominently featured in social media. “We’re really, really careful about where we go,” she says.

But Semenova is shockingly nonchalant about the risks. “It’s dangerous, but it’s life,” she says. And, as proven by the incredible feeling she had after this year’s Pride march in Kiev, the personal rewards can be great. “I love being an activist,” she says. “I’m motivated by a human-rights hunger.” X

➤ MORE AT XTRA.CA

Resolute warrior

by Andrea Houston

Xtra talks with Ugandan activist Frank Mugisha

For the past two years, Ugandan gay activists have been sounding an international alarm for solidarity as they fight an odious piece of legislation that, if passed, could be a death sentence for gay people.

The bill — dubbed the “kill the gays bill” — proposes longer jail terms for homosexual acts than already exist, including a life sentence in certain circumstances and the death penalty in others (although some reports suggest that recommendation has been removed). Gay Ugandans live under a constant threat of violence, with a hostile government and a fervently homophobic culture.

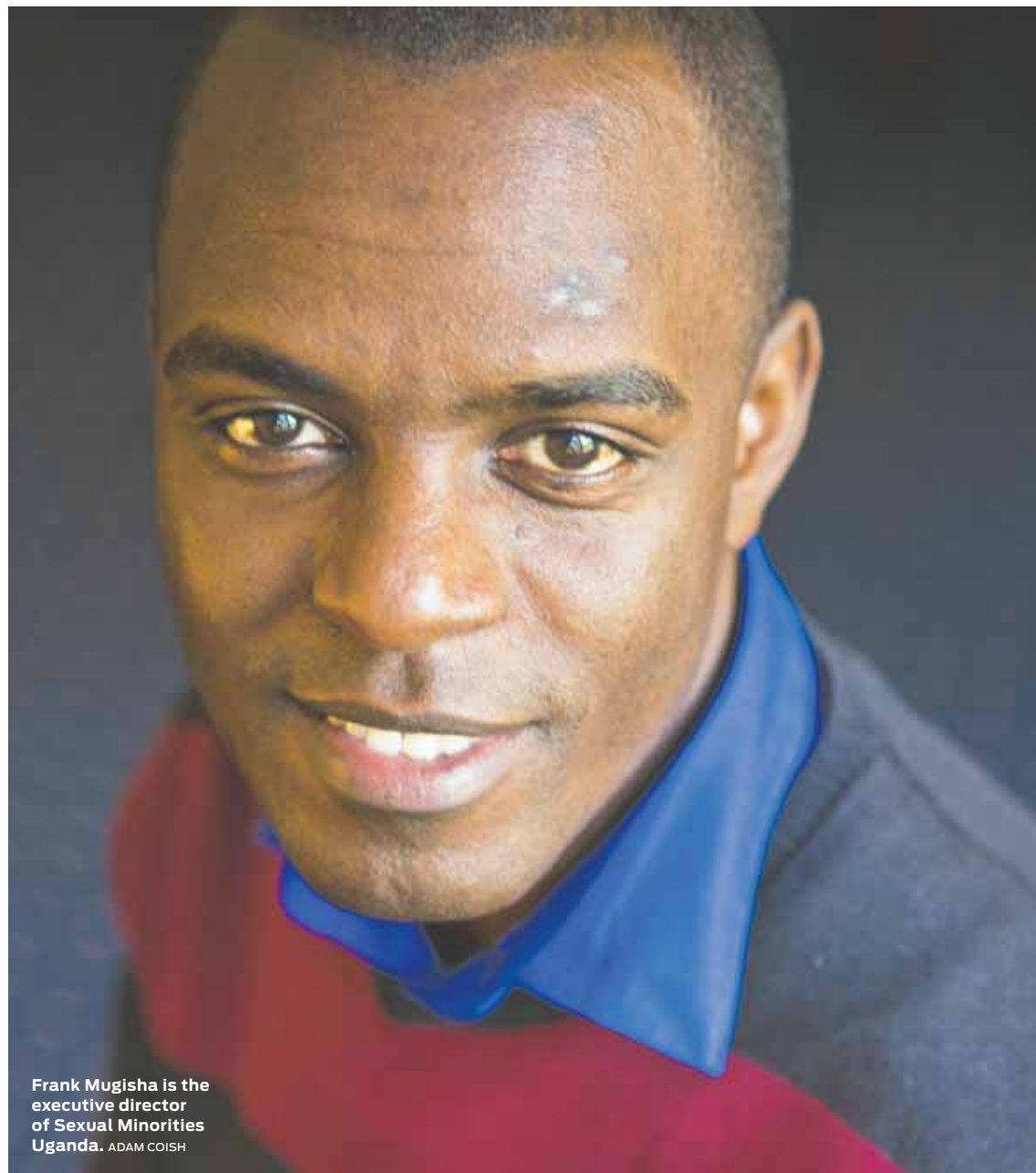
Frank Mugisha is the executive director of Sexual Minorities Uganda and a leader in the fight against the anti-homosexuality bill. Mugisha visited Toronto and Ottawa recently as the keynote speaker for the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network’s fifth Symposium on HIV, Law and Human Rights.

XTRA: What is the status of the anti-homosexuality bill right now?

FRANK MUGISHA: The bill is still in the committee of Parliament. Recently, the speaker has expressed interest to bring up this legislation for debate on the floor of Parliament, but she hasn’t been able to do it. But the bill sits on the order paper of Parliament, which means it could come up anytime, any day.

What is it like to live in this aggressively homophobic climate?

The uncertainty is very challenging. It’s not just about the bill. This is about my life and the lives of other Ugandan activists. We are also uncertain about what could happen to you when you leave your house in the morning to go to work or do anything you want to do. If you want to go to the beach, something could happen to you. You could be attacked by people and beaten.



Frank Mugisha is the executive director of Sexual Minorities Uganda. ADAM COISH

How has international attention on Uganda’s homophobia affected life for activists and ordinary gay people?

In every movement, we need allies. We need friends. And the international pressure has created a lot of that. Also, our politicians, our government, have been concerned about the international community focusing a lot on LGBT issues. It creates a fear in them

that this could be the movement. This could be the struggle that brings the world together. It also legitimizes our work. Before, officials said, “There are no homosexuals in Uganda.”

What has been the influence of Christian missionaries?

Ugandans believe so much in Christianity. About 85 percent of the population is Christian. It surrounds everything:

our politics, our economy, everything. So when a Christian comes to Uganda and says, “Don’t accept homosexuality,” Ugandans immediately listen to the Christian. I will say that religious propaganda in my country has increased the homophobia, although we had levels of homophobia before. X

👉 For a video interview with Frank Mugisha, go to xtra.ca.

None on Record documents stories
of queer persecution in Africa

Bearing witness

by Elaisa Stokes

Bisi Alimi was forced to flee Nigeria in 2007 after he came out on national television. At the time, Nigeria's president was claiming there were no gay people in the country and Alimi felt a moral obligation to correct the record. The message was not well received. Soon, Alimi faced verbal and physical harassment, culminating in a threat on his life. He left Nigeria for the United Kingdom to seek asylum, with the knowledge that he would probably never return to his homeland.

Alimi's story is one of many included in None on Record, a digital media

project that aims to document the experience of gay and lesbian Africans. Selly Thiam founded the group in 2006. At the time, there was scant media dialogue on queer issues in the African community, both on the continent and in the diaspora. Today the project is making a name for itself with a series of short documentaries that highlight the gay asylum experience.

"Stories affirm who you are," Thiam says. "We keep hearing there are no gay people in Africa. Actually no, we exist. Here are our first-person narratives to prove it."

Internationally, the situation for gay-identified persons is still dire. In 76 countries it remains illegal to engage

in same-sex conduct. In Saudi Arabia, Mauritania, Sudan, Iran and Yemen, homosexuality is punishable by death. On the African continent, a series of high-profile laws criminalizing homosexuality received much media attention last year, most notably in Uganda. While countries like South Africa have taken progressive steps to ensure the health and safety of their gay citizens, in many African nations, gay-identified people live in a constant state of fear.

Thiam says the idea for None on Record came to her after the murder of FannyAnn Eddy, a prominent Sierra Leonean lesbian activist. Eddy was one of few speaking publicly about the plight of the gay community on the continent.

She paid for it with her life. Thiam was working as a teacher in Chicago when she saw the newspaper headline announcing Eddy's death. She was stunned. In the photo that accompanied the piece, Thiam saw fragments of herself.

"I am a West African lesbian living in diaspora," Thiam says. "The lack of visibility and silence on LGBT issues in West Africa was having its own impact on me, but having it reflected back to me in this way was very traumatizing."

The United Nations High Committee on Refugees estimates that at least 42 states have granted asylum to refugees on the basis of sexuality. But hard data on the number of asylum seekers is hard to find. Some nations grant asylum without a mandate to do so for the queer community, while others do not track their reasons for granting asylum. Internationally, LGBT asylum law is a recent addition to the dialogue on the rights of refugees. The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as someone who cannot remain in their home country "owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." But it was only in 2008 that a guidance note was issued recommending that persecution on the basis of gender or sexual identity should be included in the understanding of the law.

In 2010, the United Nations finally released its first report on the state of human rights for gay and lesbian people. The report noted that "vio-

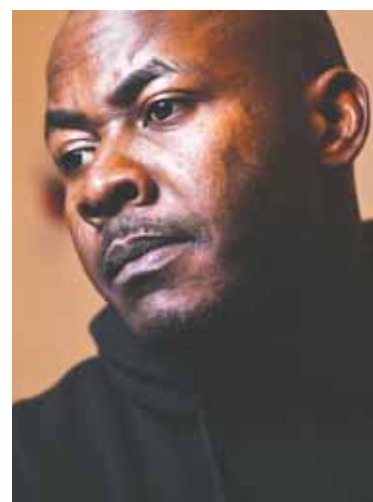


Bisi Alimi is a Nigerian activist who was granted asylum in the UK after coming out on Nigerian television.



“We keep hearing there are no gay people in Africa. Actually no, we exist. Here are our first-person narratives to prove it.”

**NONE ON RECORD
FOUNDER SELLY THIAM
(ABOVE)**



Above, Skye Tenivembo, a Zimbabwean refugee living in London. Tenivembo is holding a photo of her grandmother. Left, Uche Nnabuife, a gay Nigerian asylum-seeker living in London.

lence against LGBT persons tends to be especially vicious compared to other bias-motivated crimes” and cited a particularly high degree of cruelty and brutality administered during gay-motivated hate-crimes.

Thiam tried hard to shake the murder of FannyAnn Eddy, but she was haunted. Instead, she flew to conferences around the United States, desperate to find people who could help her understand her own place within the community. Soon, she found herself driving north to Canada with an audio recorder in hand. She had no idea what the end result of the interview would be, only that she wanted to learn more and that recording it was probably a good idea.

“This didn’t start as an oral history project,” she says. “It started as a question: what are the lived experiences of people who are LGBT or identify as queer in an African context.”

As it turned out, many of the people

who could share these experiences lived in Canada. Thiam attributes this to more lenient immigration laws and a relative tolerance for the gay community. At the time, it was still illegal to immigrate to the United States as an HIV-positive person, and gay asylum cases were unheard of (Thiam notes that this has shifted under the Obama administration).

When she returned, an NPR producer friend asked to take a listen. The first interview was packaged and aired on national radio. For Thiam, this experience was a game changer. “I was really shocked that people were interested in hearing the story. And then, it gave me this idea, that there’s probably more people out there who want to share their story. There are people who want to listen to it. And I should be recording it and sharing it.”

Thiam started collecting stories. At first it was 10 a year, but then people started contacting her, asking her to record their stories. An audio archive soon blossomed.

Like so much of the None on Record project, the realization of video came almost by accident. Thiam was invited to present the audio archive at a conference in Spain. She was determined to use the time to document the experience of gay and lesbian Africans in Europe. She envisioned a grand tour of the continent. But after a bit of research, she noticed two trends: many of the stories were located in the United Kingdom, and many of these stories were those of asylum seekers.

This is how Thiam met Bisi Alimi, the asylum seeker from Nigeria.

While his story of coming out on national television in Nigeria had made Alimi famous, many admired him most for taking control of his own narrative and creating a public dialogue. Since being granted asylum in the United Kingdom, Alimi has continued to give regular interviews with the media and continued to work to raise the profile of issues facing the gay community in both Africa and the United Kingdom. After a

mutual friend connected Thiam and Alimi, he agreed to participate in the Seeking Asylum video series.

Alimi envisioned another straightforward interview. He would recount his coming-out experience, perhaps answer a few questions on his asylum case. He wasn’t nervous. But Thiam pushed him to go to places he hadn’t been in a long time. “I’m very used to the camera,” Alimi says. “But when the questions started coming in, I got to the point that I had to remember so many things that I had to lock away in my past because they were too painful. And I broke down.”

Thiam stopped the camera and together they cried.

They eventually finished the interview. The documentary was well received: it became one of the flagship profiles for None on Record, it was a finalist in the PBS film festival and it aired on AfroPop. For Alimi, the experience was transformative. “That was the first time I had ever done anything like that since I came out. So it was pretty hard for me. But it was also very lib-

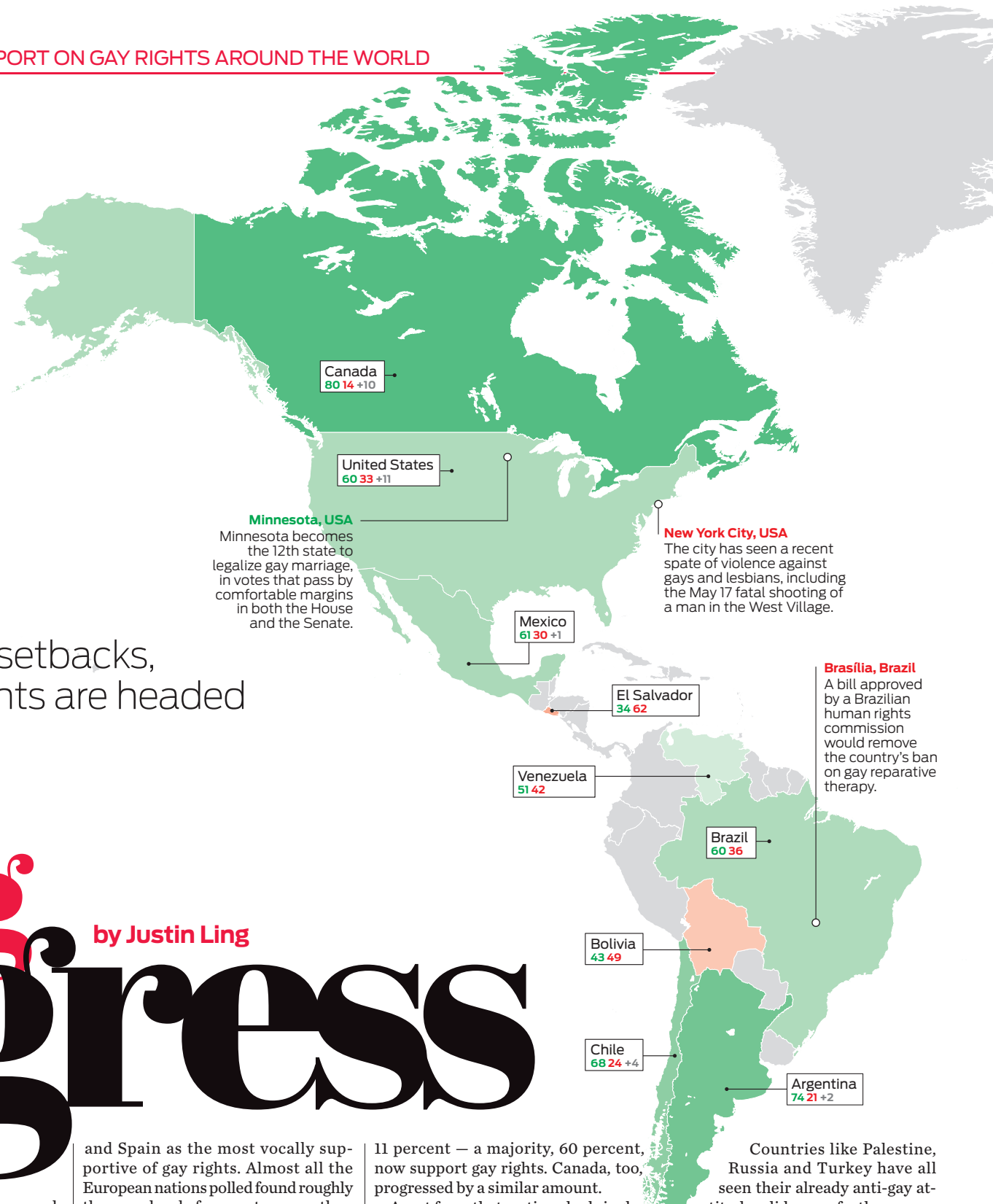
erating. I felt like my story mattered.”

Because Alimi came out on national television, proving his sexuality to the British immigration system was relatively easy. But for most asylum seekers, cases are harder to prove. Many live deeply closeted lives in their home countries in an attempt to stem the homophobia that threatens them. A report released in October 2012 by the United Nations High Committee on Refugees found that gay and lesbian asylum seekers are more likely to face sexual and gender-related violence during detention than other asylum seekers.

None on Record provides a vehicle to share these narratives. It places gay asylum-seeking on the agenda while simultaneously providing a voice and a platform for those with lived experiences. This is Thiam’s ultimate goal for None on Record: to make people feel like their stories matter.

“There have been some hard, terrible stories. But there have also been stories of triumph. People changing their families’ minds, people finding their space in the world. People finding a way to live their lives as they choose. So it’s one of those projects that helps me to understand the complexity of the human experience.” **X**

For more information about None on Record, visit noneonrecord.com.



Although this year saw many setbacks, global attitudes about gay rights are headed in the right direction

Mapping progress

by Justin Ling

Plus ça change.

For every two steps forward for gay rights worldwide, there appears to be one step back. For every new Pride parade like the one in Riga, Latvia, there is a brutal attack in an otherwise safe space, such as Brooklyn. For every gay marriage bill that passes in a place like Iowa, a regressive anti-gay “propaganda” law is introduced in Russia. Every time a transgender rights bill is passed, such as Toby’s Act here in Ontario, a bill like the draconian “kill the gays” bill

in Uganda inches forward.

That seems to be the reality of gay rights worldwide, according to a new Pew Research poll. While the past year has marked landmark steps forward for gay rights, things aren’t moving as fast as they seem.

The poll reflects that, in much of the West, gay rights are calcifying. In Canada, not even a decade after a heated debate over the passing of gay marriage, fully 80 percent of the country answered yes when asked, “Should homosexuality be accepted?” Only 14 percent said no.

That puts us behind only Germany

and Spain as the most vocally supportive of gay rights. Almost all the European nations polled found roughly the same level of support — more than 75 percent — with the exceptions of Greece, Poland and Russia.

But almost all the great leaps forward for acceptance were in the West. Those countries that, according to a similar poll done in 2007, were already supportive simply became more supportive.

South Korea made the largest jump, with a 21-percent uptick, but a majority of the country is still unsupportive. The United States, a country that still has anti-gay laws on its books, surged

11 percent — a majority, 60 percent, now support gay rights. Canada, too, progressed by a similar amount.

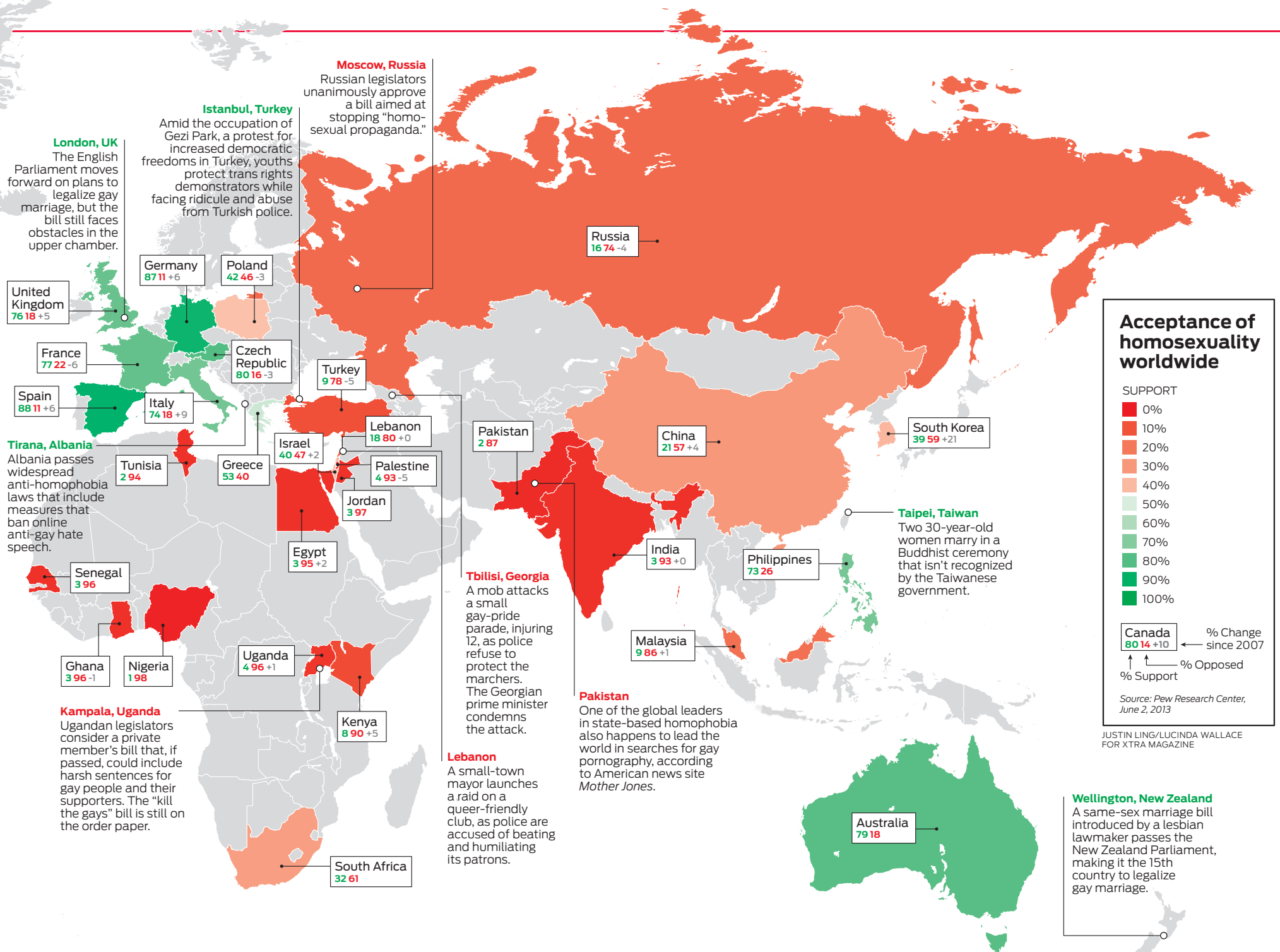
Apart from that, nations had single-digit shifts. While some countries, like Kenya, showed marginally positive trends, support shifted in favour of gay rights by only about three percent over six years. Around the same number, in many other countries, became less supportive.

France, where a recently passed law legalizing gay marriage has sparked massive protests, took the largest step back, going from the most supportive country, at 83 percent, in 2007 to a still-admirable 77 percent.

Countries like Palestine, Russia and Turkey have all seen their already anti-gay attitudes slide even further.

The outlook isn’t improving: 13 of the 39 countries polled hold single-digit support for acceptance. Just 17 have majority acceptance. And this is only on the primordial question of whether the basic reality of gays and lesbians should be accepted — never mind the further questions of human rights protections, freedom of expression, marriage and adoption.

One promising region is Latin America. Only Bolivia and El Salvador fell below 50 percent support, with countries



like Argentina and Chile surpassing more than two-thirds support.

The world map paints a discouraging picture for a campaign that appears stalled at the starting gates.

Canada and Great Britain have made gay rights a hallmark at meetings of the Commonwealth of Nations, yet their efforts appear to be making little headway. Most of the Commonwealth countries polled — Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Malaysia — held predominantly anti-gay views. Only Australia, England and Canada are even marginally supportive of gay rights.

The UN, too, has pushed an LGBT rights declaration, encouraging its

member states to adopt a set of principles outlining their support for gay rights. Roughly half the represented countries have signed on, almost entirely in the Americas and Europe, while more than 50 states — mostly in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia — have signed a contrarian declaration underlining their opposition to gay rights.

The statistics come amidst several months of high-profile anti-gay attacks, from the United States to Russia. While many countries have moved forward on laws to improve the legal status of gay people, others, like Uganda, have pushed draconian measures that seek

to further criminalize, even put to death, homosexuals.

Some of the attacks have happened at home, with Canadian police reporting more than 100 violent hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation each year, a statistic that has climbed in recent years.

In its annual state-based homophobia report, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) last year noted that progress is happening in fits and starts. Renato Sabbadini, co-secretary general of the ILGA, called the global trend "positive" but added the caveat that "the pace of change is not as quick as many of

us in the LGBT movement would like."

Sabbadini says it's not surprising that countries with long histories of supporting gay rights are now moving toward marriage equality and anti-discrimination laws: "2012 and 2013 will indeed be remembered as the years in which several countries adopted same-sex marriage laws or laws recognizing identity rights to transgender people."

But he says that there are problem zones, like Russia, which he accuses of bending to the will of the Orthodox Church. The broader impact, Sabbadini says, could be to influence other nearby states like Ukraine to imitate the state-based homophobia.

In general, Sabbadini is optimistic. "We believe this to be only a temporary setback," he says. "As more and more LGBTI people become visible and vocal, very often at a high price for LGBTI activists and human rights defenders in many countries, the issue of equality is gradually transforming itself in the eyes of the population from an abstract issue to a very concrete one."

"When enough people in the population see things in concrete rather than abstract terms, then the tipping point has been passed and the progress towards more equality becomes unstoppable," he says. X

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- JONATHAN HOLLAND, VARIETY



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SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

IN THEATRES JULY 5

Spanking Colby Keller

Colby Keller is quite possibly one of the hottest, smartest, cutest and most interesting pornstars on the planet. Not only does he know how to have great sex on camera, but he has a blog (bigshoe-diaries.blogspot.com) that follows his #selfie adventures around the US and a YouTube channel called In Bed with Colby Keller. Colby lover and gay blogger Sissydude spoke to him.

XTRA
PRIDE

SISSYDUDE: Hey, Colby, how are you?

COLBY KELLER: Wunderbar! Et toi, Sissydude?

I'm awesome. So, you'll be in Toronto for Fit Primpin'? Very exciting!

I'm seriously pumped. Moisturizing my spankin' hand as we type.

Have you been to Toronto before?

Never! And I used to summer every year at Beach O' Pines in Grand Bend. I have no excuse.

Well, you will "see penis." Toronto's CN Tower is super phallic. And it's Pride Week. So you know there will be real peen everywhere.

Hopefully much of it inside my body at some point.



Colby Keller is caught in public and needs a spanking. GABE AYALA

I know that you're a major foodie. Toronto has tons of amazing restaurants. Be prepared!

I'll remember to bring my jockstrap and my suspenders.

What will you be doing at Fit Primpin'?

Managing a small mom-and-pop spanking booth (minus the mom and double the pop, if you think your booty can handle it).

I hope we have a chance to meet while you're in town.

Your butt. My hand. Let's do it.

I'd be honoured! Thanks so much, Colby.

Up close and personal

It's an intimate thing, staring closely at someone's face. Each pore and contour uniquely informed by both lineage and life experience; a landscape of both personal and familial history. It's a shame we don't get to make such a close study of our fellow humans very often — unless you're hankering for a face full of mace from strangers on the TTC.

"This is why I love portrait photography," says photo artist Lynne Fox. "I really enjoy the permission to stare. You're allowed to look at them, take it all in, without anyone being bothered."

Fox is one of 10 queer artists who will be exhibiting photographic portraits in the upcoming 10x10 exhibition. Now in its third year, 10x10 features 100 portraits that celebrate queer people in the arts, taken by members of our community.



A portrait of Mikela Jay. LYNNE FOX

Paul Dymond is another of the photographers whose work will be featured. For his 10 subjects, Dymond

employed a rather offbeat method to avoid the studied poses we all spend hours practising in front of the mirror.

"I photographed them all underwater," Dymond says. "It was about eight inches of bath water, and I told them they had to smile and keep their eyes open. No matter how confident someone is, their composure can change completely when underwater. You get some very revealing images."

And while portrait photography may not be as dangerous as, say, a *National Geographic* safari shoot, there are still some risks involved. "I had a real concern that my lighting equipment was going to fall off the shelf and electrocute the person in the bathtub," Dymond says, laughing. "But maybe that added to the reality in the photos." — *Serafin LaRiviere*

10x10 runs until Sun, July 14 at the Gladstone Hotel, second floor, 1214 Queen St W. 10x10photography-project.com

PHOTOGRAPHING FIRE ISLAND

Fire Island, a sandy strip off the south shore of Long Island, New York, holds a certain power in the collective gay consciousness.

Toronto photographer Patrick Lighthouse couldn't wait to explore it, physically and artistically.

"It's like a gay mecca," Lighthouse says. "You hear about these places and you don't really know what to expect. I had a certain idea of what it would be. Quaint little cottages, a bit tired, a bit '70s and '80s, kind of older gays, and it was completely opposite from that. There was everything, which is what I really liked about it. It was a mix of everybody, but it was probably one of the chicest places I've ever been."

Lighthouse's *Fire Island* project was born when interior designer Tommy Smythe asked him to take some photos of the gay resort for *House & Home* magazine. Later, he decided to put together an exhibit incorporating some of the unused images. Reminiscent of vacation photography, each piece is stylized as an oversized Polaroid image.

The work seeks to capture the feeling of the place, not just the landscape or the people. "There was a double personality to the place. As soon as the lights went down, it was a whole other . . . you know, all kinds of things went on," Lighthouse says. "It was very civilized, chic: daytime pool party, dinner parties, and then at night it was no-holds-barred, full party, all sorts of things going on in the dark on the beach." — *Michael Lyons*

Fire Island opens Thurs, July 4, 7–9pm, and runs until Sat, July 20 at Akasha Art Projects, 511 Church St. patricklighthouse.me, akashaart.com



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From New York to LA to Pride

Patsy Gallant promises a Toronto paradise of disco fun

ON STAGE
PHIL VILLENEUVE

Montreal in the 1970s was a hotbed for disco. Big hair, platform shoes, flashing dancefloors and funky beats blasted out of Quebec's largest city for nearly a decade. Patsy Gallant, whose hits include "From New York to LA" and "Sugar Daddy," was a leader in the city's bell-bottomed movement. She is performing at this year's Disco Disco party, Pride Sunday at The 519's Green Space, and promises a special trip to disco paradise.

XTRA
PRIDE

XTRA: You had great success in Quebec at a time when disco was booming in the province. Did you feel like you were part of a movement? What was the vibe like back then in Montreal?

PATSY GALLANT: The vibe in Montreal never changes. It's always had that *joie de vivre*, a party place where people like to have fun, enjoy life, drink all night, dance their asses off and celebrate! Trends change, but good ones don't need to.

Disco is making a great comeback these days, thanks to a lot of French groups and, especially, Daft Punk. What do you think of the genre coming back to life?

Well you know, disco never died! Those sweet melodies, funky beats and empowering lyrics bring joy to every dancefloor, and basically this is what disco is about! So the ball has kept rolling — from Donna Summer to Madonna, Diana Ross to Kylie Minogue or Lady Gaga — the disco spirit has always stayed alive and vibrant. Daft Punk's latest album is amazing, by the way, don't you think?

Any regrets from the glory days of disco? Are you still getting up on tables and dancing?

The glory days of disco are not over; they are going on around us. And yes,



Patsy Gallant is one of the featured performers at The 519's Green Space. ÉMILIE RÉGNIER

I still jump on tables — but for singing, not dancing! When I lived in Paris, I was working with Luc Plamondon, and we often used to go to the same restaurant for dinner. Every night, after some champagne and wine, I used to jump on the table and start singing. The waiters got used to this and started cleaning the table as soon as a plate was finished, to minimize potential damages. I still do this now.

One of your biggest hits, "From New York to LA," is a classic. But really, you mostly went from Montreal to France! How was your time in France?

Paris is a big part of my life. I was in the best show that Paris had seen for ages, *Starmania*. It was huge, a production Paris hadn't seen since maybe [Bal-

lets Russes founder Serge] Diaghilev! I lived Paris intensely, had my loved ones and my partners in crime. The night life is pure debauchery; I spent so many memorable nights at Queen with Karl Lagerfeld and Gilles Dufour. I didn't merely dance on tables there, but used to grab on to those crazy nets they had attached to the ceiling — that held those gorgeous boys dancing inside of them.

The style during that time is so iconic, and you are such a show lady. Do you remember some of your favourite outfits and hair styles? You've had some huge hair!

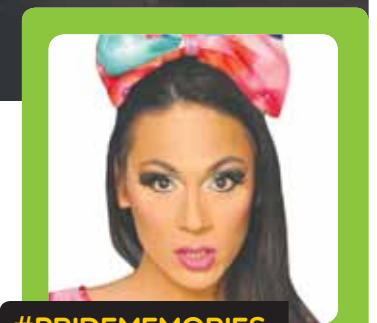
You have to have the slick dress and you have to show lots of leg — pant suits, lots

of sequins. I had so many wild outfits, but maybe one of my favourites are those pants that Rafaele, my designer for my TV shows, made for me. They looked like pants, and technically they were, I guess, but they had those cuts on the side running all the way up to the waist. Daring, and I loved it!

DISCO DISCO
Greenspace,
519 Church St.
1pm-Midnight
No cover
greenspaceto.org

Final question: what can the party people expect at your Toronto Pride show?

I will be onstage with dancers in a special set prepared and remixed by my DJ, Mario Leonard. I am planning a special trip, not from New York to LA, but from Toronto to the Paradise of Disco Fun. No worries — all you have to do is dance! X



#PRIDEMEMORIES

“I had the pleasure of meeting a couple of Next Door Studios boys after my big Sunday gig, and they ended up inviting me to their hotel to celebrate. Needless to say, I had an extra wonderful finish to my Pride that year!”

— CASSANDRA MOORE

Loving Julie Klausner

Acclaimed comedian tosses Toronto's Bitch Salad

ON STAGE
JOHNNIE WALKER

The inimitable Julie Klausner — author, performer and all-around hilarious lady best known for her podcast *How Was Your Week* — is heading to Toronto as headliner at the Queer Pride edition of Andrew Johnston's Bitch Salad comedy show at Buddies in Bad Times. We were fortunate enough to chat with Klausner about her Toronto debut, as well as *Liberace*, young adult novels and bears.

XTRA: Julie Klausner! You're coming to Toronto. How did this happen?

JULIE KLAUSNER: Andrew Johnston approached me and said, "Come to Toronto and we'll pay you," and that was just about enough for me.

Have you ever been to Toronto before?

I was there when I was a little girl because I remember going to that science museum and touching that thing that makes your hair stand on end.

Is it fair to say you've got a big gay following?

I think it's super fair. Gay people have loved me since before I loved me, and I

can't even express the despair I'd feel if I didn't have as many gay people in my life. I don't think that straight people are on to me yet. But hopefully, they'll take your guys' cue.

Fans of *How Was Your Week* will be familiar with your live episodes. Is the Bitch Salad gig going to be along those lines, or something else entirely?

To be completely honest, I have no idea what I'm doing. I know that I'm going to be there, physically. Maybe I'll just drink too much and embarrass myself.

You've recently published a young adult e-book called *Art Girls Are Easy*. Did you read YA growing up?

I loved *The Baby-Sitters Club* when I was in grade school. And then when I was in junior high, I read a lot of Paula Danzinger books. I was a little bit obnoxious about wanting to read adult material in high school; I wasn't really dipping my toes into the YA waters. But it's a really different market now. It's dirtier than the stuff from when I was growing up, and that was appealing to me when my agent was trying to get me to write one.



Julie Klausner headlines at Bitch Salad, part of Buddies' Queer Pride.
MINDY TUCKER

You've talked a lot about the *Liberace* biopic *Behind the Candelabra* on your podcast.

I thought it was a beautiful movie.

Would *Liberace* have liked the movie?

No, I don't think he would have. I loved

it. But there might be something to a really good biography not being lovable to its subject. I mean, Robert Crumb hated the movie *Crumb*, and that's an incredible movie.

Do you have a message for the gays of Canada?

#PRIDEMEMORIES



“Somebody sprayed me with a water gun, so I swung around with my metal-tipped purse and missed. I could have killed him!”

— MICHELLE DUBARRY

Yes. I love you all, except for those of you who are disingenuous or pretentious. And even those I kind of like, because there's something very attractive about artifice and putting on airs. So basically, I love you all. And, do you guys have bears as much as we do?

Bears are huge right now.

It seems like Canada invented bears. I have a lot of bear friends, and I imagine that Canada very much sets the standard.

BITCH SALAD
Fri, June 28, 7pm
Buddies in Bad Times
12 Alexander St
\$25

Well, it can be a very lumberjackylook.

Yes, no question. And if you did invent bears, thank you.

Canada has no problem claiming that.

Well, thank you on behalf of everybody. X

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PRISM MAIN EVENT
SATURDAY JUNE 29.13

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TONY MORAN
SHAWN BIKER
SUZANNE PALMER

BIG LOVE

REVIVAL

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MARCO OVANDO

She likes it loud

Carmen Electra goes back to the beach for Pride 2013

MUSIC
MIKE YERXA

Carmen Electra's latest pop-culture adventure is in music. She's got a blazing new single, a hot video and an army of gays behind her. She's also performing twice at this year's Pride celebrations. This girl is on fire.

XTRA: Tell us what you've been up to lately.

CARMEN ELECTRA: I've been in the studio a lot lately, recording and working with amazing people like Mams Taylor and Orlando Puerta at Citrusonic. I just got back from the Vienna Life Ball, which was so exciting and a completely life-changing experience for me. The

crowds and positivity were amazing, and it's definitely the biggest party I've ever been to. Of course, movies and TV are still going on, and now I'm gearing up for Toronto Pride. We've got two performances in your city and heavy-duty rehearsals starting. I've got my girls — dancers — ready to go. I can't wait to go out there and perform and have a great time. I'm going to show the love.

You've conquered so many aspects of media; what drew you to music at this point in your career?

Music has always been my first love, whether it be exploring music through dance and studying classical ballet from age five or doing musicals at my performing-arts high school in Cincin-

nati. I love being in front of the camera, but I love being in front of an audience more. I love feeling the energy immediately. You kind of know right away if you're killing it or not. When I do my stuff onstage, I give my heart and soul, and it's what I love to do.

What was it like working with director Marco Ovando on the "I Like It Loud" video?

I love Marco so much, you don't even know. He brought so much through his talent and connections with club kids. He has the best energy, too. I trust him and will let him shoot me doing anything. I can't wait to get back to NYC and have a kiki with him.

You seem to have a really strong relationship with the queer community. Why do you think this is?

I think for me it's been early exposure to the arts and going to my high school.

There, there was no judgment in terms of race or gender, and it was a very free environment. We were taught to *be* and express ourselves. From a young age it opened my mind to see the beauty in people.

What was it like being a guest judge on *RuPaul's Drag Race*?

So much fun! I am a huge fan of RuPaul since back, back, back in the day. It was fun and campy and entertaining. And I will say that RuPaul may be one of the kindest people I have ever met. He was so friendly and so generous — and looks so goddamned good. He puts every girl to shame. When he walked out on the stage, it was crazy. The body, the outfit, the hair, the makeup!

Have you ever seen a drag version of Carmen Electra?

I have, and it's the biggest compliment in the world. I remember the first time was actually around the time when I was working with Prince. I would go to drag shows with friends, and someone happened to perform my song "Go Go Dancer." My music was underground, and people didn't know who I was, so that was a moment when I felt like I had made it.



#PRIDEMEMORIES

“When Zelda's was open we would serve in drag, but when it closed, that's when the shade was out and the fun was in, honey. Messy trannies partying till 5, 6, 7am, then stumbling out into the street for our whore tour down Church Street.”

— SCARLETT BOBO

It's Pride in our lovely city of Toronto — can you describe your perfect Pride experience?

I love taking it all in: the love, the parties, the celebration. I can't wait to see what everyone is wearing. It's so inspiring and fun. I look forward to a really fabulous time and celebrating life! X

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Blockorama turns 15

Pride's longest-running stage boasts an all-star lineup

ON STAGE
JONATHAN VALELLY

"As soon as the sun started to go down, all of a sudden you just started to see people show up," remembers Junior Harrison, one of the founders of Toronto Pride's Blockorama stage, which celebrates the black and Caribbean queer community. "And the people that showed up were so thankful."

"You could tell there was a need," says Nik Red. Red was a DJ at that first iteration of the all-ages community space in 1999 and is now one of its organizers.

Fifteen years later, Blockorama is Pride's largest and longest-running stage, featuring a wide range of entertainment, including DJs, burlesque, drag performers, ballroom houses, singers, rappers and more. But when it began as a humble stage at the corner of the Wellesley parking lot, Pride was a very different experience for people of colour.

"It started because there wasn't a lot of programming at Pride for racialized queer and trans people, and in particular black people," explains Syrus Marcus Ware, who is one of the primary organizers with Blackness Yes!, the collective that hosts Blockorama every year.

"What we wanted to see was a real, defined black queer presence in Pride," adds Angela Robertson, who, like Harrison, was one of the group of friends who founded the collective.

Blocko, as it is known, began as an idea of Trinidadian-Canadian organizer Jamea Zuberi, who imagined a Carnival-style float in the Pride parade. Zuberi would eventually see her vision made reality in the form of her Pelau Masquerade troupe, but at the time it became clear that logistically, something like a block party would be more feasible.

Since those early days, the space has grown, drawing thousands of people every year. But despite its success, it hasn't always been easy to pull it off. "Our little tug of war with Pride never ended," says



Some of the Blockorama crew, from left: Steve Foster, Craig Dominic, Syrus Marcus Ware, Nik Red and Ashai.

Harrison, who was the stage liaison with Toronto Pride until stepping down in 2005. "I found that I had to constantly be reminding people who we are."

Harrison remembers nightmarish Pride days, where Pride volunteers didn't recognize the name Blockorama or when promised resources wouldn't arrive. One year, the police interrupted the festivities, apparently unaware that the event was sponsored by Pride.

Tensions between Pride and Blockorama came to a head in 2010 when, after the Pride committee attempted to move the stage for the third time in four years, frustrated community members hosted an open consultation to create a resolution to the instability. Although many were dissatisfied with the results of that forum, Blocko is now firmly positioned at its original, and

expanded, Wellesley Stage area. And it is impossible to ignore.

"We're incredibly proud to congratulate Blackness Yes! on their contribution," says Kevin Beaulieu, current executive director of Pride. "These folks have worked very hard to make sure Pride Toronto remains grounded in the community it serves."

"It's still relevant, it's still necessary," says writer and burlesque artist Dainty Smith, who has danced on Blocko's stage in the past and will co-host this year's event with performer Travoyintheflesh. "It's about being able to see yourself. It's about more than survival — it's about thriving."

Robertson agrees that political struggle must sometimes work itself out through a kind of positive energy. "Our lives often get constructed around why

our identity . . . is fraught with struggle and challenge," she says. "So this space was created as a celebration. By virtue of that, it was also a political act."

This year's Blockorama attendees will certainly find reasons to celebrate. Organizers will honour the stage's founders throughout the day, and the entertainment will include sets by local heavyweight DJs Blackcat, Craig Dominic and Unruly Twin; singers such as Steve Foster; Toronto ballroom pioneers House of Monroe; and the return of drag superstar Michelle Ross. Out of towners include members of New York's legendary House of Xtravaganza and the Blocko return of lesbian reggae musician Diana King.

But the real kicker is this year's headlining act, 1990s R&B superstars En Vogue. The foursome broke into the scene in the early '90s with their funky singles "My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)" and "Free Your Mind" and will grace the Blocko stage this year for the first time. Besides their hits, the group will also perform a Motown set.

Whether or not the space is explicitly political, the yearly block party makes a crucial and infectious fun space amidst the enormity of the Pride festivities. "It becomes the space of reunion for activists, for our racialized LGBTQ family members, our allies and friends," Robertson says, adding with a laugh, "and quite frankly, it has the best music." X

BLOCKORAMA 15
TD Wellesley Stage
Sun, June 30
11:30am-11pm

blockorama

fifteen

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Four for Fringe

Xtra's picks from this year's theatre fest

ON STAGE MICHAEL LYONS

After *Pride* ends, a whole other kind of queer party takes over the city. Every year the Toronto Fringe Festival becomes bigger, with increasingly ambitious shows, which means even more queer content for the throngs of theatregoers. Michael Lyons checks out some of this year's queer Fringe choices — from small towns to Weimar-era Berlin, from public nudity to time-travelling homos, and so much more.

Love Is a Poverty You Can Sell 2: Kisses for a Pfennig

The audience will be transported back to 1920s Berlin in *Love Is a Poverty You Can Sell 2: Kisses for a Pfennig*, the sequel to the smash hit 2010 Fringe production of the same name. Creator Justin Haigh promises an evening of quintessential cabaret, with some twists: "1920s Berlin was a strange and vibrant city full of grit and joy, and we want audiences to feel as though they are getting a taste of that when they walk through the doors."

He says the show will be MCed by two characters who pop out between numbers to chat with the audience. "They will also tell a dark folk tale about a young butcher's apprentice who becomes the mayor of his small town," he says. "It's a story that stands on its own two feet, but politically savvy Torontonians may find it resonates on more than one level."

Haigh wants the cast to play with the sexual liberation and queerness of Weimar-era Berlin. "Having said that, our director has come up with some spicy choreography for a few of the numbers, and some of the costumes are pretty eye-catching, too."

Love Is a Poverty You Can Sell 2: Kisses for a Pfennig
Bite, 423 College St

Fort Isabel

Small-town Canada comes to the big-city stage in *Fort Isabel*. When two children discover a dead body, their town descends into panic and their lives are changed forever. "*Fort Isabel* deals with the aftermath of a hate crime in a small town," says playwright Sarah Miller-Garvin. "I started writing the



show after finding out that hate crimes against queer people are actually on the rise, even though we hear so much less about it in the media.

"The children find a male body in women's clothing, although the identity of the person is unknown," director Evan Vipond says. "Jen and Clinton both struggle to understand the motivation behind this hate crime and are deeply affected by it. The play explores growing up in rural Ontario and the homophobia, and transphobia, that remain prevalent today."

Fort Isabel tackles the dark subject matter with fearless realism. "The show explores the ways in which events from our childhood shape our understanding of ourselves and our identities as adults," Vipond says. "In a way, we can never really escape our childhood or our past because it affects our perception of the world and who we are."

Fort Isabel
Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace,
16 Ryerson Ave

continued next page ▶



Top, the cast of *Love Is a Poverty You Can Sell 2*. Above, Jennifer Krukowski and Victor Pokinko in *Fort Isabel*.

Six more must-see plays

God Is a Scottish Drag Queen
The pope, power suits, pop stars: Mike Delamont's character skewers everything, then serves it with a side of haggis.
Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St

Making Love with Espresso
A multi-character show serving up dark, sexy roasts. A series of bizarre online dates take a young man on a worldwide adventure.
Robert Gill Theatre, 214 College St

MSM [men seeking men]
A sexy dance-theatre piece inspired by transcripts of online conversations between men who seek men.
Randolph Theatre, 736 Bathurst St

Spoon
Gender theory and cuddling. Andrew and Charles embrace and deconstruct roles and preconceptions in their homo relationship.
Glad Day Bookshop, 598A Yonge St

Stealing Sam
Sam and Jimmy were planning to face "gay middle age" together, but when Sam dies, it's up to his friend to plan their final picnic together, complete with stolen cremated remains.
Helen Gardiner Phelan Playhouse,
79 St George St

Liza Live!
That's Liza with a "Z." A heartwarming, toe-tapping tribute to one of the most dynamic female stars of our age.
Annex Theatre, 730 Bathurst St

► continued from previous page

The Dance Without Pants

A good artist bares all, and The Nakedme Show's *The Dance Without Pants* takes this idea to a whole new level. Nakedme is Sam Hatfield and Fiona Skelton, an Australian performance-art duo that stages guerrilla-style dances in the buff.

"Through our art we hope to reveal there is nothing inherently immoral or shameful in naked bodies," Hatfield says. "Perhaps even more importantly, we are tackling issues of fear and self-

limitation. It is quite scary for us to take off our clothes and perform in public."

The two have driven across the Sydney Harbour Bridge on a scooter in nothing but helmets and boots; they've danced naked on the suspended railway train in Wuppertal, Germany; they shook their junk in front of Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and Abbey Road; and in their recent performances at the NXNE Festival and now, at Toronto Fringe, they'll be polling patrons about a potential naked endurance dance on the last days of the festival.

"*The Dance Without Pants* is about using political systems to push social

norms and reconfigure moral boundaries," Hatfield says. "It is about our right to use our bodies as a form of expression, and it is also about the equality of all bodies."

"In addition to this, our art is fun, flamboyant, colourful and, indeed, a little risqué... so for this reason alone it is worth checking out!"

The Dance Without Pants
Factory Theatre, 125 Bathurst St

The Effects of Time Travel on Neurotic Homos

If you could go back in time and talk to your awkward, confused, adolescent self, would you offer comfort? Impart some critical wisdom? "The inspiration came from the 'It Gets Better' campaign," says actor Neil Cameron of his play *The Effects of Time Travel on Neurotic Homos*. "It made me stop and think... and realize that my 15-year-old self would be disgusted with the behaviour of my 35-year-old self."

Through the magic of time travel, an idealistic 15-year-old finds himself in a conversation with himself, successful and cleaning-product-obsessed, at 25, and then — unemployed, slutty and addicted to his iPhone — at 35.



Neurotic time travellers Neil Cameron, Nadene Schuster and Keith McCallum.
AIR/LETH AODHFIN

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The brand-new comedy by Fringe favourite Cameron focuses on how our identities evolve as we get older. "Given that the show tracks

an individual over three different ages, there is a lot in it for people to relate to," Cameron says, "from sexual awakening at 15 to some of the depravity that occurs

later in life. The overlying theme is about owning the choices you make/don't make and defining what it means to be queer in your own terms."

The Effects of Time Travel on Neurotic Homos
George Ignatieff Theatre,
15 Devonshire Place



Sam Hatfield and Fiona Skelton dance without their pants.

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Tons of fun

Italian duo
Hard Ton brings
dance music
back to life at
HotNuts Pride

PLAYLIST KEVIN RITCHIE

Like so many successful pairings, Hard Ton traces its origins back to a gay chat room.

The Italian dance duo of Bologna-based producer Mauro (aka DJ Wawashi) and Venice-based singer Max first connected in 2008 on Bearwww, an online community for gay bears.

On the surface, a musical collaboration may have seemed unlikely at first.

A heavy-metal singer for the past 15 years, Max is the current front man for progressive metal bands Great Master and Helreidh. Mauro, meanwhile, is a teenaged electronic-music obsessive turned DJ who has spent the past eight years promoting a monthly gay night called PopUP at Bologna's Cassero LGBT Center, the headquarters of Italy's biggest queer association.

"Apart from our passion for music, we immediately realized that we were coming from two different planets," Max writes in an email to *Xtra*.

As they began trading musical references, the pair discovered a shared love of pop music and glammed-up camp, as well as a deep appreciation for seminal disco and Hi-NRG figures Giorgio Moroder, Patrick Cowley and Sylvester. A year after their initial online encounter, they connected offline at a party and decided to start making music.

Hard Ton is billed as the "biggest disco queen of the 21st century." Mauro and Max use an array of analog and vintage gear to make dance music that harkens back to the rubbery synths, dirty basslines and spacey grooves of mid-1980s house music. Over the past four years they have released a steady stream of 12-inch singles and EPs on various European dance imprints.

The slick minimalism of Hard Ton's studio sound combined with Max's fanciful falsetto and maximalist stage

persona take that disco queen to the nth degree. If he isn't rinsing his body hair in glitter, he's covering it up in a graphic Leigh Bowery-inspired body suit or spray tanning to recreate Grace Jones's pre-Photoshop arabesque from the *Island Life* LP sleeve — as he did for the cover of Hard Ton's 2010 single "Earthquake."

In the music video for the recent single "Food of Love," he cavorts semi-nude in a giant cupcake, wrapped in a pink boa, with a marshmallow Mohawk and a pair of eyebrows so big they look like they could start flapping and fly off his face.

"Our dear friend Gaia, a performer and talented makeup artist, always tries something different on my face," he says. "Her work is very unconventional and surrealist. We always joke that she doesn't really apply makeup on my face but just glues things on it."

Body image is clearly not a hang-up. Whereas Max's heavy metal image is stoically macho, Hard Ton is a chance to not only femme out, but let it all hang out. Asked why it was important to put his weight at the

forefront of the duo's name and image, his response is practical: "Can you see an alternative?"

"It fits with the concept we've tried to develop," Mauro elaborates. "A mix between pop culture, exhibitionism, art, self-confidence, unconventional beauty and a pretty big love for camp."

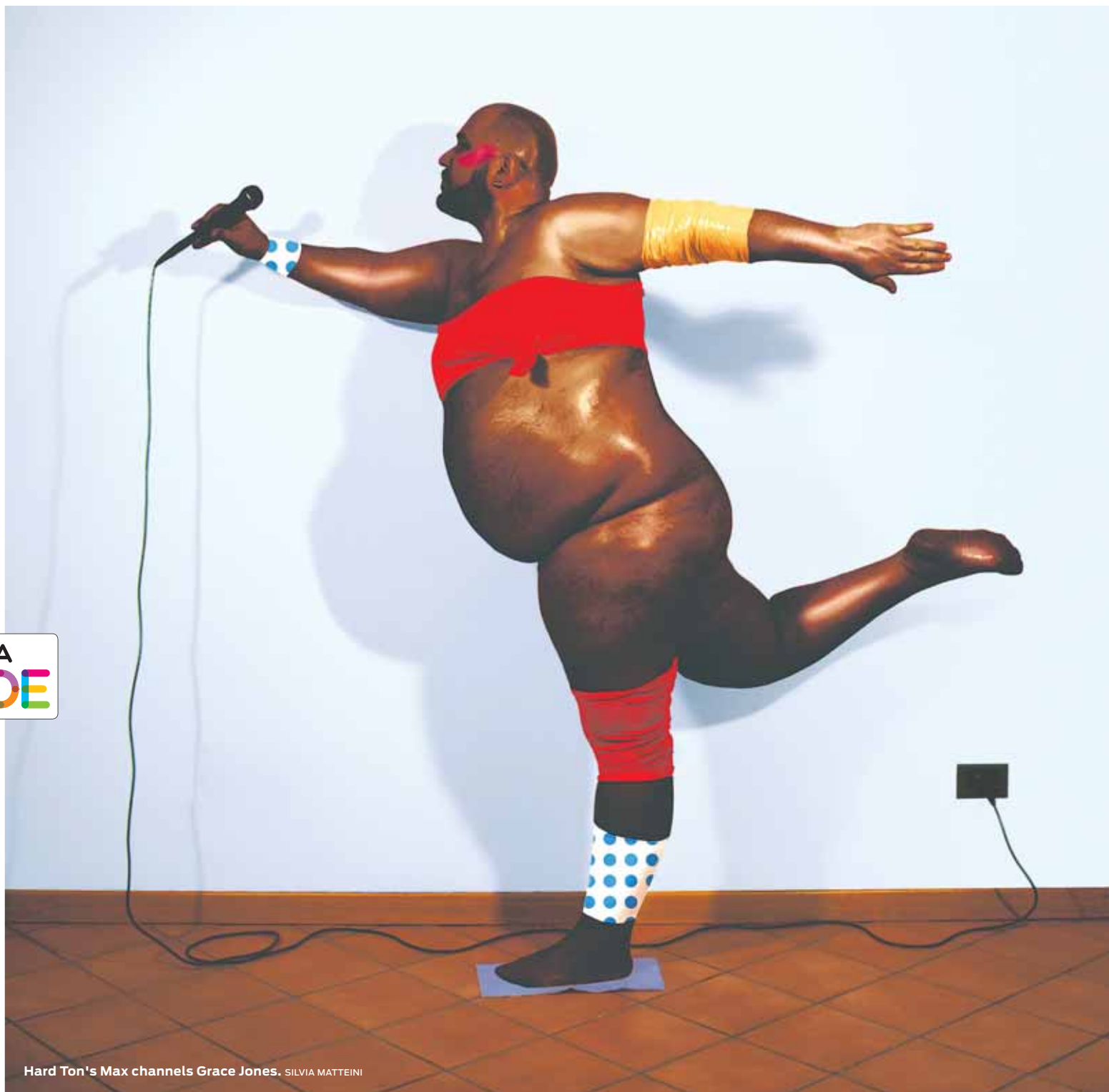
Although Mauro is the behind-the-scenes man, he is just as instrumental in developing Hard Ton's live performance element. He clearly knows his stuff: at PopUP, he

has booked a mix of underground DJs and live acts, including Luomo, Ellen Allien & Apparat, Ascii Disko, Chicks on Speed and Cicciolina, a Hungarian-born Italian pornstar-turned-politician who cut a bunch of disco tracks in the 1980s.

There, as with Hard Ton, the goal is to nudge the dance world away from David Guetta button-pushing toward a palpable live experience.

"What we do is a show, a performance in a way, which is not something so usual in the club scene nowadays," Mauro says. "We wanted to bring back that rock 'n' roll mood, because that's the way we like it." X

XTRA
PRIDE



Hard Ton's Max channels Grace Jones. SILVIA MATTEINI

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STYLE LIFE
DIEGO ARMAND
 PHOTOS BY MAY TRUONG

Happy Pride! Swim trunks are the unsung heroes of our favourite time of year. They're colourful and bold, and they're ideal when you're caught in the line of fire of a water gun or, heaven forbid, stuck in the rain — eek.

Go for swim trunks that are mid-thigh or longer. Wear them with your favourite sunnies, a water-resistant watch and a sexy wet T-shirt (or nothing at all). Skintight Speedos are always a fun sight, but I prefer them for the beach (and they can look awkward with shoes).

I asked Evolution Fitness trainer and competitive bodybuilder Jeffrey Chan to be our swim-trunk hunk. His body-ody-ody framed these shorts most perfectly and he wore them with such pride. Let's get soaking wet!

1. The Wet Look

T-shirt, \$32, American Apparel. americanapparel.net
 Swim Trunks, \$80, Diesel. Available at Out on the Street, 551 Church St.
 Sunglasses, \$198, Super. Available at The Future of Frances Watson, 1390 Queen St W.

2. Red, White & New

Swim shorts, \$56, Andrew Christian. Available at Out on the Street.

3. Juicy Solids

Orange Resort swim trunks, \$38, American Apparel.

4. Prep Time

New England two-toned board shorts, \$49, Penfield. Sunglasses, \$190, Super. Both available at The Future of Frances Watson.

5. In Print

Grey Roadkill shorts, \$59.50, Insight. Available at The Future of Frances Watson.

Hardline Chat

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First Media Group's Anthony Lund is the brand director of Hardline Chat and the developer of Hardline's newly enhanced mobile chat application. He understands the company's place in gay history.

"Just over 30 years ago, when the AIDS pandemic and gay revolution came to a head... unless you lived in cities where these things were happening, the majority of men were still in closeted situations and their lives were very secretive," he says. "Having a phone line to call was the first time they had a service that connected them with other people who shared

their same secret, insecurities and, of course, their primal leanings. It was an outlet for them, sort of like an underground railroad for what connected men to other men back then."

In 2013, despite what some might think, the business of chat is bigger than ever: it's a \$350 million industry in North America.

"Just about everyone on the planet has a phone," Lund says. "It may have evolved over the last 40 years, but so has the phone-dating game. The chat-line dating category isn't dead but is now evolving into a massive network of international communications."

Lund notes that the amount of information a person can get while instant messaging isn't as fulfilling — or as fast — as voice communication. When using the Hardline Chat App, a conversation can warm up with an instant message, then become



something more with the "Live Connect" feature, taking the conversation to an interactive level. A user can take the chat even further by sending a video message that gives the man on the other end some insight on what exactly he's doing.

Hardline Chat has become an expert in connecting straight, married,

closeted and virgin men across North America. With the launch of the new Hardline App, users can interact with guys locally and internationally by sharing photos, videos, instant messages and audio notes or by connecting with them using Hardline's new voice-conferencing feature. The conversations are discreet; no phone

HARDLINE CHAT HAS BECOME AN EXPERT IN CONNECTING STRAIGHT, MARRIED, CLOSETED AND VIRGIN MEN ACROSS NORTH AMERICA.

numbers are exchanged during the connection.

In addition, the Hardline App lets users chat with the pornstars of Next Door Studios at the end of every month — exclusive one-on-one conversations with some of the biggest names in the industry, including Cody Cummings, Marcus Mojo, Trystan Bull and more.

Since their inception, Hardline and its sister company Cruiseline have been in the business of dating, and judging by their new apps and chatting options, they show no signs of slowing down.

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TORONTO AT NIGHT
RYAN G HINDS

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Other folks declare Oscar night or Halloween "gay Christmas," but for me that title is reserved exclusively for the end of June: our nights are filled with anticipation, our social calendars are nearly unmanageable (don't be afraid to click "not attending" on Facebook events; it makes life much easier for everyone), and we wear clothes that we would never wear any other time of the year. Surrounded by our chosen or blood families, we wake up on the big day eager to have the time of our lives, indulging in the things that make us happy, even though they may not be the healthiest, and reenacting traditions.

For both Christmas and Pride, it's the social factor that is most fascinating to me. Yes, we're a loving community that supports and watches out for each other, but if you take more than a million queers and jam them into a few small blocks of city and sell them tickets to the same few parties, there's bound to be more fireworks than Victoria Day at Ashbridges. I once watched a couple do nothing but break up in front of everyone for the entire weekend: if you've ever suffered through a Christmas-dinner family argument, imagine that but add sequins, feathers, some vicious face slaps, and stretch it out over a few days. Starting on Friday, all day and night on Saturday, all through the parade, and then, mercifully, ending on O'Grady's patio at 1am, these poor, unfortunate gay boys screamed and accused and fought, to the cackling delight of many an onlooker. Pride is the time of year when our hookups/breakups are entirely spectator sports.

Music is also a hugely important part of both holidays (and yes, I know Pride is a holiday this year only because it coincides with Canada Day, but frankly, we all know that queer pride trumps national pride in terms of fabulosity). Christmas gives us carols, anthems and secular tunes, and Pride gives us much the same. Instead of praying at church, I will be worshipping at the temple of En Vogue as they finally grace the Blockorama stage after many years of efforts to book them. Will they open or close the service with "Free Your Mind," the '90s tune that can still turn



THINKSTOCK

out a dancefloor? Mine eyes may not see the glory of the coming of Dawn Robinson (the group's former lead singer), but it's the music of En Vogue that makes me feel the spirit, not the individuals.

One day, I'd love to be able to take a look back through everyone's memory books of Pride nights past. What would yours include? Some of mine: Deee-Lite's Lady Miss Kier pinching my nipples in the DJ booth at The Barn (yes, she was gentle and yes, it was caught on camera). RuPaul's less-than-gracious behaviour at Circa (although it was pre-*Drag Race*... wonder if she's happier now?). Deborah Cox's divine headlining set. Kissing that American singer. A game of spin-the-bottle stretching half a city block. Getting caught in the rain and having to dry off under the hand dryers at Burger King. And those are just the fun ones. Like Christmas, it's all about who's been naughty and who's been nice. Pride is also the time of year when you run into people you haven't seen in years, except you can't say hi because they're on a sling and... occupied. In more ways than one.

Although many people see Pride as an instant-gratification celebration of the hedonistic here and now, I'd love it if we all took a moment to remember our comrades, friends, lovers and family who are no longer. In the same way that departed family members are sorely missed at Christmas dinner and the ghost of Christmas past haunts

every corner, it's impossible for me to enter the Pride season without thinking of the many spectres that I wish were around to celebrate with. May we ever so slightly disturb their eternal rest with our earthly revels, for Pride is also the time of year when, more than ever, we need to embrace our personal and collective histories.

Toronto at Night appears in every second issue of Xtra.



#PRIDEMEMORIES

"I performed on the Church and Wellesley stage on Sunday night. I climbed the rafter and stood on a speaker high above the crowd. My heel then got stuck in a hole, and I had to wrench it out as I floated above the crowd."

- DAYTONA BITCH



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Xtra! CANADA'S GAY & LESBIAN NEWS

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SHERBOURNE Health Centre

Sherbourne Health Centre

“Healthy People. Healthy Communities”

Chief Executive Officer

Since its inception in 2003, Sherbourne Health Centre (SHC) has offered the highest quality healthcare, and developed programs and services to fill existing gaps and address specialized needs. Our programs have about 100,000 client contacts each year with newcomers, children, adults, the LGBT community and many others who come from the diverse communities we serve. We focus on being welcoming, inclusive and accessible, and our key services include:

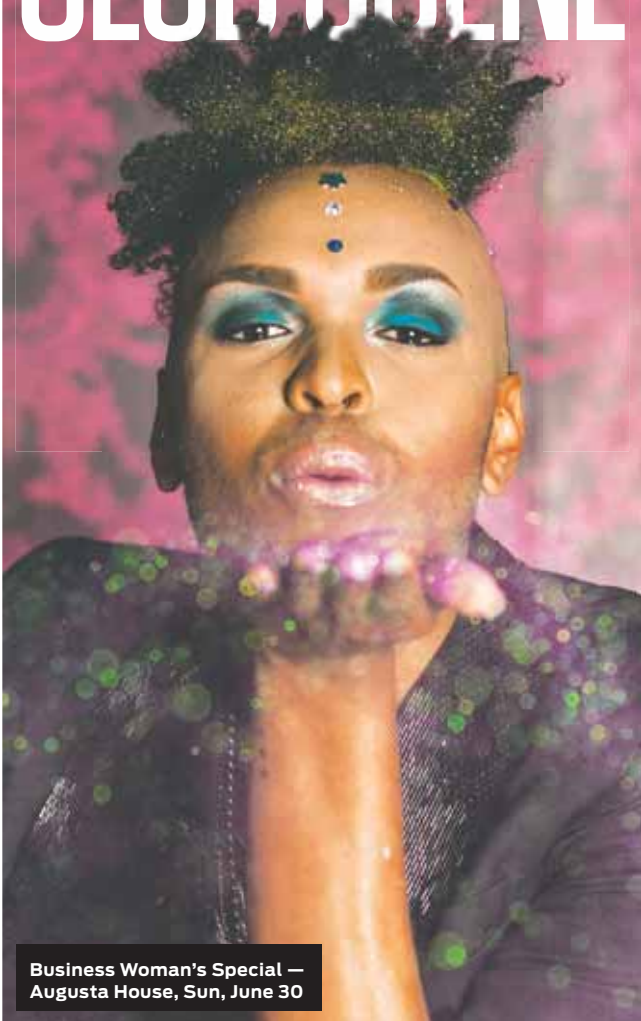
- Community governed Family Health Team (FHT), providing primary health care for Homeless and under-housed people, LGBT people, Newcomers to Canada and residents of South-east Toronto
- 24/7 Infirmary Care
- Newcomer Services, including participation in the St. James Town Community Corner
- Health Buses (Mobile outreach and health promotion)
- Chronic Disease Clinics/Programs (HIV, Hepatitis C, Diabetes)
- LGBTQ parenting and families
- Rainbow Health Ontario
- Supporting Our Youth (SOY)
- WINK (Women in need 'Klinik' – Accessible, drop-in primary care for street-involved women)
- Trans health care

As SHC's inaugural CEO, Suzanne Boggild is leaving, the Board of Directors wishes to recruit a new CEO who will both nurture the accomplishments to date, and take SHC to new levels of achievement in the years to come. The ideal candidate will possess significant health care leadership experience, preferably acquired in a community health setting(s) and/or a hospital or equivalent health service provider agency. Leadership experience in a unionized environment is essential. Demonstrated experience with, and understanding of the communities served by SHC is essential. An effective and compelling communicator, the candidate sought for this role will be strategic, motivational, collaborative, progressive, proficient at operational improvement, and, above all, passionate about SHC's potential. The CEO will be skilled in engaging funders to grow the programs and services offered by SHC.

The preferred candidate would ideally possess a Masters level qualification and be conversant with the ethos guiding health care service delivery at SHC (vested in an anti-oppression framework and aligned with SHC Values).

For more information, or to submit your application in confidence, please contact Jim Stonehouse, Partner at 416-593-0900 ext. 2240 or via email at jstonehouse@fourcornersgroup.com or Lorraine Manners, Associate Partner at 416-593-0900 ext. 2228 or via email at lmanners@fourcornersgroup.com

CLUB SCENE



Business Woman's Special — Augusta House, Sun, June 30

Thurs, June 27

Starry Night: Love Is in the Hair

Lady Bunny (NYC), Jinx Monsoon and Sofonda perform, with DJ Alessandro on decks. 7pm. Green Space on Church, 519 Church St. No cover, donation appreciated. greenspaceto.org

T-Girl Pride Party

Toronto's only T-girl party, with spontaneous T-girl go-go shows and private VIP dances. DJ Todd Klinck spins. 8pm–5am. Club120, 120 Church St. Guys \$8 before 11pm, \$15 after; ladies free all night. club120.ca

Milk Thursday presents Faux Girls

A night of jaw-dropping performances, featuring Chris Edwards, Jeanette Jabier Dupree, D'Manda Tension, Divinesque, Jade Elektra and Stevie Nicks impersonator Crystal Visions. 8pm. Mojo Lounge, 1305 Dundas St W. \$5. facebook.com/mojotoronto

Pinky's Big Gay Birthday Ball

Special guest *Drag Race's* Jiggly Caliente, with DJ Boy Brian and host Cassandra Moore. 9pm. Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. \$10. gladstonehotel.com

Drip 2013: The Arduous

Hosted by Petra Collins, with Vanessa Kathleen, Miley Highrus, Condo-Coon, LBC and Girls Club. 9pm. Smith, 553 Church St. \$5 door. facebook.com/dripparty

Steers and Queers

Toronto's gay ole opry presents Night of 1000 Dollys: a tribute to the world's greatest drag queen. DJs Joe Blow and Sigourney Beaver spin Dolly hits, with performances by Fay Slift, ManChyna, The Pining and Igby Lizzard. Complete with a Dolly look-alike contest. 9pm. The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. \$8 in Dolly drag, \$10 without. gladstonehotel.com

Ten Years of Prism College

DJs Micky Hi and Sumation spin dance faves for Prism College's 10th birthday, with Shangela performing the drag show. 10pm–4am. Fly, 8 Gloucester St. \$20, or \$199 for weekend pass. prismtoronto.com

Fri, June 28

Drip

Very special guests Le Youth and Shaydakiss on the decks, along with local DJs Diego Armand and Kevin Ritchie. Hosted by Cary Tauben. 6:30pm–4am. Smith, 553 Church St. \$10. facebook.com/dripparty

RuPaulogize

RuPaul's Drag Race's Willam Belli performs; hosted by Cassandra Moore, with DJ VIVI Diamond on decks. 9pm. Mojo Lounge, 1305 Dundas St W. \$15 advance. facebook.com/mojotoronto

Rangeela 2

Bollywood, bhangra and house for Canada's biggest queer South Asian event. Proceeds support the victims' families in Bangladesh's garment factory disaster. 9pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$10 before midnight, \$15 until 2am, \$20 after. club120.ca

Mighty Real

DJs The Robotic Kid and John Caffery on the house-music decks, with hosts Nina Arsenault and Lexi Sanfino. Performances by Lucas Silveira, Morgan Page and Judy Virago. 9:30pm. El Mocambo, 464 Spadina Ave. \$7.

Electro-Queer Nachtmusik

Electro, synth, new wave and more. Red Armband, Burning Iceberg, Vierance, Judy Virago, Igby Lizzard and Jenna Syde perform, DJs Sarin and Short Attention Span spin, and Maestro Jubal Brown is on the mic. 10pm. Bovine Sex Club, 542 Queen St W. Cover TBA. bovinesexclub.com

AX Pride

DJs Alex and Mark Vincente spin top-40 remixes, club anthems and dance beats, with Sofonda Cox, Nikki Chin, Jade London, HenryX and the go-go boys performing. 10pm. The Phoenix, 410 Sherbourne St. \$20 advance, \$25 door. aznxp.com

Prism Festival Presents Bootcamp

Pornstar François Sagat takes the stage, with DJs Tom Stephan, Danny Verde and Aron spinning circuit beats. 10pm. The Government, 132 Queens Quay E. \$55, or \$199 for weekend pass. prismtoronto.com

Black Eagle Pride

DJ Devon Sheffield tests out the Eagle's new sound system, spinning deep house and minimal techno. 10pm. Black Eagle, 457 Church St. No cover. blackeagletoronto.com

#StayGolden

Spandex on, tits out for this hard-rocking Pride party presented by She Does the City. DJ Steve Rock spins classic rock anthems, while go-go dancers help Joan Jett look-alikes get sweaty. 10pm. The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. \$5. gladstonehotel.com

Lick It

Girl Play presents a dance night for women, with DJs Sticky Cuts, Ria, Stix, Delicious and Miz Megz. 10pm–5am. The Marquis of Granby, 418 Church St. \$20 advance, \$25 door. marquisofgranby.ca

Bad Boy Weekend Kickoff

DJ Mark Falco spins for army, navy, leather men and jocks. Until 4am. Woody's, 467 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Hot Pick

Our cover boy, Chase Hostler, is perhaps the hottest go-go boy in New York right now, and he's about to get even hotter with his Canadian debut at the TreeHouse Party. We got to dance with him in New York while famed photog Marco Ovando was shooting him — and boy can shake. You'll get your chance on Pride Sunday — we dare you to try to keep up.

TREEHOUSE PARTY
Sun, June 30
1pm–midnight
Ryerson quad, Church and Gerrard
No cover
greenspaceto.org

Beefball

UK DJ Hifi Sean and a special performance by Dr Draw are the main attractions at this year's burly dance party — that and an army of beefy go-go boys. 10pm–5am. The Opera House, 735 Queen St E. \$30 advance, more at the door. beefdip.com



MARCO OVANDO

Sat, June 29

Fruit Loopz Youth Stage: Here We Are!

Showcasing the queer community's most talented young musicians, poets, dancers, actors and artists. 12:30–11pm. Buddies in Bad Times and Alexander Parkette, 12 Alexander St. buddiesinbadtimes.com

TNT Naked Dance Party

Show your pride and take off all your clothes at the annual TNTMen Naked Dance. 5–8pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$4 students, \$5 members, \$8 everyone else. tntmen.org

Boylesque TO

The all-male burlesque troupe presents Class Dismissed, featuring all your favourite dancers and special guest Lucky Charming. 9pm. Lee's Palace, 529 Bloor St W. \$20 advance, \$25 door. boylesqueto.com

Starships

Prism Festival presents Ibiza's Matinée debut in Canada, featuring DJs Micky Friedmann (Berlin), Phil Romano (Rome) and Ivan Gomez (Barcelona), Spanish dancers, and a special performance by Vanessa Klein. 10pm. Kool Haus, 132 Queens Quay E. \$50, or \$199 for weekend pass. prismtoronto.com

Cherry Bomb Pride

The beach sensation edition features DJs Denise Benson, Cozmic Cat, Nix and Leticia Love. Dress in your sexiest beachwear. 10pm–4am. Revival, 783 College St. \$15 advance, \$20 door.

Yes Yes Y'all Pride

Toronto's nastiest hip-hop, R&B and dancehall jam kicks off with *Drag Race's* Jiggly Caliente, DJs A-Rock and Shaydakiss, Shi Wisdom and, of course, the YYY DJs. 10pm. The Annex WreckRoom, 794

Bathurst St. \$12 advance, \$15 door. theannexwreckroom.com

Regretro: Pride Edition

DJs Case of Base, Party McFly and Wei Back turn back time with all the shameless retro hits you wish you hated. 10pm. Henhouse, 1532 Dundas St W. No cover. henhousetoronto.com

Pitbull Pride

DJs John Caffery and The Robotic Kid open for Stéfane Lippé, with DJ Alessandro's pop party in the side room. 10pm–4am. The Phoenix, 410 Sherbourne St. \$40. pitbullevents.ca

Hotnuts: Hi-NRG DOLLphins, featuring Hard Ton

Italian glamour-bear disco outfit Hard Ton takes the stage, with DJs Wawashi, Das Hussy and Produzentin. 10:30pm. The Garrison, 1197 Dundas St W. \$10 advance, \$15 door. hotnutshardton.eventbrite.ca

Absolute Sultry Saturday: Pride Edition

DJ Cajimere spins proud house. 11pm. Byzantium, 499 Church St. No cover. byz.ca

J'Adore Pride Blowout

DJs Blue Peter and Chris Steinbach on decks. Until 4am. Woody's, 467 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Sun, June 30

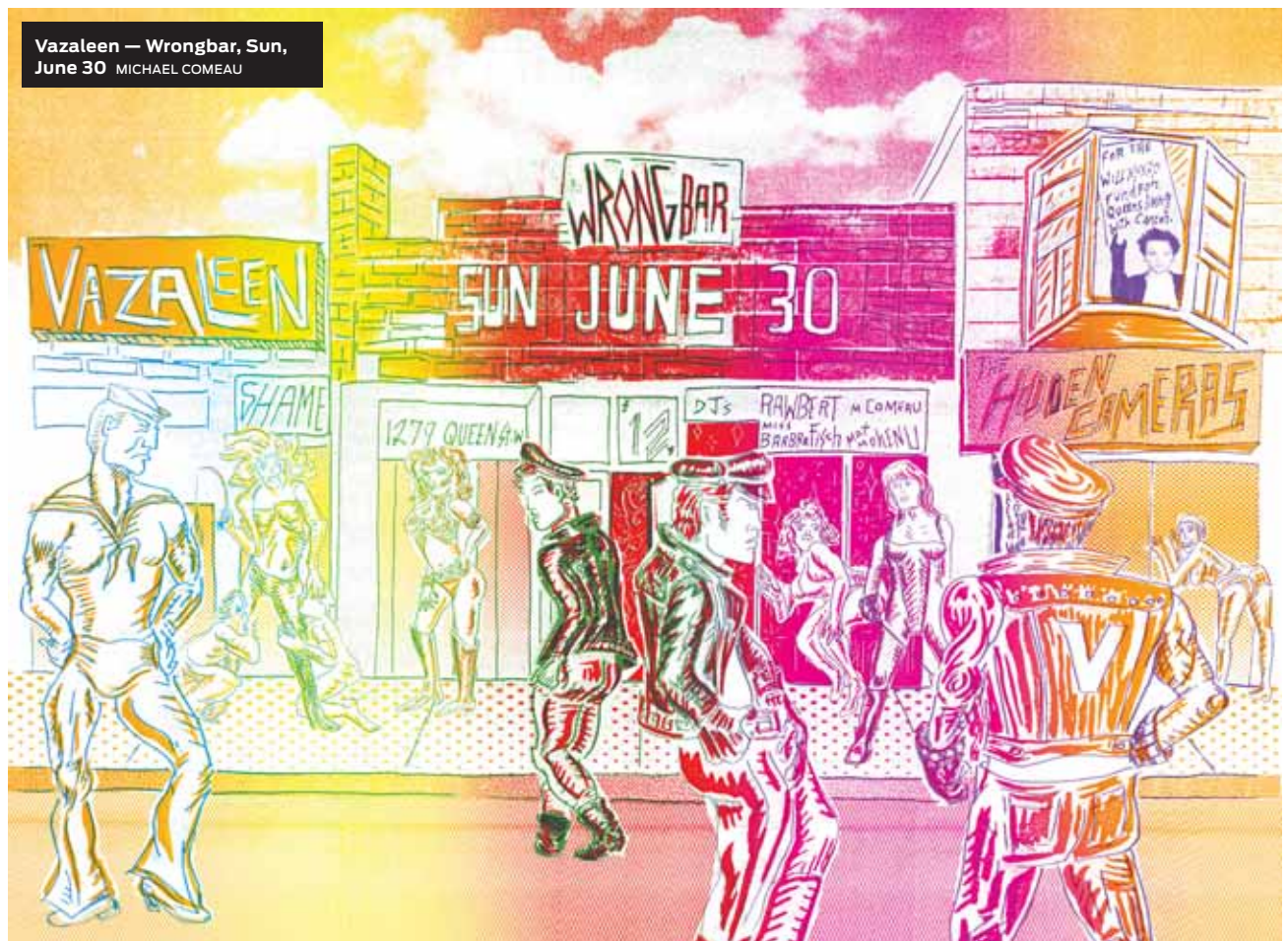
Drip 2013: The Shut Down

DJs Kaytranada, Members Only, Prince Innocence, Rory Them Finest, Marcus Marcus, Kikileaks, CBB and LBC on decks all day. 1pm. Smith, 553 Church St. \$10. facebook.com/dripparty

Pride at Byz

DJ Matty Ryce, 3–5pm; DJ Cajimere Wray, 5–8pm; DJ TLA, 8–11pm; and DJ Geoff Kelleway, 11pm. Byzantium, 499 Church St. No cover. byz.ca

Vazaleen — Wrongbar, Sun, June 30 MICHAEL COMEAU



Pride at Slack's

Sarah Smith belts it out, 3–6pm. DJs Quinces, Cozmic Cat and ViVi Diamond on decks, 6pm–4am. Slack's, 562 Church St. No cover. slacks.ca

Go Hard: Swag 2 Da Roof

DJs Blackcat, Pleasure and Sikh Knowledge spin hip hop, reggae and dance. 10pm–5am. Club120, 120 Church St. \$5 with flyer. club120.ca

Business Woman's Special: Pride Edition

Hosted by *Big Brother Canada's* Gary Glitter, with DJs Sammy and Nino Brown spinning R&B, hip hop and pop. 10pm. Augusta House, 152 Augusta Ave. \$10. facebook.com/ugustahouse

Vazaleen presents Shame

The one and only alt-queer dance bash returns with a performance by The Hidden Cameras. DJs Rawbert, Miss Barbara Fisch, Max Mohenu and Michael Comeau spin. 10pm. Wrongbar, 1279 Queen St W. \$12. wrongbar.com

Shi Wisdom at Yes Yes Y'all Pride — Annex WreckRoom, Sat, June 29 DANIELLE DASILVA



continued next page ▶

Morgan Page at Mighty Real — El Mocambo, Fri, June 28



► continued from previous page

Big Love: Revival

Suzanne Palmer performs live, with DJs David Morales, Tony Moran, Honey Dijon, Shawn Riker, and Dave and Gerardo spinning circuit beats. Featuring Sofonda Cox and a Peter Rauhofer tribute. 10pm. The Government, 132 Queens Quay E. \$85, or \$199 for weekend pass. prismtoronto.com

Grind: Afterglow

Pride edition of the party for queer people of colour, with DJ Sissy Fuss. 11:45pm. Oasis Aqualounge, 231 Mutual St. \$20 advance, \$25 door.

Mon, July 1

Canada Day BBQ

Randy cooks up good eats, and hot men gather for drinks and sunshine on one of the best patios in the Village. 3–9pm. Black Eagle, 457 Church St. No cover. blackeagletoronto.com

Singular Sensation

Weekly music-theatre open-mic, hosted by Jennifer Walls. 9:30pm. Statlers, 487 Church St. No cover.

Tues, July 2

Varsity Tuesday

Sofonda Cox hosts the amateur So You Think You Can Strip? competition, with a \$100 cash prize. 11pm. Remington's, 379 Yonge St. \$5, no cover with student ID before 11pm, \$2 after. remingtons.com

Wed, July 3

Meat and Greet

Evening social and chat for trans men and their allies. Every first and third Wednesday. 6:30–8:30pm. Fabarnak, 519 Church St. No cover. the519.org

Thurs, July 4

Pussy Party

Acid and techno with DJs Boy Pussy and Mellee Fresh. Nancy Bocock hosts. 11pm. The Beaver, 1192 Queen St W. No cover. beavertoronto.com

Rangeela — Club120, Fri, June 28



The Smirnoff Best Men's Chest Contest

Boys go shirtless for \$300 in cash prizes, with drag performances and the DJ on decks. Midnight. Woody's, 465 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Fri, July 5

Urban Friday

Live music at 8pm; DJ and dancing at 10pm. Slack's, 562 Church St. No cover. slacks.ca

Fetish Funhouse

Bears, leather queens, daddies and boys get naughty. 10pm. Black Eagle, 457 Church St. No cover. blackeagletoronto.com

Bearcode

DJs Cory Activate and Alain Plamondon spin for muscle bears, otters, jocks, daddies and boys every Friday. 10pm–3am. Zipperz/Cellblock, 72 Carlton St. No cover. facebook.com/zipperz

Gitch: Underwear party

DJs Jay&J, hosted by Todd Klinck. 10pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$6 before 11pm, \$8 after; students no cover before 11:30pm, \$5 after. club120.ca

Sat, July 6

Motown

DJ Spattermonkey guests, spinning Motown, northern soul and remixes, while resident DJs Fawn BC and Caff keep things tight. Brett Millius plays an all-vinyl set with Rev Throwdown in the basement. 9:30pm. 751 Lounge, 751 Queen St W. \$5 before 11, \$10 after.

Daddy Next Door

DJ Dwayne Minard plays house for daddies and their admirers. 10pm. WAYLA, 996 Queen St E. \$5. waylabar.com

RMV

Cyberpunk theme party, with DJs Datarider, Shok, Paul Savage and Edwin Somnambulist. Sexy cyber-gear encouraged. 10pm. Club120, 120 Church St. \$5 before 11pm, \$10 after. club120.ca

Sun, July 7

Sunday at Woody's

Hollywoody Broadway Show, with Miss Conception. 6pm. Woody's, 465 Church St. No cover. woodystoronto.com

Poz TO Pride Edition

Phillip Fournier hosts the monthly dance party for Toronto's HIV-positive queer community, with DJ Relentless on decks. 8pm. Club120, 120 Church St. No cover; suggested donation of \$5 or non-perishable items for PWA's food bank. club120.ca

Shit Show Sunday

Industry night, with a different live band every week on the main stage at 9pm, and the DJ spinning in the Loft at 11pm. Statlers, 487 Church St. No cover.

Best Ass Contest

Carlotta Carlisle gets the boys to expose their behinds for \$200 in cash and prizes. 10pm. Flash, 463 Church St. No cover. flashonchurch.com

Mon, July 8

Dirty Monday

Devine Darlin and Nikki Chin perform on the drag stage. 11pm. Crews & Tangos, 508 Church St. No cover. crewsandtangos.com

Tues, July 9

College/Industry Night

DJ and dancing with the ladies. 9pm. Slack's, 562 Church St. \$5 bingo cards or \$10 for three. slacks.ca

Wed, July 10

Toronto Drag Kings

Tyler Uptight, Cameron, Kenny and Chase Manning perform in the weekly drag-king show. 11pm–2am. Zipperz/Cellblock, 72 Carlton St. No cover. facebook.com/zipperz

WHAT'S ON

FOR MORE EVENT LISTINGS, GO TO XTRA.CA

ARTS & PHOTOGRAPHY

Some Boys I'd Like to Know

Allen Shugar's retrospective explores the mystique of the male figure, challenging the idea that only the female figure should be represented erotically. Opening reception Thurs, June 27, 6–9pm. Exhibit runs until Sat, June 29. Urban Gallery, 400 Queen St E. Free. urbangallery.ca

10x10 Photography Project

This annual celebration of queer heroes features work by Paul Dymond, Lynne Fox, Stev'n Hall, Jeanette Martin, Walter Segers and more. Opening reception Thurs, June 27, 7pm. Exhibit runs until July 14. The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. Free. 10x10photographyproject.com

That's So Gay: Say It to My Face

This annual Pride art exhibit examines such issues as transphobia, slavery and racism. Features 15 artists, including Kiley May Longboat, Ange Loft and Textaqueen. Opening reception Thurs, June 27, 7pm. Exhibit runs until Sun, July 28, noon–5pm. The Gladstone Hotel, 1214 Queen St W. Free. gladstonehotel.com

Christian Louboutin

Curated by the Design Museum in London in conjunction with Christian Louboutin, this exhibit presents the high-fashion designs of the iconic French shoe designer. Runs until Sun, Sept 15. The Design Exchange, 234 Bay St. \$18–22. dx.org

HEALTH & ISSUES

The 519 Legal Clinic

A free, accessible service for low-income people. Volunteer lawyers provide legal advice, referrals and help with forms and letters. The confidential and private visits are first-come, first-served. Bring any necessary documents. Every Thursday; registration 6–6:30pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. the519.org

Positive Routes to Recovery

A peer-led support group for gay men working on substance abuse issues. Takes place the first and third Tuesday of each month. Tues, July 2, 6–8pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. pr2r.org

Bisexual Women of Toronto

A peer-support and discussion group focused on community and solidarity. Thurs, July 4, 8–10pm. The 519 Community Centre, 519 Church St. Free. torontobinet.org

LEISURE & PLEASURE

Men 4 Men Sensual Touch and Tantric Exploration: Pride Edition

Sensual studs are exposed to a tantric, full-body erotic experience. Fri, June 28; registration 12:45pm, workshop 1–6pm. Awaken Studio, 270 Carlaw Ave. \$45. philippcoupal.ca

TNTMen Meet and Greet

Bare-bottomed boys mingle and celebrate Pride in private booths and on the dancefloor. Fri, June 28, 5–8pm. Club120, 120 Church St. No cover. tntmen.org



Gitch: Underwear Party — Club120, Fri, July 5



History Boys — Videofag, Thurs, June 27 KAI YAPP

Some Boys I'd Like to Know
— Urban Gallery, until Sat,
June 29 ALLEN SHUGAR



Bitch Salad

Andrew Johnston's Pride comedy show returns with Sara Hennessey, Emma Hunter, The Cheeto Girls and *How Was Your Week's* Julie Klausner. Fri, June 28, 8pm. Buddies in Bad Times, 12 Alexander St. \$25. buddiesinbadtimes.com

Pride and Remembrance Run

Revellers take a break from Pride partying to raise funds for local queer organizations at this 5-kilometre run (or 3km walk) through downtown. Sat, June 29, 10am. Begins at the Church and Wellesley intersection. \$45. priderun.org

Pink Turf Charity Soccer Tournament

Women and trans people join the Pink Turf players for a soccer tournament benefiting Voice for Hope and Supporting Our Youth. Registration required. Sat, June 29, 10am. Withrow Park, 725 Logan Ave. \$25. outspportoronto.org

Class Dismissed

Canada's all-male burlesque troupe presents a sexy high school-themed show. Hot off the honour roll: Dew Lily as the Emo Kid, El Toro as The Overachiever, Man Chyna as The Bro and more. Sat, June 29, 9pm. Lee's Palace, 529 Bloor St W. \$20 advance, \$25 door. boylesqueto.com

Dudettes: Pride Edition

Ryan Kelly, Dale Miller and Jeannie Wyse pay tribute to gay icons of musical theatre with campy stories, bitchy repartee and fantastic vocals. Sat, June 29, 9pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. \$15 advance, \$20 door. pubaret.com

Tegan and Sarah and Fun

The hot indie-rock twins and melodic pop-rockers Fun are joined by two guest bands, Family of the Year and Diana. Sat, July 6, 4pm. Downsview Park, 35 Carl Hall Rd. \$51. teganandsara.com

upon registration. Register at social@thefraternity.org. No cover. thefraternity.org

READINGS & SCREENINGS

Write On! Open Mic for Queers of Colour

An evening of spoken word, music, comedy, dance and more, from featured guests and emerging artists. Thurs, June 27; 7:30pm sign-up, 8pm start. Glad Day Bookshop, 598 Yonge St. \$5. gladdaybookshop.com

History Boys: Academic Discipline

In this Pride follow-up to their successful first reading, the History Boys tutor their audience on titillating queer history with readings based on their irreverent column. Thurs, June 27, 8–11pm. Videofag, 187 Augusta Ave. \$5. facebook.com/historyboys

Pink Latino Film Festival

Sexual diversity and homosexuality in Latino culture is celebrated in a three-day, 20-film showcase. Runs until Fri, June 28, various times. Carlton Cinema, 20 Carlton St. \$12. pinklatino.com

Flaunting It! Reading The Body Politic

Gerald Hannon, Ed Jackson and other writers and admirers of the iconic gay publication read their favourite passages. Featuring a



Christian Louboutin — The Design Exchange, until Sun, Sept 15

special performance by the History Boys. Sun, June 30, 5:30pm. Glad Day Bookshop, 598 Yonge St. Free. gladdaybookshop.com

Gavin Crawford's Wild West Screening

Crawford celebrates the airing of his TV pilot, *Wild West*, in which he plays six Albertans, ranging from a vampire farmer to a gay cattle rancher. Sat, July 6, 6–9pm. The Flying Beaver, 488 Parliament St. Free. pubaret.com

I'm So Excited

The new Pedro Almodóvar film takes place almost entirely inside an airplane and features dance routines. Enough said. Opens Fri, July 5, 7pm. Varsity Theatre, 55 Bloor St W.

Tales of Minimum Wage Jobs

An evening of hilarious storytelling from the CBC's Ralph Benmergui, MTV's Ian Lynch and a slew of local comedy stars. Mon, July 8, 8–9:30pm. Rustic Owl Café, 993 Bloor St W. No cover.

STAGE

Cats

Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical based on TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* returns with an all-Canadian cast. Runs until Sun, Sept 1, various showtimes. Panasonic Theatre, 651 Yonge St. \$59.95–109.95. mirvish.com

Avenue Q

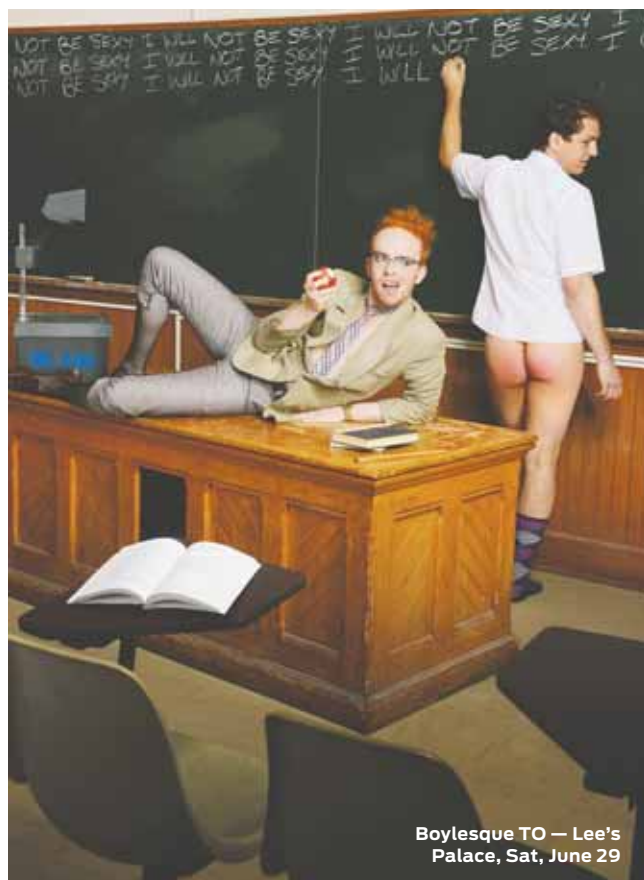
The musical coming-of-age story that stars some puppets who live on a fictional New York City street. Features such hits as "If You Were Gay" and "The Internet Is for Porn." Runs until Oct 6, various showtimes. Lower Ossington Theatre, 100A Ossington Ave. \$49–60. avenueq.ca

Fringe Festival

The 25th annual Toronto Fringe features 35 venues packed with 148 shows, including new and old plays, experimental works, dance and the family-friendly FringeKids program. Runs Wed, July 3–Sun, July 14. fringetoronto.com

Feint of Heart

Henri Fabergé transforms his monthly cabaret into a two-part punk-rock opera about his fictional years in a naval academy. Runs Thurs, July 4–Sat, July 6, 8pm, and Thurs, July 11–Sat, July 13, 8pm. Videofag, 187 Augusta Ave. \$10. videofag.com



Boylesque TO — Lee's Palace, Sat, June 29

Submit your event listing to oitc@xtra.ca. Deadline for the July 11–24 issue is Wed, July 3.

#PRIDEMEMORIES



“During Edmonton Pride, I had been sipping back cool cocktails all day and decided to jump the fence from the beer garden to relieve myself. The only appropriate place was next to a mailbox. I soon found myself, dress up and panties down, with a police officer tapping on my shoulder! I pretended that I couldn't speak English.”

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Checking in with Chris: Week 13

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Chris and the Evolution Fitness team won't be kicking Chris's training and nutrition into high gear for Pride season — they've been doing it all along!

"I find the whole process to be wild," Chris says. "I never thought of myself as a supplements guy, but my nutritionist has recommended a bunch of supplements for me. Some help with blood flow, others provide more energy, and some promote muscle growth. I'm not going to be the next Lance Armstrong or anything, but it has been an interesting ethical question in terms of how I wanted to pursue my fitness goals."

Chris has come a long way in 13 weeks, and he's having a great time reaching his goals, thanks to his trainer, Stephanie. "She always pushes me and gives me confidence to go further," he says. "She has a great attitude and never makes me feel like I'm doing a bad job, even when I'm whiny or struggling."

You won't hear Chris whining during Pride: he'll be too busy. You can catch him in Boylesque TO's new show, Class Dismissed. Check out



our Pride listings on page 58 for all the scholarly details.

To read about how Chris survived Pride while still staying fit, pick up the next issue of Xtra. For more information on Evolution Fitness and its team of experts, visit personaltrainerstonto.com.

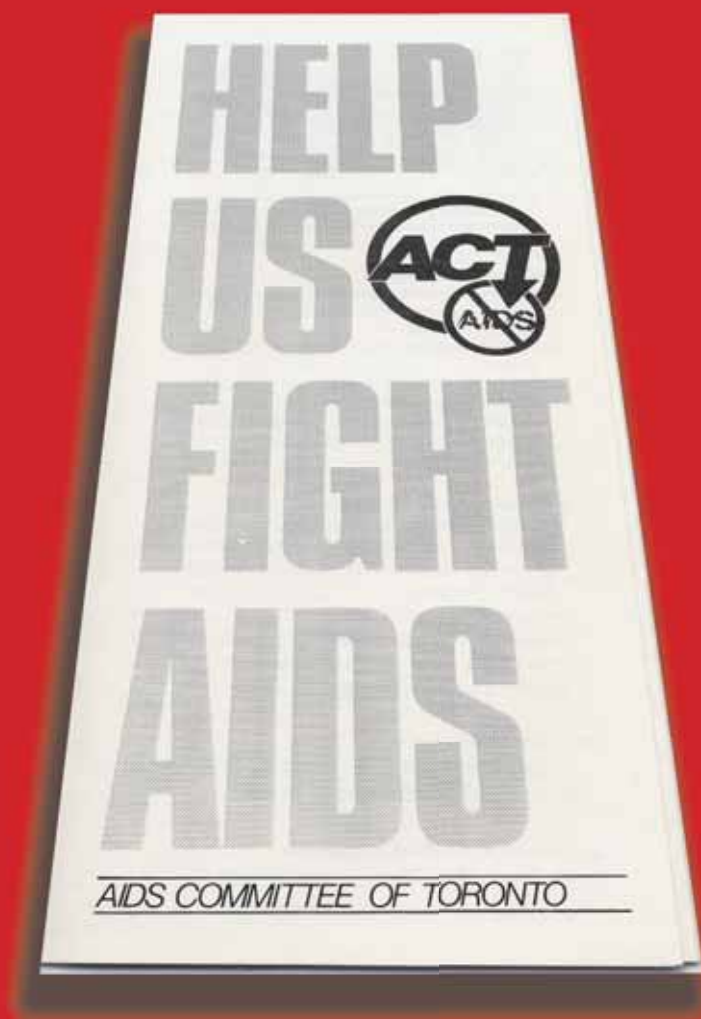
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DEEP DISH

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Go Deep

SAT, JUNE 15 @ WAYLA

Launching a new monthly party weeks before Pride takes balls. Big, glittery, low-hanging, bouncy balls. But DJ/promoter/dancer **John Caffery** has them. And many have seen them at one point or another jiggling away under one of his eye-catching, scrotum-hugging outfits. From wrestling singlets to tight '70s-style running shorts to jockstraps — he's always had my visual attention. Since he began DJing, he's also lassoed my ears. On my way to Fly nightclub's jungle party, I pop in to the launch party for Go Deep at east-end club WAYLA, which has a very healthy turnout. Besides Caffery's husband, **Ian** (who has to be here because of their marriage contract, I'm sure), there are men from all over the city and beyond. Legendary Toronto hairstylist Trancis, who now splits his time between our fair-haired city and bed-headed Montreal, is on the dancefloor grooving to DJ **The Robotic Kid**. Also out is **Tony**, long-time partier and virgin WAYLA-er. "I'm a bit older now, and it takes a lot to bring me out these days," he says, amidst a small group of friends enjoying a draft on the cute, tiny back patio. "I have to be stimulated." Stimulation comes from two hunky Latinos sitting inside front and centre, wide-legged and narrow-minded. "We don't do pictures," says one. Of course you don't. You got balls.

1▶ Tony, Carl & Steve 2▶ John Caffery
3▶ Matthew & Kiro 4▶ Justice & Crispen

Come Out and Play

THURS, JUNE 20 @ WYCHWOOD BARN

Playing sports takes balls. Usually, but not always. Sometimes there are pucks, boxing gloves, teeny-weeny swimsuits and big, glittery figure skates involved. But for all those gays who sweat it out, Come Out and Play is here to oversee the action. The bow-tied fundraiser at the Artscape Wychwood Barns is a benefit for Out-sports and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, and as guest speaker **Olivia Chow** tells the audience, "We must remember the past if we are to move forward and pass the torch so that future generations can come out and play." Hosted by cute Virgin Radio host **Steve Roberts**, the night includes a silent auction, live musical performances, Clayton Scott dancers, and a headpiece-focused fashion show by designer **Ben Barkworth** starring drag queens **Devine Darlin** and **Sapphire**. With a couple high-profile American athletes having come out recently, let's not forget those out Olympic stars in our own backyard, like bronze-medallist figure skater **Jeffrey Buttle**, who donated his Olympic jacket to the archives; the late silver-medallist boxer **Mark Leduc**, whose belt was donated; and gold-medallist swimmer **Mark Tewksbury**, who donated the Olympic torch he carried. Knowing that at some point Tewksbury palmed this flaming pole, I stroke it eagerly with both hands. I got balls.

5▶ Clayton 6▶ Ben Barkworth fashion-show models 7▶ Rob & Brennon
8▶ Shawn Sheridan & Olivia Chow



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XPOSED

ANNA
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1▶ There are a lot of “vs” parties going on. It started in drag four-score and a thousand years ago, and now it’s pervaded everything from Church to the Best End. Britney vs Christina Burlesque is by far one of the best takes on the theme for me. Here we have performers **Belle** and **Johnny** getting their *Children of the Corn* on with them matching blonde ‘dos.

2▶ Did I mention that it’s the second Britney vs Christina that Club120 has hosted? All these years later and we’re still enamoured with them. Kinda funny if you think about it: Xtina is fat-Elvis, bloated-on-a-chicken-wing big now, and Britney is still struggling with a dollar-store weave and a fashion sense that can be seen only in suburbia and the Dufferin Mall. But once they were young and they listened to stylists, and oh how we loved them then. See the looks of sheer joy on **Emily** and **Max**’s faces? That’s their memory of what once was working overtime there.

3▶ **Judy Virago** doing *Royal Tenenbaums* is really hot. Way hotter than that snore Gwyneth Paltrow. As Joan Rivers says, “Who voted on the committee to name Gwyneth Paltrow the most beautiful woman in Hollywood? Stevie Wonder and Hellen Keller?” She slays me, that Joan.

4▶ **Jason** and **Jesse** are so cute it’s actually sickening me to look at this picture. Jesse especially. This girl needs to

get an agent and quit getting her mug up in these amateur shots. Seriously, though, her face is the equivalent of a soprano at karaoke — like, go get a record deal and get off my stage. I have a really slurry rendition of Boney M’s “Daddy Cool” that needs turning out. Know what I mean?

5▶ How much do you want to fuck **Kate** in this picture? Speaking of Joan Rivers and *Fashion Police*, this is what I wish Kelly Osbourne would do with her style instead of that weird Veronica Lake, grey-hair thing that’s going on above her forehead. Kate in the Cali shirt and light-purple pompadour is killing it with those butch glasses and thick eyebrows. **Lee** isn’t so bad herself, with the tattoos and crazy-ass piercings. And they say the lesbian scene is dead. Psh tosh — my ass it is.

6▶ I’m putting these in only because the 4am last call at Wrongbar is always the spot for NXNE, Pride or TIFF. Everyone who’s done an event in the city and needs to get faced to celebrate shows up, plus all the musicians and sweet young things. Wrongbar is both neutral territory in the west end and a safe haven from the madness (OMG, have you been to Ossington lately? It’s like going to the suburbs after a fire sale at a mall). Be prepared to see pairings like **Sasha**, **Quinton** and **Diana**. Can you tell it’s 3am on their faces? Hell no! That’s how pro the Wrongbar crowd is. It’s a relay, not a sprint, as these vets know.

7▶ Truth be told, this pic of **Pete**, **Calvin**, **Matthew** and **Alex** made it in only because of the visions I had of an all-boy pileup involving these four. Alex’s hat says “LUST.” In capitals, no less. Envision it with me. Yeah . . . there it is.



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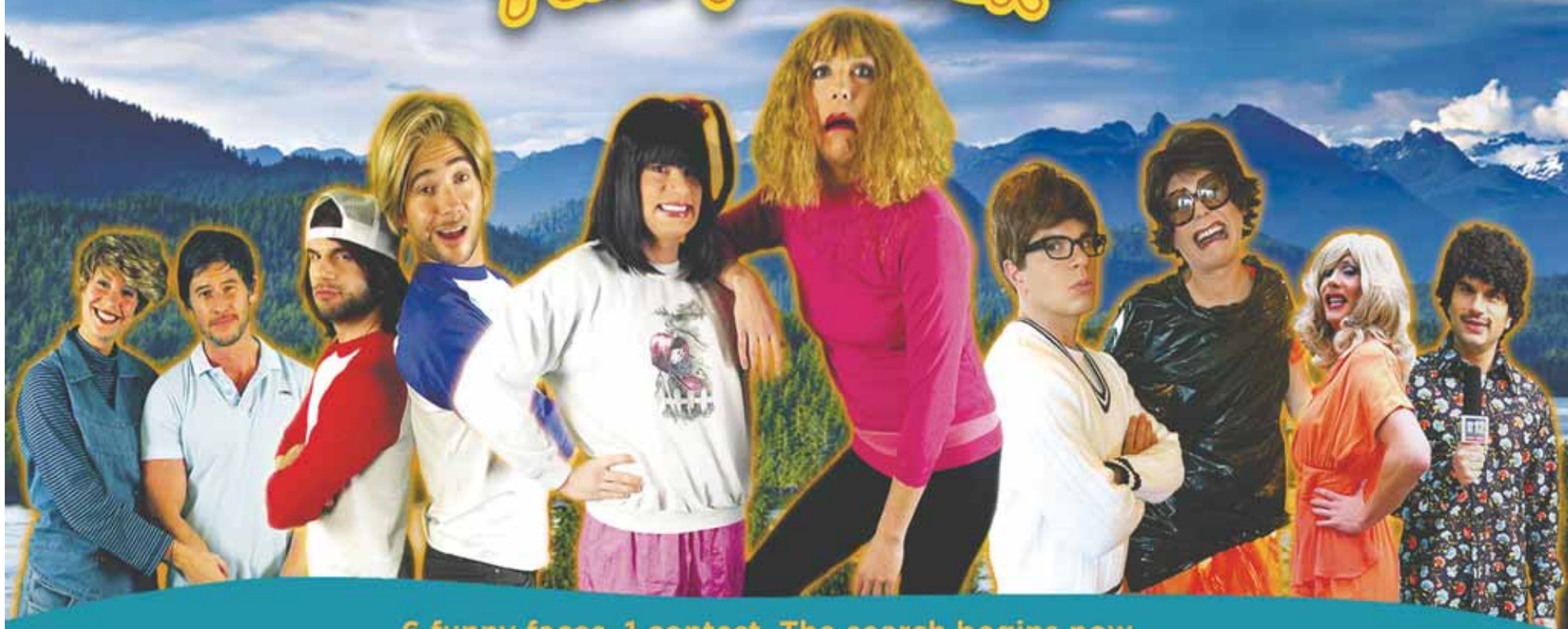


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416-487-3273 x24

Telecommunications

Acanac
416-849-8530

Theatre

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre
416-975-8555

V

XTRA HOT

DRASKO BOGDANOVIC



NAME: MAT MUIR
AGE: 29 SIGN: CAPRICORN

"Do what makes you happy, don't compromise," says Mat, who likes spending nights with great music, good friends and stiff drinks.

He is turned on by strong personalities, beards and tattoos. The last song he downloaded was "Black Room Boy (Maor Remix)," by Above & Beyond, and he invites you to check out Friday nights at Buddies in Bad Times, with a new lineup and the DFMO party.

@matmuir | Instagram: matmuir | matmuir.tumblr.com

To comment on or become an Xtra Hot guy or gal, email Drasko at xtrahot@dailyxtra.com.

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A black and white photograph of two men standing outdoors. The man on the left is wearing a dark denim jacket and is looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing a light-colored sweater and has sunglasses hanging from his neck. They are standing next to a dark-colored car. In the background, there is a large window with a grid pattern and a view of a beach or coastal area under a cloudy sky.

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While they're not a cure, these treatment options are designed to be effective and convenient. If you've been exploring different HIV treatments, talk to your doctor about **Single Tablet Regimens** too. It's good to know what is out there.