



Hate politics and violence leave some LGBTQ Americans considering life abroad

- pg 14

Community members talk about the animals they love and share their lives with

- pg 18



BROADWAY'S "EUPHORIC CELEBRATION!"
Entertainment

SIX

THE MUSICAL



 **PNC Broadway Lights**
SERIES

JULY 4-16 • BELK THEATER

AT BLUMENTHAL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



BlumenthalArts.org • 704.372.1000
Group Sales: 704.348.5752

Infusion Fund
A Partnership for Arts + Culture

connect

qnotescarolinas.com

twitter.com/qnotescarolinas

facebook.com/qnotescarolinas

instagram.com/qnotescarolinas

contributors this issue

Writers: Lynn Bonner, Alex Bollinger, David Aaron Moore, Mary Ramsey, Gregg Shapiro, Terri Schlichenmeyer Daniel Villarreal

front page

Graphic Design by: Will Kimbrough
Photography: Shyyell Diamond Sanchez-McCray

Mission:

The focus of *QNotes* is to serve the LGBTQ and straight ally communities of the Charlotte region, North Carolina and beyond, by featuring arts, entertainment, news and views content in print and online that directly enlightens, informs and engages the readers about LGBTQ life and social justice issues.

Pride Publishing & Typesetting, Inc., dba *Qnotes*

P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222
ph 704.531.9988 fx 704.531.1361

Publisher: Jim Yarbrough

Sales: x201 adsales@qnotescarolinas.com

Nat'l Sales: Rivendell Media, ph 212.242.6863

Managing Editor: Jim Yarbrough, x201,
editor@qnotescarolinas.com

Digital & Audience Engagement Editor:
Chris Rudisill

chrisrudisill@qnotescarolinas.com

Sr. Content Editor: David Aaron Moore,
specialassignments@qnotescarolinas.com

Copy Editor: Bailey Sides

Production: Will Kimbrough, x205,
production@qnotescarolinas.com

Printed on recycled paper.

Material in *Qnotes* is copyrighted by Pride Publishing & Typesetting © 2020 and may not be reproduced in any manner without written consent of the editor or publisher. Advertisers assume full responsibility — and therefore, all liability — for securing reprint permission for copyrighted text, photographs and illustrations or trademarks published in their ads. The sexual orientation of advertisers, photographers, writers, cartoonists we publish is neither inferred nor implied. The appearance of names or photographs does not indicate the subject's sexual orientation. *Qnotes* nor its publisher assumes liability for typographical error or omission, beyond offering to run a correction. Official editorial positions are expressed in staff editorials and editorial notations and are determined by editorial staff. The opinions of contributing writers and guest columnists do not necessarily represent the opinions of *Qnotes* or its staff. *Qnotes* accepts unsolicited editorial, but cannot take responsibility for its return. Editor reserves the right to accept and reject material as well as edit for clarity, brevity.

charlotte NEWSALLIANCE

charlotteobserver.com/1166/

a local news partner of
The Charlotte Observer

inside this issue

feature

14 Leaving the US behind

news

- 5 Tennessee upholds anti-Trans birth certificate policy
- 8 Most Americans oppose religious-based LGBTQ discrimination
- 8 SCOTUS refuses to hear Christian college lawsuit about trans student housing
- 8 Support for gay relationships drops among Republicans
- 9 Planned Parenthood sues over NC abortion law
- 9 Looking to buy a house in Mecklenburg County?
- 11 The Bar at 316 incident mobilizes the LGBTQ community

a&e

- 20 Boze knows
- 22 Out in Print: "In the Company of Grace: A Veterinarian's Memoir of Trauma and Healing"
- 23 The Juno Show comes to town

life

18 People and their pets

views

4 Introducing Ashley Mazingo

events

For event listings, visit qnotescarolinas.com/events-calendar.



The Juno Show comes to town

'The Juno Show' comes to town: British trans drag diva Juno Birch, who often claims to be an alien, brings her unique stage show to Charlotte as part of a whirlwind American tour.

PAGE 23

Planned Parenthood sues over NC abortion law

Planned Parenthood sues over NC abortion law: Dr. Beverly Gray calls law unreasonable and says access to realistic reproductive choice will be impossible for most.

PAGE 9



NOW FIND **Qnotes** IN 63 CHARLOTTE-AREA FOOD LION AND HARRIS TEETER GROCERY STORES

Now more new locations for pick-up to support our readers and advertisers.



These rates only cover a portion of our true cost, however, our goal is to serve our community

Mailed 1st class from Charlotte, NC, in sealed envelope.

Subscription Rates: 1 yr - 26 issues = \$48 1/2 yr - 13 issues = \$34

Mail to: P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222

name: _____

address: _____

city: _____

state: _____

zip: _____

credit card - check one: mastercard visa discover american express

card #: _____

exp. date: _____

signature: _____

SUBSCRIBE!

Introducing Ashley Mazingo

Success coach and journalist joins Qnotes as Advertising and Partnerships Account Executive

By Qnotes Staff

Ashley Mazingo has been a success coach for creatives and journalists since 2013. During that time, she's worked with fashion, wellness, travel and design brands helping create marketing and DEI strategies. She is a graduate of Winston-Salem State University and has a masters degree in business administration from Strayer University.

Ashley will be leading growth for Qnotes as it celebrates 37 years of publishing for the LGBTQ+ community of Charlotte and the Carolinas. As the new Advertising and Partnership Account Executive, she'll be focused on building relationships with the local business community, something she is no stranger to, and developing a strategy to build sustainable revenue to support the organization into the future.

What better way to get to know Ashley than a round of 20 Questions? We hope you'll join us in welcoming her to the team. Reach out directly by emailing adsales@qnotescarolinas.com.



Ashley Mazingo, MBA. CREDIT: PEE SHEFF

What movie do you know all the lines to?

I don't have a movie that I know all the lines, but if you play Usher's My Way Album, I'll sing every single note.

Who do you think is a true LGBTQ+ icon?

PRINCE. Prince was my first exposure to fluidity and androgyny. The heels, makeup, and crop tops sold me. I saw a man being sexy and non-conforming, and it blew my mind.

What was your first job?

Dollar Tree & Aeropostale! Shout-out to my favorite manager ever, Christina!

What (or who) makes you laugh the most?

I'm legally bound to say my wife, but off the record, the animated series Bordertown gets me every time.

What never fails to make you cry?

I cry at everything - a butterfly, a kid

playing in the park with their parent, Disney movies, Demon Slayer, spilled milk. Everything.

What's one thing on your bucket list?

To backpack/explore New Zealand. I became obsessed with New Zealand in the early 2000s because of the Nickelodeon series Rocket Power. My favorite X-games characters participated in The Junior Waikikamukau Games in the Race Across New Zealand episode. I remained interested in going and have recently learned they have one of the highest LGBTQ+ acceptance rates in the world. (More love, less hate.)

Instagram or TikTok?

Follow me everywhere @coachmazingo.

What's your favorite free thing to do in Charlotte?

Grab a blanket and relax in the park.

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Union County, New Jersey, and spent most of my elementary school years in Jersey. We moved to Goldsboro, NC towards the latter half of those years, and I finished high school there.

What's your best piece of advice for young LGBTQ+ youth in our community?

Get in the habit of saying "I love you" to yourself every day. Don't let a day go by without telling yourself that you love yourself. Say it when you wake up, during lunch, or before bed.

What would your superhero name be?

The Invisible Guru (I just want to help and keep it moving).

What's one thing you wish more people cared about?

I wish people cared more about mental health and did so beyond a surface-level concern. Mental health is not just about going to therapy or writing in a journal. We can have a million and one mental health

podcasts, a million and one meditation apps, and a million and one therapists. However, if there is still limited access to resources and information, it is the equivalent of corporations dipping their logo in rainbows for June. It's not progressive or advocacy - it's showmanship.

What's the last major purchase you made?

Invisalign. The process has been so much fun. Painful. But fun.

What artist is topping your playlist right now?

KAYTRAMINÉ

Any pets?

No. I'm still mastering feeding myself more than once a day.

Cold brew or iced coffee?

Iced Matcha, Oatmilk, two pumps of vanilla.

Video games or board games?

VIDEO GAMES! I am a Playstation Girlie!

What smell takes you right back to your childhood?

Motorcycle emissions (lol). My Dad rides motorcycles, and I got to be his plus one.

What's your favorite podcast?

Freakonomics Radio.

Finally, since you're a business coach we wanted to ask you about another type of "coach" - what type of bag do you prefer. Tote, messenger or old-school backpack?

This is so funny! I love the brand COACH. I have a hidden agenda to create a collaboration with them one day (LOL). I have to go with a good Tote Bag! I need to be able to access things quickly, so the tote makes that process easier for a busy-body like me. ::

HIV/AIDS Support Group
Need a safe place to talk?
 Come join our HIV/AIDS Support Group
 Hear how others are managing their lives while sharing your own experiences in a supportive, confidential environment.
When: 2nd Wednesday of the Month
For location and/or more information, call 866-CWW-4-YOU (866-299-4968), ext. 3015.
Your Health Is Our Priority!

Connie J. Vetter, Esq.
Attorney at Law, PLLC
Your LGBTQ+ Law Attorney serving Clients from across North Carolina
Talk/Text 704-333-4000 or online




Tennessee upholds anti-Trans birth certificate policy

Previous court cases successful in other states



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

A federal court judge in Tennessee has upheld the state's discriminatory anti-transgender birth certificate policy as of June 22, which will not allow transgender people to correct the gender marker on their Tennessee birth certificates.

That ruling leaves them grappling with inconsistent government identity documents and Tennessee one of only a handful of states left in the country that still categorically prohibit transgender people from correcting their birth certificates to accurately reflect their identity.

"At a time where we are under attack, I am devastated to see that after years waiting for this decision, the court has refused to allow us the opportunity to prove our case," said plaintiff Kayla Gore, 37, who lives in Memphis, Tenn.

"Tennessee's discriminatory birth certificate policy has not only gravely impacted my life, but also presents a roadblock for all transgender Tennesseans," she continued. "We deserve recognition and dignity from the government just as much as every other Tennessean."

The LGBTQ civil rights organization Lambda Legal filed a federal lawsuit in 2019 challenging Tennessee's anti-trans policy

on behalf of transgender people born in Tennessee – Kayla Gore, Jaime Combs, and two plaintiffs identified by their initials, L.G. and K.N.

At that time, Tennessee was one of just three remaining states, including Kansas and Ohio, with such a policy. Since then, federal courts in both Kansas and Ohio ruled that such policies are unconstitutional, but states like Montana, North Dakota and Oklahoma have adopted similar discriminatory policies.

"We are very disappointed in [the] decision, which fails to acknowledge the incontrovertible truth that birth certificates are the quintessential identity document," said Lambda Legal Counsel and Health Care Strategist Omar Gonzalez-Pagan.

"Tennessee's discriminatory birth certificate policy forces transgender Tennesseans to out themselves and to use an identity document inconsistent with who they are. This is wrong.

"As Tennessee continues to target transgender people for discrimination and opprobrium, we will continue to fight for their rights," she explained. "We continue to evaluate what next steps we will take in this case."

"It's hard to exist as a transgender person in Tennessee at this moment," said plaintiff Jaime Combs, 54, who lives near Knoxville. "To have the court join state officials to willfully not see us for who we are adds to that burden.

"All my life I've been carrying an inac-

curate birth certificate, complicating my life and making me feel not seen by my government," she offered. "Today, my heart is saddened as the court has refused to address the harms imposed by Tennessee's policy, but I will continue to fight against the discrimination that continues to be perpetuated by the state of Tennessee."

The federal court decision comes after the Tennessee legislature enacted a raft of anti-transgender bills which Tennessee Governor Bill Lee signed into law. These bills have banned transgender youth from participating in sports, criminalized the provision of gender-affirming medical care for trans adolescents, banned drag performances and required businesses to post signs if they allow transgender people to use the correct bathrooms.

The latter two have been found unconstitutional by federal courts and the ban on gender-affirming care for trans adolescents (L.W. v. Skrmetti) and prohibition on sports participation by transgender youth (L.E. v. Lee) is currently facing challenge in court, as well.

In the lawsuit, Gore v. Lee, attorneys argued that denying transgender people born in Tennessee the ability to obtain accurate birth certificates violates the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the U.S. Constitution.

The lawsuit also argues that forcing transgender people through their birth cer-



It's hard to exist as a transgender person in Tennessee at this moment.
Jaime Combs, metro Knoxville resident.
CREDIT: Facebook

tificates to identify with a sex that is not who they are violates their free speech rights under the First Amendment.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee in Nashville and has been filed in multiple states throughout the United States, where Lambda Legal's efforts have been largely successful.

According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, almost one-third of transgender people who showed an identity document with a name or gender marker that conflicted with their perceived gender were harassed, denied benefits or services, discriminated against or assaulted. Transgender people also are disproportionately targeted for hate crimes. ::

Reach out. Help is here.

If you're struggling with feeling sad or worried or even angry, you don't have to keep the hurt inside. Talk to someone.

Find people and resources that can help at ncdhhs.gov/OpenToCare.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

***THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK
INTENTIONALLY***

***THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK
INTENTIONALLY***

Most Americans oppose religious-based LGBTQ discrimination

Large majorities of U.S. adults across different racial, ethnic and religious identities oppose religious-based discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, according to a new Williams Institute report.

Even majorities of Republicans oppose religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination, the report found. Its findings suggest that Republican-led attacks on LGBTQ+ civil rights — many of which are couched in religious terms — are actually opposed by most American adults.

The data came from the Williams Institute's September 2022 survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,003 adults.

Approximately 84 percent of survey respondents said they opposed religious-based denials of healthcare to LGBTQ+ people, 74 percent opposed religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ employment discrimination and 71 percent opposed business employees denying services to LGBTQ+ people based on the employees or employer's religious beliefs.

Over 80 percent of respondents in all non-white racial and ethnic groups opposed the use of religious beliefs to deny LGBTQ+ people business services, medical care and employment. About 70 percent of white respondents felt the same. Female, younger or college-educated respondents were also more likely to oppose religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination than respondents who are men, older in age or non-college educated.

While Democrats unsurprisingly opposed these various types of religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination by about 90 percent, the report surprisingly found that Republican majorities also opposed such discrimination: 52 percent opposed religious-based refusal of business services to LGBTQ+ people, 54 percent opposed religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ employment discrimination and 71 percent opposed religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ healthcare discrimination.

Respondents who personally know LGBTQ+ people were more likely to oppose such religious-based discrimination, the re-

port found. However, even respondents who don't personally know LGBTQ+ people were also opposed to religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination by margins of 65 percent to 80 percent.

Even majorities of Protestant/Christian, Catholic and non-Christian faiths opposed such religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination.

When asked about their support for allowing religious-based anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination, less than 30 percent of respondents in almost every different demographic supported allowing such discrimination.

These findings matter specifically because Republicans have introduced over 400 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in state legislatures nationwide. Many have been couched in religious justifications.

Florida, for example, passed a law in May that allows any medical worker or insurer to deny care to anyone based on "ethical, moral or religious beliefs." The U.S. Supreme Court is also about to issue a ruling on



Recent study shows most Americans disapprove of religion used to discriminate. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

whether religious beliefs should permit public-facing businesses to violate LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination laws.

"Recent efforts by some state legislatures to expand religious exemptions from LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination laws are largely out of alignment with the views of most Americans," wrote Christy Mallory, Legal Director at the Williams Institute and author of the study. "More than three in four Americans now favor civil rights laws protecting LGBTQ people against religiously motivated discrimination."

This article appears courtesy of our media partner LGBTQ Nation. ::

— Daniel Villarreal/LGBTQ Nation

SCOTUS refuses to hear Christian college lawsuit about trans student housing

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to hear a private Christian college's legal challenge to President Joe Biden's executive order prohibiting LGBTQ+ housing discrimination.

On Biden's first day in office, he signed a sweeping executive order instructing executive agencies to interpret federal civil rights legislation as already banning discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in many areas of the law, including housing discrimination.

A month later, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued a directive updating its interpretation of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) to forbid LGBTQ+ housing discrimination based on people's sex or gender, The Hill reported.

In April 2021, the Missouri-based College of the Ozarks sued the Biden Administration,

stating that its Christian faith required the college to assign student dormitory housing based on students' sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity. The college was represented by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), an influential anti-LGBTQ+ legal group that opposes any expansion of LGBTQ+ civil rights and authors anti-LGBTQ+ "model" legislation passed by Republican-led state legislatures.

The ADF's lawsuit said that Biden had denied the college its procedural right to comment on the HUD's new interpretation of the FHA before it was formally implemented.

"That result has mammoth implications," the ADF's lawsuit said. "If HUD gets away with rewriting the FHA via the Directive, it has no incentive to ever go through the



US Supreme court rebuffs College of the Ozark's attempt to legitimize housing discrimination against Trans students. CREDIT: Fred Schilling, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States

rule-making process. That eliminates judicial review until after an enforcement proceeding is complete and the regulated entity has already been harmed."

However, lower courts disagreed, saying the college lacked legal standing to challenge the law because it faced no imminent enforcement risk.

The courts' disagreement rested partially upon the fact that, in court filings, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) said the HUD's

FHA interpretation didn't address how the new policy would interact with the college's religious exemption to Title IX. This federal law forbids schools from discriminating "on the basis of sex."

Judges have previously ruled that private religious schools can discriminate against LGBTQ+ students because of their religious exemptions to Title IX.

"HUD has never filed a charge of sex discrimination based on a housing policy against an educational institution where, as here, the Department of Education has recognized that institution's entitlement to a religious exemption under Title IX," the DOJ wrote in a court filing.

While the College of the Ozarks could file a new case if the Biden Administration tries to punish the school for housing transgender students in dorms that don't match their gender identity, the DOJ's aforementioned court filing makes it seem unlikely that the Biden Administration will ever take that step.

This article appears courtesy of our media partner LGBTQ Nation. ::

— Daniel Villarreal/LGBTQ Nation

Support for gay relationships drops among Republicans

After two years of rising conservative rhetoric calling LGBTQ+ people "groomers" and "pedophiles," support for same-sex relationships has dropped among Republicans.

A Gallup Poll this month found that only 64 percent of Americans said that gay or lesbian relationships were morally acceptable, a seven percent drop since 2022. The percentage of Americans saying that same-sex relationships are morally acceptable has steadily risen since 2001, when Gallup first started asking people's opinions on the subject.

The drop was driven by Republicans. In 2022, 56 percent of Republicans said that same-sex relationships are morally acceptable. This year, only 41 percent said so. Support among Democrats dropped less precipitously from 85 percent to 79 percent

and rose slightly among independents from 72 percent to 73 percent.

One Republican senator told Insider that the GOP message this year is supposed to be about attacking transgender rights and that rank-and-file Republicans are "conflating" the issues.

"I think people are conflating same-sex rights with transgender rights, and they are very different issues," said Sen. Cynthia Lummis (R-WY). Lummis voted in favor of the Respect for Marriage Act last year but says that transgender people "tried to erase women's rights" by "elevating the rights of transsexuals above everyone else."

Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) is another Republican who supported the Respect for Marriage Act but opposes transgender

rights. He too used the word "conflated" to describe the Republican base's growing opposition to gay equality.

"I think that the general moods and attitudes are changing there," he said. "But I think you've got a lot of issues that are being conflated."

Sen. J.D. Vance (R-OH) insisted that people "don't really care about same-sex marriage" and are instead concerned about "giving hormonal therapies to 13-year-old kids," despite the Gallup Poll showing that many Republicans, at least, are not making a distinction between sexual orientation and gender identity.

When Gallup first asked about people's views on the moral acceptability of same-sex relationships in 2001, only 40 percent of Americans agreed that they were. A majority agreed for the first time in 2010, with 52 percent of Americans saying that they were morally acceptable.

The percentage of people saying that



While support for same sex relationships remains high among the general population, Republican support is waning. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

same-sex relationships are morally acceptable reached its high point last year at 71 percent.

Support for marriage equality remains higher. Gallup found that 71 percent of Americans support marriage equality this year, the same as last year.

This article appears courtesy of our media partner LGBTQ Nation. ::

— Alex Bollinger/LGBTQ Nation

Planned Parenthood sues over NC abortion law

Planned Parenthood South Atlantic filed a federal lawsuit Friday over the new North Carolina law limiting abortion, saying its provisions are contradictory, add further harm to rape victims and may violate the First Amendment.

Most of the North Carolina law banning abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy except in cases of rape, incest, "life-limiting fetal anomalies" or emergencies goes into effect on July 1. The state now has a 20-week ban on most abortions.

The new law allows abortions up to 20 weeks of pregnancy in cases of rape or incest. But abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy must be performed in hospitals rather than clinics.

"This irrational limitation on one of the safest medical procedures will further harm victims of sexual assault without improving safety," the lawsuit says.

The lawsuit seeks to make clear whether abortion pills are legal through 12 weeks of pregnancy. Medication abortions are the most common form of abortion in the state.

Legislators in their public statements said abortion pills can be used through 12 weeks, but the law is inconsistent, referring to both 12 week and 70-day limits for using abortion pills, the lawsuit says.

The law is also unclear as to whether Planned Parenthood or doctors can help people who are more than 12 weeks pregnant obtain legal abortions in other states, the lawsuit says. If the law prohibits offering that advice, it violates the First Amendment, the suit says.

Dr. Beverly Gray, a Duke University Ob/Gyn who was one of the doctors most critical of the bill, is one of the plaintiffs.

"Given the hurried passage of this bill



Plaintiff Dr. Beverly Gray says new law is 'unreasonable and will make it virtually impossible for many people to receive abortion care in our state.'
CREDIT: Duke University Staff image

without guidance from the medical community, S.B. 20 lacks clarity and asks patients and health care providers to overcome

impossible hurdles to obtain and provide care," she said in a statement. "These hurdles are not based in science but are unreasonable and will make it virtually impossible for many people to receive abortion care in our state."

Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein is named as a defendant in the suit. Stein, who is running for governor, opposes the law.

In a press release last month Stein said, "This bill is about controlling women and taking away their freedoms. And they are not done yet. They will keep coming until they completely ban abortion in every instance. We can't let them."

Senate Bill 20 passed in party-line votes last month. Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the bill. His veto was overridden in party-lines votes.

Under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0, this article appears courtesy of our media partner NCNewsline.

—Lynn Bonner

Looking to buy a house in Mecklenburg County?

The average home price in Mecklenburg County may hit another milestone soon, a report from the county says.

"Mecklenburg is experiencing another shortage in homes for sale which will likely push average home prices past \$600,000 within the next couple of months," county economist Michael Simmons said in May's Mecklenburg County Residential Housing Market report.

The report puts the average home price in the county as of May, the most recent data available, at \$592,252, "up 12.1 percent year-over-year."

"Growth in home prices has picked up due to the shortage in homes with this month being the first to see year-over-year growth in the double digits since November of 2022," the report said. The same study put the median home price in Mecklenburg County at \$445,000 for May. Averages are the result of adding up values and dividing by the number of examples, whereas medi-

ans are a middle value.

There was "a notable slump" in year-over-year home sales in the month, the report says. "New listings year-over-year were down 28.5 percent with 1,627 properties up for sale compared to 2,277 properties up for sale over the same period last year. A normal number of listings for the month of May is typically around 2,400," it said. The report looks at "Mecklenburg County as a whole, and the individual submarkets for the area," and is based on information from "Canopy MLS, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis."

What are others saying about Charlotte home prices?

The real estate website Zillow puts the average home value — a measure the company says is "designed to capture the value of a typical property across the nation or the neighborhood, not just the



Because of the continuing shortage of housing in Mecklenburg County, houses that become available sell quickly. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

homes that sold — in Mecklenburg County as of June at \$404,652.

In its most recent National Housing Report, the real estate firm RE/MAX said the median home sale price in Greater Charlotte was \$398,000, and the median list price

was \$410,000. And the real estate company Redfin put the May median home sale price in Charlotte at \$410,000.

This story appears courtesy of our media partner The Charlotte Observer. ::

—Mary Ramsey/Charlotte Observer

We buy interesting & worthwhile used books & Compact Discs.

Books Do Furnish A Room
1809 W Markham Avenue • 286-1076
(Between 9th & Broad) Durham

Lupie's Cafe

HOME OF THE EMPTY PLATE CLUB!

2718 Monroe Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28205
704-374-1232

101-A Old Statesville Rd.
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-948-3959

Email: lupie@lupiescafe.com
www.lupiescafe.com

CAROLINAS
LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce

CONNECT. ENGAGE. EMPOWER.

To Become a Member or Partner: 704.837.4050
www.clgbtcc.org
info@clgbtcc.org

WHITE RABBIT

WHERE EVERYONE IS WELCOME



WHITE RABBIT
920 CENTRAL AVE.
CHARLOTTE N.C. , 28204
(704) 377-4067



FOLLOW US @



@WHITERABBIT



WRABBITNC



SHOPWHITERABBIT

The Bar at 316 incident mobilizes the LGBTQ community

Nightclub owner with purported history of racist and inappropriate behavior verbally assaults drag performer



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

Verbal harassment and humiliation aimed at a drag performer of color exploded live and on stage June 17, at The Bar at 316. The local establishment typically caters to a mostly young and white gay male crowd. Community members are crying foul and pointing to continuing evidence of racist and discriminatory behavior from owner Jeff Edwards.

The firestorm of reaction has led to more than 250 signatures of condemnation from well-known performers, high-profile individuals and businesses in the LGBTQ community. Peaceful protests are continuing outside of the establishment on a regular basis, while many in the community are telling Edwards it's time to get out of the business and encouraging potential customers to stay away.

Shelby Savage, a well-liked, beard-wearing drag performer was the brunt of Edwards' verbal assault. Named Miss South Carolina USA Unlimited Newcomer this past year, she and the other performers on the bill the night of June 17, among them Angela Lopez, Ava Gemini and Aurora Carlisle Nicole, had already performed a successful first show before the evening's controversy occurred.

"It was great," Savage recalled. "The audience was having a lot of fun, everyone was enjoying the show and I made \$200! There were bills all over the floor."

It was during the second show, after the crew of performers had gone downstairs for a costume change and returned back to the stage that trouble arose.

"The DJ wasn't really paying attention," Savage recalls. "At first he played a completely wrong song by another artist, something other than what I had given him. I pointed that out and said it was the second song on the drive by Lizzo."

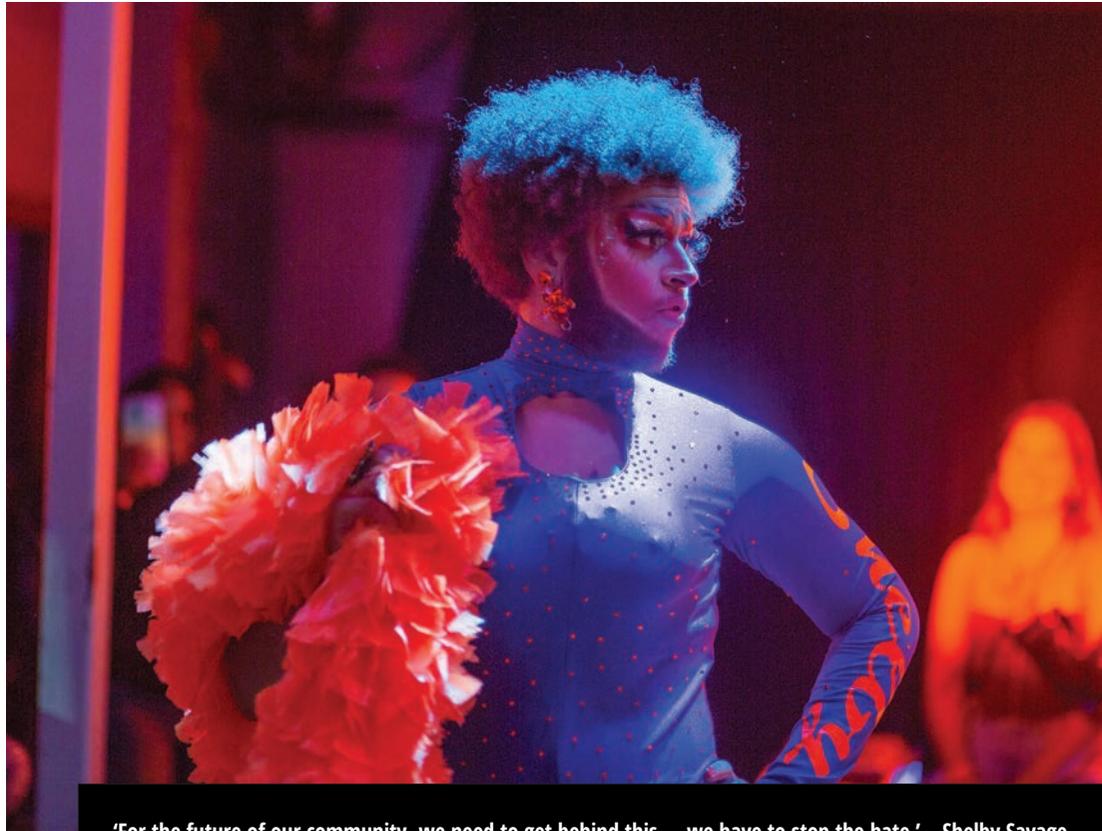
"He still didn't get it right and I screamed, 'if you're not going to play the right f*ckin' song, then I won't f*ckin' perform."

"I could have handled that better and I probably shouldn't have said it like that. I felt bad because he came out and apologized for it and I realized it was an honest mistake."

Just before Savage was to start the next performance, Edwards reportedly made a mad dash from the stairs towards the stage, screaming at the DJ and Savage.

"Cut it, cut it," Edwards was heard yelling. "Just shut it down." After aggressively demanding the entertainment be halted he turned his attention to Savage, who recalled Edwards screaming, "Get this damn freak off my stage!"

"I was shocked," says Savage. "I think everyone was. The whole room fell silent. It was so quiet in there you could have heard a mouse peeing on cotton," she



'For the future of our community, we need to get behind this ... we have to stop the hate.' – Shelby Savage.
CREDIT: courtesy Shelby Savage

chuckled uncomfortably.

"It just wasn't something I was expecting. The mood had been so positive and uplifting. When I perform I tend to do the stuff that's campy and comedy. I like to make people laugh."

But the incident that had just unfolded in the comfortably packed room didn't leave anyone laughing.

"People started to leave," Savage explains. "I think it made a lot of people uncomfortable."

Savage confirms she left shortly thereafter but according to her friend and the show host Angela Lopez, things continued to deteriorate. "She told me that he was very patronizing and talking down to her," Savage said.

Lopez posted a video on social media offering a heartfelt apology to Savage and distancing herself from Edwards and 316.

"I want to apologize to Shelby for the way she was treated on Saturday at 316," she said slowly.

"I feel horrible that it ever happened, because I was the one that asked her to come there. It was horrible to witness and I just can't understand why [it happened]."

"That being said, I honestly cannot condone or promote or work at a place that treats people that way, because no one should ever be treated that way."

"I will no longer be affiliated with The Bar at 316 and there are not enough 'I'm sorrys' I can say to Shelby for the way she was treated."

For her part, Savage remains in good spirits.

Her response to Lopez and the Facebook video clip confirms she knows what her priorities are. "I know it was never your intention for me to feel unwanted or attacked in one of your shows. I was there to witness the shocked and disgusted look on your face as Jeff yelled across the room ... I want you to know that I love you and this has only made our friendship and bond stronger."

Touched by response from the community, Savage is wholly supportive of their call to action, which places a ban on performers who work with Edwards from appearing at other venues across both Carolinas and calls for him to completely step away from the nightclub business. She bears no ill will towards the venue, employees or patrons and she recognizes the historic importance of the Dilworth neighborhood bar, which originally opened as a club in August 1989 and was previously known as Liaisons. "I don't want to see that go away," she offers. "It is significant. I just don't believe Mr. Edwards is the one who should be running it."

Savage is certainly no stranger to controversy, especially after being rebuked previously by an LGBTQ nightclub in North Carolina two years ago that seemingly cooked up a questionable mix of various reasons to prevent her from performing.

In June of 2021 Savage posted on her Facebook account that she was denied entry into a Greensboro, N.C., talent show held at Chemistry Nightclub. According to comments Savage attributed to the club's show director, she was disqualified

because she had already performed at other night clubs in town.

She ended that post with the following statement: "I would like all my Greensboro friends and family to avoid Chemistry and the negative environment Drew [Wofford] has created in the city's club community."

If Savage is no stranger to controversy, Edwards practically has BFF status, at least according to a press release created by Johnny Saldana, a board member at the Freedom Center for Social Justice and the co-founder of the Charlotte Gaymers Network.

The press release reads as follows: "There are multiple police reports, hundreds of reviews and countless first-hand accounts that show Edwards' abusive and threatening pattern of behavior towards LGBTQ+ people."

The final paragraph offers significant detail on some of Edwards' more controversial incidents, including a purported arrest in August 2019 for resisting an officer and another arrest for battery assault by strangulation in November 2019.

Among the reviews of the bar there is evidence of different standards of treatment from various patrons. A post dated June 21 on Yelp indicates Edwards apparently refused entry to a potential patron and told him he was "too ugly to be let in," while later repeating the same phrase to a drag queen, days after the event involving Savage.

Other posts reporting racist behavior directly attributed to Edwards show up in January of this year and date back as far as November 2016.

Attempts were made to contact Edwards to allow him to comment on this article by phone and text. He did not respond.

On national, regional and local levels, LGBTQ communities have been caught up in a seemingly never ending nightmare of legislated discrimination. South Carolina has already passed anti-trans and anti-drag laws. In North Carolina, Republicans remain hard at work attempting to bar all trans youth from participating in public and private educational institution sports activities.

In an atmosphere for many in the LGBTQ community that feels like regression, the last thing you'd expect would be discrimination from within the community towards itself.

Savage is adamant that all LGBTQ folks need to stand together to battle intra-community intolerance and racial animus.

"It is very important," Savage insists. "For the future of our community, we need to get behind this to fight against people like Edwards and others like him, both inside and outside our community. This has been going on for years and it has to stop. We have to stop the hate." ::

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North and South Carolina Drag Entertainers announce boycott of The Bar at 316

CHARLOTTE, NC – 6/21/23 – Leaders of North and South Carolina’s drag communities, composed of drag entertainers and performers announced today that they are launching a multi-state wide boycott campaign of The Bar at 316, owned and operated by Jeff Edwards. Additionally, the drag community has instituted a ban on any drag performer/entertainer that accepts a booking, or otherwise performs at The Bar at 316. This boycott will block any performer who collaborates with Jeff Edwards and The Bar at 316, in any way, from performing at any other venue in either state run by the undersigned. We take this unprecedented step in response to Mr. Edwards history of aggression and racism, which has caused repeated harm to Black and Brown members of the LGBTQ+ community.

There are multiple police reports, hundreds of reviews, and countless firsthand accounts that show Mr. Edwards' abusive and threatening pattern of behavior towards LGBTQ+ people. This culminated in an incident this past weekend, where our folks are saying enough is enough. On the night of June 17th, 2023, Jeff Edwards again displayed his contempt towards BIPOC members of the LGBTQ+ community. A local drag performer of color was beginning their contracted performance on stage at the Bar at 316, when interrupted by Jeff Edwards. Mr. Edwards aggressively rushed towards the entertainer mid-performance, yelling "GET THIS FREAK OFF MY STAGE," and ended the show.

This is yet another public incident where Jeff has publicly humiliated and harassed a local drag entertainer. This uncalled for public outburst is indicative of the danger Jeff Edwards presents to the community. For years, Jeff has been an indelible stain on Charlotte’s LGBTQ+ community, evidenced by the hundreds of reviews left by patrons which call out his behavior. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

There have been warning signals going all the way back to 2019, when Jeff was arrested in [August of 2019 for Resisting an Officer](#). In November of that same year, things take a darker turn when he’s [arrested for Battery Assault by Strangulation](#). Incidents have added up, year over year, culminating in an individual who thinks he can treat folks however he wants, without fear of repercussions. It is because of this, that our community has felt the need to release this statement, and enact the extreme measures that we have, to bring attention to this person and his misdeeds.

Please refer all press/media inquiries to our email address: boycottbarat316@gmail.com

SIGNATORIES, INCLUDING COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES

- Onya Nerves and DKO Entertainment
- Lolita Chanel
- Liam Laughlin
- Kristi Darling
- Faith N Mae
- Buff Faye
- Candelario Saldana
- Tiffany Storm
- Nova Stella
- Dale Pierce AKA Mink Shoals, Executive Director of Dudley's Place
- Mania
- Quan Rutledge-Wade
- Charlotte Black Pride
- Cierra Desiree Nichole
- Lilli Serena Frost
- Hangover Takeover Events
- Rosenriot
- Tanner Shriver
- Gary Montgomery (QC Queer Centro)
- Chynaa Maraj Evangelista
- Alex Guiteras
- Rylee Hunty
- Ryan Butterfield
- Cristal Robinson
- Cynthia Brown
- Monica King
- Duchess Mizz Lacie Lynn
- Jay Perez
- Giselle Cassidy Carter
- Jonny Golian w/ Reporting From 20XX
- Nadia Rain
- Bethany Ross
- Monica Tirado
- Todd Sic
- Matthew Amick
- Brandon Bentley
- Hazael Gonzalez
- Valerie Coia
- Maria Parada
- Ricky Ruff
- Shauna Griffin
- CC Labrie
- Sinister Slaughter
- Megan Nisbet
- Devin Kallam
- Bethany Petersen
- Skye San
- Bryan Mendoza
- All-Star International Icon Pageantry System CEO Brianna La'Shawn Mc'Coy
- Viper
- Ivy Carter
- Charlotte Pride
- Devin Osborne
- Evelyn Castro
- Ray Graham
- Danielle Mayes
- Saniya Chanel Iman
- KayCee St James (Charity Drag Brunch Director @ Artisan's Palate)
- River Styxx
- George Moropoulos
- David Lilly
- Druzilla La Fae
- Shyyell Diamond Sanchez-McCray
- Justin Castle
- Shaine Laine
- Ashton Maerz
- Our Pride Life
- DNA Charlotte
- Seth Loven
- Dima Lor
- Damien Jones
- Don Javi
- Christopher Gonzalez
- Rev. Debra J. Hopkins
- Reva Iman
- Connie Vetter
- Sunny Dior
- Rosedale Health and Wellness
- Ellis D, Hysteria Cole of Underground Presents
- Joseph Inglis
- Time Out Youth
- Freedom Center for Social Justice
- Missy V Sour
- Zachary Luke Designs
- Jean-Belle Bleu
- Aqronym Entertainment
- Equality North Carolina
- Ross Veleke
- William Leech
- The Dudzik Family
- Sassi Guinevere Michaels
- Deanna Cuccinello
- Dexter Jordan
- Kevin Melody
- RC Cola
- Erica Chanel, Riley Malicious, Ariana Venti and The Vanity House
- Crystal Brooks
- Shelby Savage
- Karen Affection
- Pepper Insult
- Oso Chanel
- Misster, Vegas Van Dank, King Perk, Bloody Mary, and Carolina Creepshow
- Charlotte FFI/ME Pageantry
- Jayla Serena Mitchell
- Elena DeVour, Fendi Carter Moore, and Houston Hangover (% Twisted Sisters Drag Brunch)
- Venus Wyre
- Tara Dactyl Nerves
- Xa'Mona Ten e
- Giovonni Diamond
- Victoria C. Von Dahlia
- Jersey Omari Lavish
- Jason R. Rose
- Velma Dearwood (Show Producer in Charleston)
- Board of Union County Pride, Inc
- Olivia Knowles
- Thigh Fieri
- Gouda Judy (Show director and producer in Columbia)
- Kameron Styles/Luscious
- Dillon Duvet
- Madison Steeger
- Marsha Mellows (Show Producer/ Raleigh, NC)
- Darian Thompson
- Audrey Stewart
- Nigel Witherspoon
- Godfrey Thompson
- Amora Fedora
- Tommy Feldman
- Chlorina
- Lucas Miles
- Blake Anderson
- Travis Thompson
- Brianna Mccoy
- Raven Queeny
- Austin Faulks
- Barrett Hudson
- Barbara Reddy
- Kelli Voss
- Han D. Mann
- Madison Leslie
- James Maldonado
- Sapphire Dupree
- Leonardo Salazar
- Saturos
- Tasia Dior
- Diamond Sanchez XL
- La'Sol Quartz
- Jupiter Quartz
- Stella Quartz
- Peaches N. Cr me
- Tiffany Dior
- Paisley Parque
- Adri n Antunes
- Tyler Santini
- Demitri Marsh
- Lynkoya Handy
- Miranda Savage
- DJ Ghost/Todd Calton
- Uppity LLC
- Emmett Tidwell
- Medusa Chaos
- Kerri M
- Erickson Hernandez
- Leslie Barraza
- Isaiah Cornelius
- Canela (Show Director/Drag to the Future)
- Cameron Pruette
- Eevee Dulce
- Asa Jordan
- Angel Dior
- Dudley's Place
- Dee Murray
- Chase Weaver
- Carolinas CARE Partnership (Transcend Charlotte)
- Bishop Tonyia Rawls
- Chelsea Gulden
- Nathan Smith
- RAIN
- Will Lattman
- She'La Williams
- Aida Stratton
- Dorie Charnin
- DJ Lady Bear
- Mann Entertainment
- Danielle Hostetler
- Alex M
- Hydration Station Foundation
- Olivia Realty Group
- Kristen Clark
- Brad Duncan
- Zuni Johnson
- Jonny Saldana and David McRae of the Charlotte Gaymers Network
- Jaysin Waterfalls
- Marty McGuy
- Quinnty Fresh
- Stevia Knix
- Will Charmer
- Roy Fahrenheit
- Ava Gemini
- Angela Lopez (Show Producer/ The Bar at 316)
- Jackson Beauregard
- Pixie Cane
- Clint Torris
- Robert Houston
- Legacy of Excellence Pageantry
- Houston's Event & Luxury Planning
- Q. Michael Dewalt (DJ Magick Mike)
- Tallulah Van Dank
- Dandy Van Dank \$exxx
- Regina Woods
- Christopher Smith (C.J.)
- Kara Murphy
- Rebecca Starrdust
- Fellini
- Dontae Malik
- Brian Garcia
- E. Beavers w/Diesel Presents Party Promo
- Stone Parque
- Logan Pierce
- Flint Fahrenheit
- Matthew Ficken
- Chase Knight
- Marquise Harris
- Jasmin Gutierrez Lopez
- Bayleigh Katch
- Blaze O'Glory
- Anna Yacht
- Malayia Chanel Iman
- Dustin Wingate
- Jeremy Fitzgerald
- Maya Wimberger
- Dorian Slay
- Lisa Dixon
- Allstar Pageantry System
- The Pauli Murray LGBTQ+Bar Association
- Jeffrey Retana
- Chosen Mii
- She'La Williams
- Tauryn NinetySeven
- Rev Kyra J Miller
- Panda Berry
- JL  Jonez Chanel-Iman
- Bimbo Thunder Quartz
- Void Quartz
- Prudence Dior
- Angel Knytes
- James Smith
- Ricky Haggerty Knight-Addams
- Cris F.
- Lolita Gray
- Allesandra B
- Cypress Van Dank
- Freddie Grant
- BIPGO Events LLC
- Holly Redd
- Corey Sefers
- Lyle Schools
- Holly Newton
- Julie Campbell
- Lee Day
- Joshua Caswell
- Ella Raye
- Sincere L'etoile
- Ilene Dawn Dover
- Carolinas LGBT+Chamber of Commerce
- Holly Savoy
- Columbia Kings N' Things
- DeShaun C.
- Tia Douglas
- Tyler J Medinger
- Gabriel Alston
- Zachary Wheeler
- Seveene Eleveene
- James Wright
- Joncarlo Palermo
- Angel Austin
- Ken Stephens
- Gina Esquivel
- James Muller
- Greg Fishman
- Valarie "Aunt Carol" Rockwell
- Crystal M. Richardson
- PFLAG Charlotte
- Lainey Millen
- Jason McCraw

Charlotte's Only Exclusive Piercing Studio

SADU

Body Piercing & Modifications

Specializing In
Traditional & Exotic Body Piercing

Large Selection Of
Wood, Stone, Glass & Steel Jewelry

Shop Hours
M-S 11am-7pm • Sun 1pm-6pm
1515 Central Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28205
sadupiercings@yahoo.com
704-344-0011

Q feature

Leaving the US behind

Violence, politics, safety concerns make some LGBTQ Americans consider life abroad



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

An in-depth look at where we are today in relatively recent American history can be traced back to former president Dwight Eisenhower's decision to blur the separation of church and state by allowing the phrases "One Nation under God" to be written into the pledge of allegiance to the flag and "In God We Trust" to be stamped on our currency.

It was the first step in many over multiple generations that led to Donald Trump capturing the White House in 2016 and a thumbs-up to the country's radical right that it was acceptable to emulate bad behavior by their commander-in-chief.

Civility and basic human respect flew out the window, while anti-LGBTQ intolerance and violence have seemingly become commonplace in this country.

Many individuals in the LGBTQ community are giving serious consideration to leaving the United States. Some already have. Others, who aren't in a position to make such a move, grow fearful as hundreds of anti-LGBTQ laws roll out of state legislatures across the country, practically on a daily basis.

We've talked to some who already have, others who are in the process and some who are giving it consideration.

Read these stories and see if you find points of self-recognition mixed among these words. Then ask yourself: what about me? Would I, or should I leave my country if I could, and where would I go?

Katherine Moore was born in Charlotte but spent more than 30 years in Colorado. After her partner passed away, she made the decision to return to North Carolina to be close to family members. At the time Democrats were largely in charge of the state and it was viewed by most as a comfortable purple when it came to politics.

There was nothing that made Moore particularly concerned about moving back to the South. At least, not at first.

"I came back here because I wanted to raise my son in an environment that included family members and I wanted to be near my siblings," Moore explains.



"But what it has evolved into is frightening," she continues. "As if the embarrassment of HB2 wasn't bad enough, now we have a state that is so gerrymandered, the minority is ruling the majority.

"Gun violence is rampant and I have concerns that my son is going to be told he can't read certain books, learn about the importance of our country's racial history and can't tell anyone that he used to have two moms."

"I don't want him to grow up in that kind of environment, so I am giving serious consideration to moving elsewhere. And I hate that my government is forcing me to even think about making this kind of decision."

Moore is, for the moment, straddling the fence. She hasn't come to a final decision as to whether or not she will move at all, relocate to somewhere else in the United States or opt to make her home in another country.

"At first I was thinking of a solid blue state somewhere in the United States would be sufficient, and that's still a possibility. But with things going on like they are on a federal level, it makes me wonder if moving to another country, while we still can, might be the way to go.

Although she is not exactly sold on the intense weather a place like Canada has to offer, she confirms that it is the most logical choice, because it allows her to remain on the same continent as other family members.

"So that's a possibility," says Moore. "For now I guess I'm just waiting. Waiting to see how the elections play out. Will North Carolina end up with a backwards, uneducated and homophobic governor incapable of respecting the separation of government and religion? Will we end up with another term for a deranged president in the white house?"

"We don't know the answers to those things just yet. And to be hon-

est, I don't really want to go. I just have to think about what's best and safe for my son and myself."

While financial resources may not be a problem for some, other considerations exist that can be initially unanticipated, especially in a divisive political climate like the United States is currently facing.

Allison Platt works for a media conglomerate and **Kayla Redmond** like many who live and work in Charlotte and the surrounding metro area, maintains a career in finance.

For both women, announcing their plans to relocate to Canada could potentially damage their professions and hamper their efforts to make the move.

That's why we've made the decision to identify them only by pseudonyms.

"It's not something I feel good about doing," Platt says, referring to the use of pseudonyms. "But it's something we can't avoid right now."

The two women have confirmed they have visited Toronto and other areas of Canada, scoping out what might be the appropriate place for them to live and to make a home with their young daughter.

Platt has informed her immediate superior, who is supportive, and Redmond has talked with the director of human resources, so that she could inquire about the possibility of transferring to an office in Toronto. Neither of the women have discussed the topic with any other coworkers and both are quick to admit during the interview their priorities have changed since the birth of their daughter, resulting in answers today that likely would have been very different five years ago. The desire to move, they explain, is largely centered on her well-being; and apprehension from the ever-increasing tide of gun violence.

"She's just four, and I worry about her safety and what could potentially happen," Platt says of her daughter. "And the best time to do this for her would be now, or very soon, so she doesn't have to readjust to her environment.

"I never expected something like this to happen," Platt continues. "I grew up here. My whole family is here. I thought I would live my life here."

BUILD THROUGH US

print and online advertising solutions with qnotes and goqnotes.com

free web presence with every print ad

call or email us today
704.531.9988
adsales@goqnotes.com

Q FITNESS AND WELLNESS
QFITNESSANDWELLNESS.NET

Small Group Fitness Classes & Personal Training & Nutrition In Studio or Virtual

Charlotte's LGBTQ+ Fitness Studio



Canadian border crossing from Detroit, Michigan, into Windsor, Ontario. CREDIT: Facebook/Screen Capture

Redmond confesses that she wasn't as quick to jump on the train to Canada as her wife has been.

"I had a slow awakening to the violence," says Redmond. "It was all the constant shootings that finally made me realize just how dangerous it is. The violence became so obvious to me because we want our daughter to be safe. You add to that the target on our backs because we're two women together, and I just don't see a path forward. It's not sustainable for us here."

"This kind of violence is just not normal," Platt replies. "But we're not unique. It's unsafe for everyone."

"The political environment has been deteriorating, in my view, for some time and we're close to looking like a failed state. We're seeing shootings in sacred spaces like churches and mosques and in schools. At this point I don't believe we can avoid at least a few years of our country collapsing and I have very little hope that we'll get out of this unscathed."

It's clear the two have a very unsettling view of what a future living in the United States will be like, but Redmond acknowledges, for the moment, she feels like the more hopeful of the pair.

"It's impossible to know what will happen," she offers. "You never know who or what could be waiting right around the corner that might change the way things are happening, so I believe it is possible we (the United States) could bounce back from this and we might be able to stay."

"At this point - in my mind - we're going," Platt insists. "Whether it's Canada, Portugal, New Zealand or Australia, and

that's just our short list."

Although Redmond is less keen on anything outside of North America because of the distance it would create for the couple and their daughter between family and friends, Platt and Redmond's differences of opinion are few. In addition to the love they share for their daughter and each other, they have another important ideal in common: Charlotte will always be home.

"We have a house here," Platt explains. And we don't want to sell it, but we would rent it out. That would give us something to come back to if things change."

When asked what would have to change in order for her to feel comfortable about returning, Platt pauses for a moment, as if she's taking stock of everything she said during the time we've talked. "The country would have to be less violent," she says succinctly. "Less violent crime, a stable economy and something would need to be done about the rising cost of living."

A third generation Charlotte native, **Jim Hock** has also lived in San Francisco, California. Currently he maintains a residence in Myers Park with his husband James Funderburk, although the two travel frequently.

Hock freely admits that actions taken by former White House occupant Trump influenced him and his husband so much they realized it was time to take action and put some sort of escape plan in place.

"When he (Trump) came into power he issued an executive order that prevented all visitors from Middle Eastern countries. It was a ban on Muslims entering the United States," Hock recalls.



The most common point of entry for traveling Americans: Porto International Airport in Portugal. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

"But a lot of those people were green card holders who considered the United States their home. It didn't matter. If you had left the country to visit friends or family in the Middle East, you couldn't return to the United States."

"That's when I thought, if a president can just sign a document and block people who were maintaining a residence here and had plans to become American citizens, what could keep him from signing an executive order that would prevent us from leaving the country? I don't want the government telling me where or what I can't do."

For Hock and Funderburk that was their notice it was time to seriously strategize. It began with research on the internet and exploring the many options available to

Americans who wanted to live abroad but maintain their American citizenship.

The two finally settled on Portugal. The country, which neighbors Spain, is part of the EU and welcoming to potential expats who want to immigrate. Luckily, there are a variety of ways it can be achieved.

Hock, who had previously worked in finance with Wells Fargo, eventually left the company to go into business with his husband in real estate development.

"We took our experience and put it to good use for Portugal, and our desire to live elsewhere."

The country offers programs that allow potential investors the opportunity to either build new structures or rehab old

see next page ►

QUALITY

Comprehensive
Health & Wellness Together

3607 Beatties Ford Rd. Charlotte, NC 28216
704-394-8968

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

Now Accepting New Patients

- LGBTQ+ Friendly Primary Care
- HIV Specialty Care
- PrEP and PEP Services
- Prevention Services
- Mental Health Counseling
- Substance Abuse
- Case Management
- Homeless Support

visit us for more info:

www.qchealth.org

WELCOMING YOU TO THE

4th CHARLOTTE PERUVIAN FESTIVAL

2023

CRISTIAN SILVA ★ LULA VALDIVIA
LOS ACOUSTICS GUYS ★ FRANKIE'S BAND
FUZION LATINA ★ VADIM & KARISH
DENIS ARRIBASPLATA (CHINA LINDA DEL FOLKLORE)
FOLKLORIC DANCES OF PERU ★ AND MORE...

July

23

PERUVIAN FOOD ART - MUSIC

Camp North End
300 Camp Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28206

FREE PARKING

CHARLOTTEPERUVIANFESTIVAL

Sponsored by

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

GET TESTED

FREE Confidential Testing
Rapid HIV | Rapid HEP C
Chlamydia & Gonorrhea

WALK - IN TESTING

Monday - Thursday

8:30 am - 6:00 pm

Friday 8:30 am - 4:00 pm



STAY HEALTHY

Gay Friendly Primary Care
HIV Specialty Care
PrEP and PEP



877.647.6363
455 LAKESHORE PKWY.
ROCK HILL, SC 29730

affinityhealthcenter.org/get-tested



structures. With their fondness for history and architecture, they chose the latter.

"It's also a lot more expensive there to build new, than to refurbish or restore old," Hock explains.

A lot of people don't have the financial resources for such an undertaking. But not to worry, if you want to maintain your American citizenship but live in a country like Portugal, other options include a retirement visa and a nomad visa for people who can live and work from any location.

But why should Americans who are part of the LGBTQ community make the decision to move to a place like Portugal, which is known to be heavily steeped in Catholicism? Hock confirms that was a thought that had crossed his mind as well.

"It's true, it is very Catholic and religious. But it is not socially conservative," he explains. "They have a live and let live attitude here that doesn't exist in the United States

We've been here since 2004."

Many people in the LGBTQ community talked about leaving the United States during the Bush administration. In hindsight, the Bush era political atmosphere pales in comparison to the years of negativity experienced during Trump's period in the White House and the post Trump-influenced era we're currently experiencing.

"But we didn't leave for political reasons at that time," Hooper emphasizes. "We left because he (Mains) had citizenship there, which made it possible for me because I'm his partner."

Hooper says immigrating to a place like the United Kingdom is not easy for most people, however.

"It's a very populated place, it's extremely expensive and they don't really want people to come here," he says with a slight chuckle.



With so much historic grandeur every way you turn, it's no surprise many in the LGBTQ community like calling London home. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

Sweeten your love life!



Peaches

Adult Boutique & Arcade

OPEN 24/7

115 Swain Street, Fayetteville, NC, 910-339-2770

facebook.com/PeachesAdultBoutique1

so much.

"It's just easier to live here," he continues. "There are no book bans and there are no beating up on trans people. I feel perfectly comfortable holding hands and kissing my husband in public here."

In addition to the relaxed and welcoming environment, there are other aspects of Portugal that many people find appealing, as well: culture, history, architecture and climate. "The place we purchased the historic apartment building we're restoring is in a town called Porto," says Hock. "It's a beautiful place.

The second largest city in Portugal, Porto is a coastal city in the northwest region and is revered for its architecture and port wine production. The current population estimate is around 1,300,000.

As for their future plans, both men plan to keep their American citizenship and currently have permanent residency status in Portugal. After five years they can also apply for Portuguese citizenship.

"But we will still be able to maintain our American citizenship and passports," says Hock.

Kenneth Hooper was born in California but grew up in Alabama. As an adult he has made his home all around the United States in places like Atlanta, New York City and San Francisco.

That was before he and his partner Robert Mains made the decision to move to London.

"My partner is from Scotland and his green card had expired," Hooper recalls. "So that was the reason for our decision.

"So they don't make it easy for you. We had to provide proof of our relationship, and that meant stuff like utility bills and shared residence addresses that could be verified over a period of time. And this was done before the internet was used the way we use it today. Stuff had to be packed up and mailed off and you had to wait for weeks for a response."

While it is true that living in England is more expensive and challenging for immigration, there are other attainable alternatives and other cities and towns with a far lower cost of living. Like Portugal, the country offers nomad visas and retirement visas.

Regardless of the time and reason Hooper and Mains left the United States, their story is still pertinent because Hooper - who has permanent residency in the UK - retains his American citizenship and still has family in Alabama.

"I don't like what I see on the news about what's happening in the country," he explains. "It's frightening. So much violence. It's not like that here and in so many other places. It's not normal. And especially the gun violence. That is one of my main concerns, especially when I think about visiting family still living in Alabama. Of course when you're in bigger cities like Birmingham, you're probably going to be just fine, but in some of the rural areas I wouldn't feel comfortable going."

Perhaps Hooper's most telling comment is his sentiments about returning to the place he once called home.

"No. Not now. There's no way we would ever consider living there again." ::

***THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK
INTENTIONALLY***

People and their pets

In the LGBTQ community, pets are often like our children – many of our allied partners feel the same



by **David Aaron Moore**
Qnotes Staff Writer

According to the American Pet Products Association and the American Veterinary Medical Association, most people in this country have pets.

In fact, an estimated 70 percent of American households have a pet. That's up 14 percent from 1988.

In the LGBTQ community, the most recent Harris Interactive survey confirms that an estimated 70 percent of adults in our community have pets living with them in their homes.

For a lot of individuals who choose not to have children, pets fill that role and non-human companions become much loved family members.

Kino Jackson is a native New Yorker who works in the corporate travel field. Following several visits to Charlotte, he decided to make the move to the region because of a more affordable cost of living and the opportunity to build his dream home.

After he and a long time best friend did just that in August 2016, they settled down together in the Charlotte suburb of Indian Land just across the border in South Carolina, near Lancaster.

Jackson, however, had been dealing with health issues dating back to 2004. Following an accident and bounce back from temporary kidney failure, the issue later returned, forcing him to turn to dialysis while waiting for the hope of a replacement kidney.

But that didn't stop Jackson from living life to the best of his ability.

In late 2018 he acquired a canine friend, which was something relatively new to him at the time, Jackson admits.

"In New York I had three cats," he recalls. "Cats are self-sufficient and they seem easier, compared to dogs. Dog ownership is very different."

A mix of lab, Pitbull and German

Shepherd, the two friends discovered the dog through an ad on craigslist and decided on the name T'Challa, named after the Marvel Comics Superhero The Black Panther.

With a sizable breed mix like that you'd expect the dog to be exceptionally large. As it turns out, T'Challa is on the medium side, coming in at about 32 pounds.

"But he can still be so greedy for food," Jackson laughs. "If you're eating he'll sit and stare at you. He'll watch as the food goes from your plate to your mouth. And if you acknowledge him, he'll put his paw on your leg."

Besides being a source of comic entertainment, the dog has been there for Jackson and his friend, during both good and challenging times.

"T'Challa is very sensitive, Jackson explains. "To what we go through everyday. He always lets us know that he is there for us, not just for play and to be fed, but as an emotional support animal. He's very intelligent. It's like he knows what you're saying. Sometimes I could believe he was a human in a past life."

Even though T'Challa is relatively young and a mix of breeds that tend to be fairly



Pets like Kino can be your best friends and offer emotional support during times of need. CREDIT: Courtesy S.K. Jackson

active, Jackson confirms the dog is relatively sedate.

"He's chill. He'll just lay there between the two of us when we're watching television and he'll chase a ball of you throw it, but he doesn't bring it back. He'll just sit and play with it on his own.

"He does enjoy tug of war, and he likes going on car rides and travel in general. So sometimes we'll take him to the dog park so he can get exercise and play with other dogs. But it's funny sometimes. If you're going somewhere and you tell him he's staying home, he gets an attitude."



Cheryl Calebro's pal Clancy. CREDIT: Courtesy Cheryl Calebro

For wannabe dog owners who haven't taken the first plunge yet, Jackson has some advice.

"You can get attached and they can get extremely attached. For me, at first, it was about the companionship. But then I realized it's a huge responsibility. So think about it, do your research, because this is their life and you are everything to them."

For Cheryl Calebro, nothing could be further from the truth than recognizing her pets as family.

A native Charlottean, Calebro lives in Pineville near the quail corners area and works in the healthcare industry.

Long an ally to the LGBTQ community, she has volunteered with the NAMES Project when the quilt has been displayed in the region, was a regular volunteer with the now defunct Metrolina AIDS Project (MAP) and remains involved with RAIN.

Prior to 2019, it was status quo to catch Calebro at Charlotte's annual Pride celebration. "Like everyone else, I missed it for a couple of years because of the pandemic," she says. "I wasn't able to go this past year, but I'm looking forward to going again."

These days it isn't uncommon for people not to have children in the manner past generations once did. Calebro hasn't had children, although she does have a house full of fur kids.

"I have eight cats and one dog," Calebro explains. "The dog is a Chihuahua and she's a total diva named Mia. She

will only eat if I feed her by hand from a plate!"

With so many cats around, the question arises, how does Mia fare surrounded by so much feline energy?

"She was a bit bossy when she first got here, but about half the cats are bigger than she is, so they were quick to put her in her place," Calebro chuckles. "So everybody gets along okay just fine now."

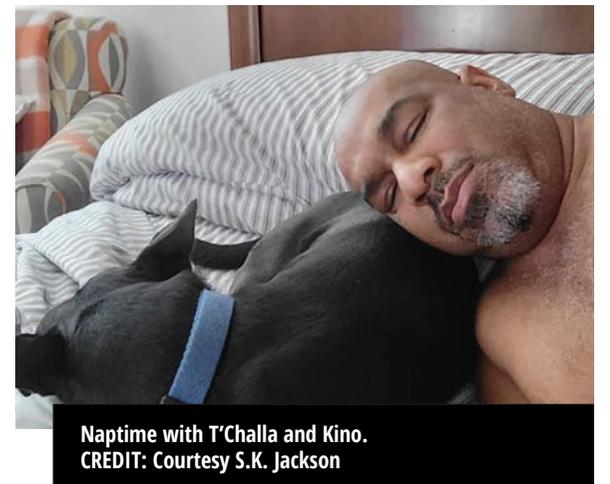
Among her feline posse, the three oldest are Calliope a tortoise shell, Jinx, a grey tabby and Skye, an orange tabby.

Each member of the crew has their own distinctive look, personality and backstory.

Clancy, who sports a beautiful black coat, was just 15 months old and an underfed four pounds who came from a house owned by a hoarder. Luna is a mixed calico and white tabby. Cooper, also a tabby, is orange and white. Riley and Scott. are both black and white tuxedos that look very similar although



Kino Jackson's canine pal T'Challa. CREDIT: Courtesy S.K. Jackson



Naptime with T'Challa and Kino. CREDIT: Courtesy S.K. Jackson



Calliope, Jinx and Skye. CREDIT: Courtesy Cheryl Calebro

a key marking makes it simple to tell them apart: one has a nose with two black spots while the other only has one black spot.

Calebro proudly claims the badge of crazy cat lady, but quickly points out that the trend of collecting homeless dogs and cats and animals in need dates

back to her childhood, and is a habit she shared with her siblings and parents.

The condominium community she calls home isn't far from apartments that are largely transitional. "And, unfortunately, a lot of people who move in and out quickly tend to leave their pets behind," she explains.

"So we've had a lot of feral and homeless cats. Between myself and two others who live here, we've been able to catch them and have them either spayed or neutered. But every once in awhile a new face you don't recognize shows up."

Calebro confirms the roaming cat population in her condo village has decreased substantially over the years, although a few remain, cared for by herself and other neighbors.

While it's clear she's a lover of all animals, her predominant focus remains with the care of the pets she directly shares her life with.

"It's a lot of work," she confirms. "Ten litter boxes that are scooped twice daily, pads placed strategically around the house (for those times when a quick dash to your litter box of choice isn't quite an option) and all the feeding. I have no doubt the budget for their food is more than what I spend on myself!"

According to Calebro, feeding time sounds something like a mixture of Chess and that old game known as Twister.

"They are very particular about where they eat," says Calebro. One cat dines on the top of an antique storage wardrobe while others share a bowl. Two others have their own separate tables and another two have plates strategically placed at certain points on the stairwell.

When it's bed time, some of her friends share her sizeable bed, while others choose to sleep in their own individual beds or places they've chosen to their liking.

Although Calebro is clearly dedicated to her family of four legged friends, she knows that pet ownership is not for everyone.

"People don't understand that it's a lifetime commitment," she insists. "It's like a child. You can't just take it back because things aren't going smoothly, and not realizing that leaves a lot of animals homeless."

"Our neighborhood was over run with cats [because of that]. It's very important to be responsible and to spay and neuter your pets."

"Sometimes I find the responsibility can seem overwhelming," Calebro continues.

"But all the work makes it so worth the effort. The pure unconditional love they return. What you give they give back. And it's so sweet to come home after work, open the door and see all those sweet little faces waiting for you."

An interesting and not too surprising footnote to Calebro's story -- she hopes to acquire a piece of property in the near future where she can create an animal sanctuary.

Author's note: since this interview was conducted, Calebro's Chihuahua Mia unexpectedly passed away. ::



Mia. CREDIT: Courtesy Cheryl Calebro



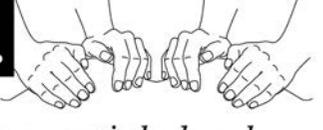
Riley and Scott. CREDIT: Courtesy Cheryl Calebro

Q-munity connections ▶
space starting at \$22:
call **qnotes** for details
704.531.9988

Bright Businesses
deserve well-lit
AD SPACE 
Call **Q-Notes**
704.531.9988

A Day / Night
SALON & SPA
704-713-1952
Massages 24/7

MANSCAPE
BODY WAXING
MIKE THOMAS
704-400-2434
CALL OR TEXT
NCBARBERMIKE@GMAIL.COM

Relax... 
to a
therapeutic or erotic body rub
given by attractive, experienced
professionals.
704.651.6899
4 hands available, by longest couple doing so.

 **MCC.**
NEW LIFE
METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH
God loves YOU,
just the way you are!
NEW LIFE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH
SUNDAYS at 7:00 P.M. 1201 SOUTH NEW HOPE ROAD GASTONIA
Rev. Dawn Flynn, Pastor www.NewLifeMccNC.org NewLifeMccGastonia@gmail.com

Boze knows

An interview with gay writer Boze Hadleigh

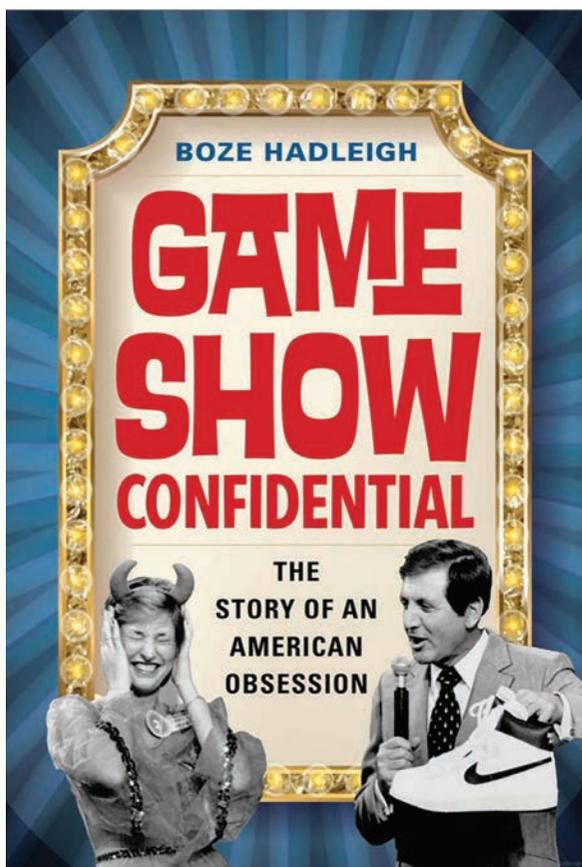


by Gregg Shapiro
Qnotes Staff Writer

To say that gay author Boze Hadleigh is prolific is an understatement. The author of nearly 30 books (including those forthcoming), Hadleigh has made a name for himself by going where few others dare: the dark underbelly of Hollywood. In his latest book, "Game Show Confidential: The Story of An American Obsession" (Lyons Press, 2023), Hadleigh doesn't play around, pulling back the sparkly curtain to dare to reveal truths some would never consider. Hadleigh recently took time out of his busy writing schedule to answer a few questions about "Game Show Confidential."

Gregg Shapiro: I know that some authors consider books they've written to be like their offspring, and don't like to play favorites, but with 29 books to your credit, is there one for which you feel a particular affinity?

Boze Hadleigh: I think my seven books that focus on the LGBT-etc. presence in and contributions to the entertainment world, though "juicy" and entertaining, are quite educational, both for gay readers and especially for heterosexuals who have no idea how big and excellent the "gay world" is. In particular I'd say my 2020 book "Inside the Hollywood Closet," because in quotes directly from the horses' mouths we get what being LGBT-etc. and working and living in "showbiz" is like--most gay stars have to "act" whenever they leave their house--and "IHC" shows how much has improved over the years for gay people but also how much has not improved and how some things are worse.



GS: What's involved in deciding on the topics for your books?

BH: Usually, it's what interests me. "Game Show Confidential" evolved from my being asked to write a biography of "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek (partly because I was on the show and won). But that didn't interest me--frankly, dull, plus before I was on the show I'd seen him make three separate anti-gay comments, which as I say in the book is three too many. A few times I've done a book because the topic interested me but there was no book. So, I did "Celebrity Feuds!" because at the library I only found two feud-related books. One on the Hatfields and McCoys (thrilling, right?) and one on "the writers' wars," meaning the fight to establish a writers' union in Hollywood. My book includes Laverne vs. Shirley, Diana Ross leaving the Supremes, Abbott vs. Costello, also family feuds like Julia and Eric Roberts, the Jacksons, and the gay feuds between Truman Capote and Gore Vidal.

GS: Hollywood is a prominent subject in your books with at least half of them being about movies, actors, and actresses. Would it be fair to say that your fascination with Hollywood is equaled by that of the public's obsession?

BH: Overall, I'd say we live in a media culture and celebrity journalism has become too prevalent. A lot about Hollywood, including reality shows and many current sitcoms plus many game shows past and present, doesn't interest me. Also, my interest, and my books reflect it, is in the reality behind the show of show business. Say, you see a magazine or tabloid photo of a male movie star and his wife and perhaps it includes his manager or personal trainer. The caption only mentions hubby-and-wife, not the fact that the other guy is hubby's lover. There is so much deception in showbiz, which is America's basic culture, and I like to show the truth behind it. It usually boils down to catering to the average, often bigoted public so that companies (studios, networks, newspapers, etc.) can make maximum profits. In other words, the business end determines what is shown.

GS: Your new book, "Game Show Confidential" is being released around the same time that ABC's "The Game Show Show," which features queer voices such as Margaret Cho, Patrick Gomez, and Guy Branum, is airing. Is it a coincidence that a book and TV program about game shows are arriving concurrently or is something else at work?

BH: No, just serendipity. ABC heard about my then-upcoming book and asked me to fly to L.A. for an on-camera interview, but I was out of the country. Would have been a great tie-in. The fact is that during COVID game shows

have become much more popular, including new shows, reboots of classic shows, reruns on the Game Show Network and Buzzr, and shows about game shows. Betty White called game shows "TV's feel-good genre."

GS: In "Game Show Confidential," you mention game shows that originated in Britain and then became popular in the US. Were there many that started in the US that went on to success in other countries?

BH: Yes, many US game shows have had foreign editions. Usually, the most popular are in Britain and Australia. Foreign-language versions are popular, too, from South America to francophone Canada to Southeast Asia. In Indonesia their version of "Tic Tac Dough" was titled "Tak Tik BOOM," spelled that way!

GS: In the book, you spill a lot of tea, including revealing things about Bob Barker, such as his sexism and racism, as well as Pat Sajak being sexist, racist, and homophobic. Were there people you weren't able to mention for various reasons?

BH: Besides Sajak, the sidebar--most of the chapters have sidebars--titled "File Under Bigotry" includes Chuck Woolery, Bob Eubanks and Steve Harvey. I also more or less answer the pertinent question, "Is Drew Carey gay?" He's the one who kept bringing it up. As for still-taboo subjects, I didn't include the longstanding rumors that perhaps "Password" host Allen Ludden (whose father died in 1919 at 26 from the global virus pandemic that's still mislabeled "the Spanish flu") and wife Betty White were basically very good friends.

GS: Why do you think so many game show hosts, including Chuck Woolery, are right wingers?

BH: That is, so many of the older male hosts. One journalist quoted in "GSC" says much of that derived from a time when white male hosts held a monopoly--no women, no people of color. However, Steve Harvey is also bigoted, and I mention that fellow African American Kevin Hart lost the coveted Oscar-host gig due to his recurrent homophobia. Alas, bigotry is not limited to any one group.

GS: Nevertheless, Merv Griffin, whose homosexuality was an open secret, created an unparalleled game show empire. Do you think his remaining closeted was the reason or was there something else?

BH: Merv's two big hits were "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune." The game show giants were the ruthless Goodson-Todman empire--there's a chapter on them [laughs]! Griffin did not need to hide behind Eva Gabor, but one reason for that was rival real estate tycoon Donald Trump making homophobic comments about him, including the nickname "Merv the Perv." Griffin was his own boss, he wasn't an actor, he was no sex symbol. I



think his closetedness was due to his generation, where everything about being gay was demonized. He remained ashamed of being gay, despite the progress being affected mostly by younger generations.

GS: Meanwhile, Jane Lynch, who is an out lesbian, currently hosts the prime-time revival of "The Weakest Link," and before that hosted "Hollywood Game Night," co-created by Sean Hayes, for several years. What do you think, if anything, has changed?

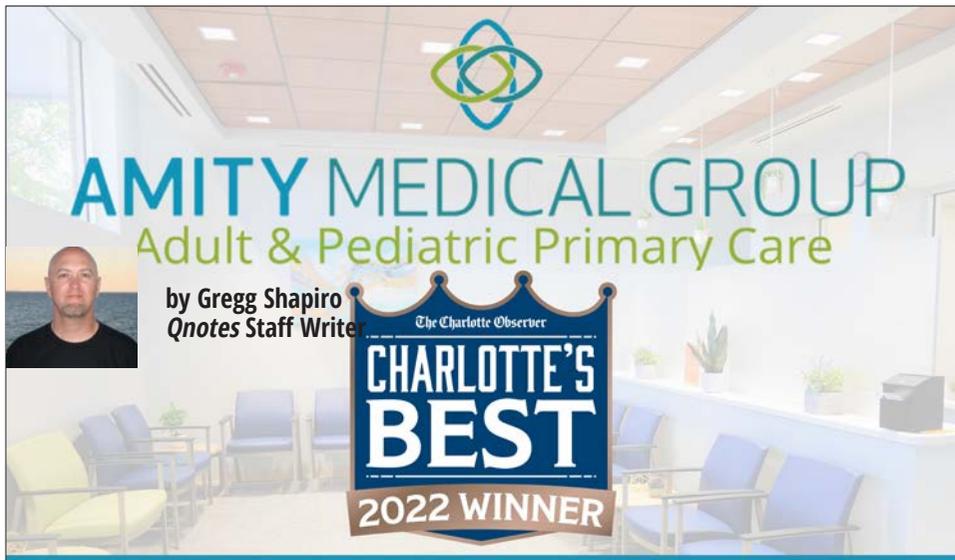
BH: There's now a diversity of game show hosts, including to some extent lesbian and gay ones--in that order, because general audiences are more comfortable with a Jane or Ellen than with most openly gay males. Ironically, Charles Nelson Reilly once hosted a game show about hetero romance, and for two whole years Rip Taylor hosted "The \$1.98 Beauty Show."

GS: Speaking of stars competing on game shows, what do you think about "Celebrity Jeopardy" and "Celebrity Wheel of Fortune"?

BH: What makes them interesting is seeing--at least on "Celebrity Jeopardy!"--how smart certain celebs are. As Nelson Reilly said, and is quoted in "GSC," lots of celebs and most sports figures avoided shows like "Jeopardy!" and "Password" but were glad to come on "The Match Game" (where Charles was a longtime panelist), because that show had no wrong answers.

GS: Have you started working on or thinking about your next book project?

BH: Due in spring 2024 is an outrageous quotes collection currently titled "I Can't Believe They Said That!!" Yes, two exclamation marks! Like all my books, including the two animal-themed ones -- Betty White gave a lovely blurb for "Life's a Pooch" in 2017 -- (it's) very gay-inclusive. That book is complete. I'm working on one about celebs and suicide--not just showbiz, though mostly--which includes a chapter on gay suicides. As Bea Arthur pointed out, 30 percent of teen suicides are due to homophobia. And today, with the Trump-inspired backlash against gays, lesbians, drag queens, and trans people, it's up to all of us to actively oppose this pro-fascist bigotry and attempts to turn back the clock to a sexual Dark Ages. ::



AMITY MEDICAL GROUP
Adult & Pediatric Primary Care

by Gregg Shapiro
Qnotes Staff Writer

CHARLOTTE'S BEST
2022 WINNER

Accepting New Patients, Private Insurance,
Medicare & Medicaid

- Primary Care
- Pediatric Exams & Immunizations
- Diabetes Care
- Addiction Medicine-MAT
- LGBTQIA+ Care
- HIV & Infectious Disease Care
- On Site Pharmacy

704-208-4134 amitymed.org @amitymedicalgroup




POWER HOUSE 2.0
Next Generation

3552 Beatties Ford Rd. Charlotte, NC 28216
704-394-8968



Free Rapid STI Testing
HIV | Hep C | Chlamydia | Gonorrhea | Syphilis

Need PrEP?
Let us help you get PrEP for FREE!
PRESCRIBED ONLINE, DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR.

www.qchealth.org
A Quality Comprehensive Health Center Program

***** SPONSORED CONTENT *****

Checking in with Charlotte Black Pride

by Rell Lowery (he/him), Transgender Community Liaison with Charlotte Black Pride

In this month's column, Charlotte Pride passes the baton to Rell Lowery to talk about some of the exciting events that Charlotte Black Pride has coming up this year.

I first want to say Happy Pride 2023 Season! As a Charlotte native, I couldn't have been happier to write this article on behalf of Charlotte Black Pride. I'm Rell Lowery and I am the Transgender Liaison for Charlotte Black Pride. I've attended Charlotte Black Pride events as far back as I can remember and each year, I've seen the events grow and expand on so many levels. I'm truly honored to be a part of the team!

There are so many amazing things Charlotte Black Pride does throughout

the Heart of the Community Awards that we host every year. We understand that without these amazing people doing what they do, we wouldn't be able to continue our work as easily. Recognition along with awards, food, live performances, music, and good vibes all go into making this event a success!

When I mentioned diversity being a valuable part of our mission, I wasn't kidding. We have some of the most amazing community partners, sponsors, and ambassadors that we collaborate with all throughout the year including Charlotte Pride, Transcend Charlotte, the Carolinas LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, PFLAG Charlotte, Equality NC, Carolinas CARE Partnership, The Plus



Rell Lowery

the year, in addition to having a full week of events in July to bring the community together and celebrate our authenticity. This year, we will be bringing another exciting week of events that are sure to bring smiles to the faces of our city, and we are eager to see our hard work pay off! This year our theme is "Black Renaissance - Made for Now". We're kicking things off with our infamous Mr. & Mrs. Charlotte Black Pride Pageant. We will also have our Made for Now Wellness Party, Made for Now Rally & Demonstration, Film Noire, Centerstage, Meet & Greet Reception, Expo Extravaganza, and our finale event, the Family Reunion. We have something for everyone!

In a time when it seems the world is constantly trying to bridge a gap between those in and outside of our community, we strive to push the importance of inclusion and diversity all 365 days of the year. That's why anytime there is a need within our community, we make it a priority to speak on the matter and also find out what we can do to help as an organization. Honoring those community leaders who stand up every day and make it a point to fight for our rights, our voices, and serve is our mission when it comes to

Collective, just to name a few. They support us like we support them and continuing those relationships allows all of us to not only bring our community together, but also to show the world just how much more we can accomplish together, instead of being divided. These relationships give us the ability, as a nonprofit organization, to be able to help out our community when they need it most.

We understand that, in this economy, some of the most basic needs are not as accessible as they once were. That's why so many of the events that we host throughout the year are free. That includes our Juneteenth Celebration with free food, drinks, music, games, and a safe space to bring our pride plus our culture together. One of my other favorites is our annual Holiday Giveback. We do this right before Christmas every year and people can go online to register for free. On the day of, we bring in catered food, music, clothes, toiletries, toys, and other goods that families can pick up all for free. I have volunteered for this event myself for the past 4 years and I can honestly say, the smiles you see on these families and their children are priceless. That to me is what community is all about and a perfect way to end the year. This year will be even better! Thank you.

CHARLOTTE  **PRIDE**

“In the Company of Grace: A Veterinarian’s Memoir of Trauma and Healing”

Out in Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Qnotes Staff Writer

“In the Company of Grace: A Veterinarian’s Memoir of Trauma and Healing” by Jody Lulich
c.2023, University of Minnesota Press
\$19.95
232 pages

You are a product of what your parents do. They nurtured you, and you learned to nurture. They yelled, and you discovered that shouting was the way to communicate. From them, you got your sense of humor, your earliest political beliefs, and your initial ideas of right and wrong. You’re a product of what adults around you do – or, as in the new book “In the Company of Grace” by Jody Lulich, what they don’t.

The suicide attempt on New Year’s Eve of 1966 was not Jody Lulich’s mother’s first.

It was, however, the one that took her life, no matter how hard Lulich, who was nine years old at the time, tried to save her. He’d been taking care of her every day after



school by then, trying to keep his parents from fighting, trying to keep the violence and vitriol between them at bay, but they were alcoholics with anger issues and he was just a boy.

On the way to his mother’s funeral, his father accidentally hit a stray dog with his car, and kept on driving. It was a kind of metaphor for Lulich’s heartbreak, and he never forgot it.

Through the rest of his childhood, Lulich tried to find the love his father denied him, but it was almost always absent. At age eleven, Lulich moved out of his father’s home, bouncing between a neighbor’s welcoming house and back; as soon as he was able, he escaped, enrolled in college, and decided on veterinary school as a post-grad at

Tuskegee, an HBCU. There he excelled in his career, found support from a mother-figure who loved him, and he grew to accept that he was attracted to men.

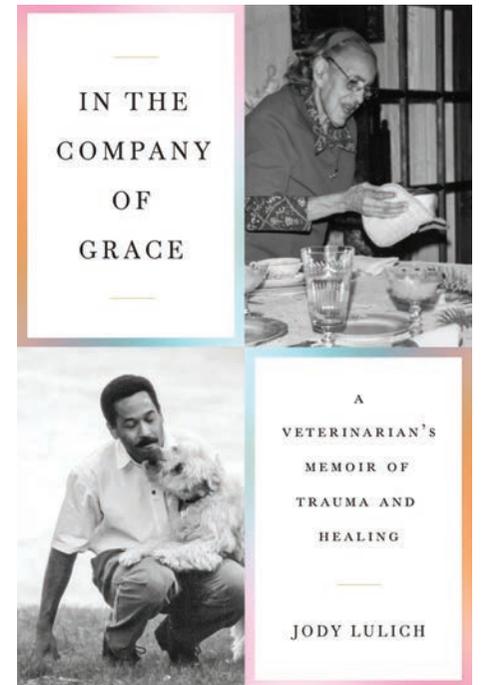
But despite his success, the appreciation of his clients and patients, and the accolades that he gathered through the years, Lulich couldn’t seem to shake the feeling that something was wrong in his life. How could he finally accept the love and compassion he deserved?

If you’re the kind of reader who sees the word “veterinarian” in the subtitle of this book and makes a beeline for it, there’s one big thing you’ll want to know: “In the Company of Grace” is not filled with animal tales.

There are a few, but they take a big back seat to author Jody Lulich’s story and that of his family, which come in wave after wave of sad memories and deep, lingering want. These are tales that, even when they’re meant to be the slightest bit upbeat, feel like a smack-down, or a stomp on your soul. That makes this a hard read for a good long time – melancholy and hard, but compelling because the tales don’t ever become what you think they’ll be. Oddly enough, there’s triumph here, and exactly what readers will want in the end.

“In the Company of Grace” – so-titled for the woman who accepted Lulich – is not

the book to come to when you’re feeling sad. Reach for it when you want something meaningful, though. That’s what to do. ::



LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE WITH US

Aldersgate is proud to set new standards in senior living and strives to foster diverse, caring communities where everyone has a voice and value. Come see why Aldersgate is right for you. As a premier non-profit Life Plan Community, our expansive campus has it all: hundreds of acres of nature, bocce ball, an urban farm, wood shop, indoor pool and spa, six dining venues (two with full-service bars), a dog park, fitness center with daily exercise classes, and more! Live your best authentic life with us.

(704) 318-2018 | 3800 Shamrock Drive • Charlotte, NC 28215 | AldersgateLiving.org



The Juno Show comes to town

Trans Drag Diva takes to the Blumenthal



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

A British drag diva known as Juno Birch, who boasts a huge global following, is just about to kick off a tour of America and will be coming to Charlotte for a performance at the Blumenthal Aug. 6.

As most of us know, drag performers come in all shapes, sizes, colors and genders. The most common garden variety version is typically a gay cisgender male who enjoys dressing up in female attire, scads of makeup, a wig or three and dancing around on stage in a nightclub while lip-syncing to a popular dance tune.

Then there are the more experimental types that might try something like a skirt made of pork chops and a shaved head with drawn on hair while brandishing a chainsaw and lip syncing a punk or rockabilly tune from the past.

Less common, but still a presence, are drag kings. Usually a cisgender female who leans towards the butch side, typically performs as a pop culture male icon and, once again, lip syncing, likely to songs made famous by legends like Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

All those are just stereotypes, of course, and the varieties are endless.

Birch is an anomaly on the drag spectrum: She's not exactly any of the aforementioned character studies.

Her look is a blend of pastel skin she calls alien, usually painted in blue or pink along with yellow hair and retro sunglasses.

Says Birch of her stage persona: "[She's] a Martian spy woman, meets the Muppets, meets a 1960s housewife, meets Squidward, meets the 'Fifth Element' the sixth element and the seventh element. All the elements, darling."

While not on stage, Birch lives daily as a transgender woman. A few tidbits about her personal life: She was born in Manchester, England on Dec. 25, 1993. She came out as trans around the age of 13 or 14 and began hormone therapy at 16. She was 22 in 2015 when she had gender affirming surgery.

Birch's professional career began in Dec. 2018. She points to multiple individuals and films as key influences in the



'It's chaotic!'— Alien Trans Drag Diva Juno Birch describes her upcoming 'The Juno Show.' CREDIT: Facebook



Promotional flyer making the rounds and touting the presentation. CREDIT: Publicity

character that she has created.

Among those, and likely the one most fans recognize first, is the film, "Mars Attacks" and the role billed simply as "Martian Spy Girl" played by actress Lisa Marie Smith.

One look at Birch and its clear the base of her stage character borrows heavily from the alien creature created by film director Tim Burton for the classic sci-fi comedy from 1996. But that's not to say the character isn't also 100 percent Birch, combining her own creative skills with an appreciation for the artistry of others.

Among the other additional influences she cites are 1960s fashion model Twiggy, 1980s television series "The Smurfs," the 1980 camp classic film "Mommie Dearest," the 1975 sci-fi film "The Stepford Wives," actress Jennifer Coolidge, film directors John Waters and Tim Burton, the video game The Sims and additional films such as "Beetlejuice" (1988) and "Death Becomes Her" (1992).

Add all of that together and it might leave you scratching your head. What would a stage show by Juno Birch look like?

In an interview with the American publication Paper magazine last year, she talked about the show that kicks off July 23 in St. Louis, Miss., with multiple stops along the way, including Chicago, Detroit, New York and Philadelphia before she lands in Charlotte on Aug. 6.

"It's going to be a theater show and it's basically a trip into the world inside Juno's head on stage. So it's going to be very chaotic. There's going to be some lobsters, some Judith Louise babies. Some cabaret and live singing and dancing. It's going to

be chaos. The whole show is based on television, so there's lots of fake commercials and '60s television."

She elaborated further on her show with the UK publication Attitude in an interview this past June,

"[The show is] a big step up from last year, that was a lot of lip syncing, one after the other, with a little chit-chat in the middle. This is more a proper stand-up comedy show with puppeteering. There's lots of puppets, lots of props things like that. I'm singing, as well. I've got dancers, it's all a big gorgeous production. I'm so excited. A lot of people know me from the internet and youtube, but my passion lies always on stage. That's a comfort to be on stage. I'm at heart a bit of a theater child, it's just what I love doing."

Birch also talked about the differences between drag performance in the United States and the United Kingdom.

"There is a big, big difference in drag from UK to America," she said in the interview with Attitude. "UK drag was born in the pantomimes, whereas America was born in the ballrooms and the pageants; they stem from different things. It's different in different parts of America, too. West Coast drag is completely different from East Coast drag, which I love. It's the same in the UK, actually. The humor is different but I'm lucky. I get away with it. When I go over they already know me from being stupid and telling jokes on YouTube and know what humor to expect."

The Juno Show takes Birch to 18 different locations across the United States in just 30 days. That's a hectic schedule, although it does allow for a little bit of

downtime here and there. In the interview with Paper, she was queried about how she planned to keep up the pace.

"Red Bull and a Prosecco," she responded. "It's like that a lot on tour, because sometimes you get sick, sometimes you're sleep deprived because you've been on flights on show days, and sometimes you really want to throw up, but you've got a put your corset on and your pads and you've got to go on and you've got to tell jokes and everything."

"What I've learned from doing the tour is that even if you feel like you're going to throw up right before you go on stage or you feel a bit ill or you've not been to the toilet properly or you're not going to sleep, once you step on stage the adrenaline will carry you through it."

While most of the Juno Show presentations are taking place in parts of the country that aren't going head to head with drag queens and trans individuals, seven of Birch's shows are in southern destinations, including St. Louis, Charlotte and Atlanta. The other four are all in Texas: Houston, San Antonio, Austin and Dallas.

They're all states where Trans and drag bans have either been passed or are currently under consideration. How does a UK drag performer feel about taking her show to places that might not welcome her?

"It's definitely scary," she told Attitude. "I'm trans as well as a drag queen, so sometimes I can't hide it out of drag. It's almost scary being in public. When you go on these tours you're almost protected, you've got the tour bus etc. I'm not going to lie, it is scary. No matter how illegal they make drag, no one's ever going to stop a drag queen from dressing up and looking



The 'Martian Spy Girl' played by actress Lisa Marie Smith in 'Mars Attacks!'. CREDIT: Tim Burton Productions/Warner Bros.

glamorous. That's all we're doing at the end of the day.

"We're entertaining people, making people happy. No drag queen is harming anybody. It's an absolute load of bollocks. In the '90s, they had Dame Edna advertising chocolate fingers, no one batted an eyelid, but now it's all a problem? They think they're clever when they say things like biology, man, woman and all that shite. Really they're just idiots. We're just trying to have fun, just having a laugh. This is people's lives. You've got to have a laugh."

Tickets for the Juno Birch Show are available at junobirchlive.com. ::

2920 N. TRYON ST, CHARLOTTE, NC 28206

PRESENTED BY

ROSEDALE
HEALTH + WELLNESS

DOORS 6:30P
SHOWTIME 7P
VIP M&G POST-SHOW



BENEFITING



AGES 21+ ONLY
GA \$25
VIP \$45



SAT, JULY 29

HOT SUMMER NIGHTS

STARRING JOEY JAY

RuPaul's
DRAG RACE



NOVA STELLA



HOSTED BY
KAREN AFFECTION



MINK SHOALS



GISELLE CASSIDY-CARTER



LOLITA CHANEL