

A photograph of a man with extensive black skeleton body paint on his face and torso. He is holding a glowing jack-o'-lantern. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a backdrop.

Carolina Ghost Stories and why Queers love Halloween

- pg 14



US Census shows healthcare woes for LGBTQ+ community
-pg 10

Holiday Shopping Guide offers something for all
-pg 16



HOPPY Halloween



Halloween Goodies

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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.

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inside this issue

feature

16 The Ultimate Guide to
Gay Gift Giving in 2023

news

4 Equality NC's Kendra
Johnson to leave at end of
the year

4 Gastonia city council
member Robert Kellogg
running for mayor

7 UNC-Chapel Hill's con-
troversial new 'School of
Civic Life and Leadership'

8 Gov. Cooper sues over
a new law that strips
governors of state elec-
tions board appointments
Nine-year-old and family
sue North Carolina over
gender-affirming care ban
HB 808

9 Campaign for Southern
Equality says NC's new
Parents' Bill of Rights
violates federal law

10 U.S. Census shows same-
sex married couples less
likely to be same age, race,
ethnicity

12 LGBTQ History: When
NOW Purged Lesbians

a&e

13 Out in Print:
"Glitter and Concrete:
A Cultural History of Drag
in New York City"

14 Spooks and specters: a
guide to haunts in the
Carolinas

life

15 Halloween: The Great
Gay Holiday

17 Celebrity Recipes:
Food to celebrate
the season

18 Health and Wellness:
LGBTQ+ people are more
likely to develop breast
cancer or other forms of
cancer

19 Our People:
Ben Thompson

views

events

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



Our People: Ben Thompson

QNotes talks with WCNC-TV's morning and mid-day news anchor, who reflects on his experiences in mainstream broadcast journalism, coming out while other journalists remain closeted, getting married and the importance of a supportive work environment.

PAGE 19

Gastonia City Councilman running for Mayor

Robert Kellogg, now in his third term as a city councilman for Gastonia, is running against an incumbent candidate to serve as the city's mayor. Can an independent candidate and openly gay man capture the position in a city once known for its conservative politics? He talks about that and more in his interview with *QNotes*.

PAGE 4



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Equality NC's Kendra Johnson to leave at end of the year

At press time organization had yet to choose an interim or new director



by Taylor Heeden
Qnotes Staff Writer

Over five years after moving to North Carolina to join Equality NC (ENC) as its executive director, Kendra Johnson recently announced her departure from the organization in the following statement:

"I made the decision to come to the Tarheel State because I witnessed a dramatic increase in vitriol directed toward minority communities as Trumpism began to rise and ultimately reach the White House," she wrote. "Amid the resurgence of mainstream racism, xenophobia, transphobia and homophobia, I knew I needed a bigger playing field to fight back, alongside strong allies working for undocumented immigrants, Black folks, women, differently abled people, the resource poor and the LGBTQ+ community. I found just that, with incredible partners

working on issues from voting and reproductive rights to incarceration."

During her time at ENC, Johnson oversaw the expansion of the organization from the diversifying of ENC staff to the physical expansions to western and eastern North Carolina. ENC has also served a crucial role in advocating for LGBTQ+ North Carolinians, including, but not limited to, demonstrations at the North Carolina General Assembly to protest anti-LGBTQ+ legisla-



Kendra Johnson served as Equality NC Director for more than five years CREDIT: Facebook/ENC

tion, showing up at community events at booths or handing out information and more.

Through Johnson's five years as executive director, ENC was able to work with municipalities to pass 22 ordinances protecting LGBTQ+ people from discrimination. ENC was also able to establish a Rural Youth Empowerment program, which provides resources to LGBTQ+ people and allies in rural communities across the state.

Johnson said in a time when legislators continue to dehumanize and attack queer residents, the work of ENC is more important than ever.

"As I look at where the movement is nationally, with more anti-LGBTQ+ bills than ever before and an open attack on our youth, I know that we need strong organizations like Equality NC to keep fighting," she wrote. "White supremacists and Christian nationalists have moved from the shadows of our society to the center stage of our government, taking aim at our rights and our very existence. Now more than ever, we need to be telling our stories differently, flanking and supporting organizations that serve as a container for organizing and working across identities to build a movement for us all."

ENC's boards — led by Milan Pham and Ivan Canada — are working to name a new executive director before Johnson's departure. A new director or an interim hasn't been named at the time of writing. ::

Gastonia city council member Robert Kellogg running for mayor

Openly gay candidate has served nearly three terms as councilman



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

Robert Kellogg is an independent candidate running for the office of Mayor in Charlotte's neighboring city of Gastonia. First elected to the city council there in 2015, he's already served two terms and is currently on his third, confirming a history of service to the city. He's also openly gay.

In addition to his role as a councilman, Kellogg is employed by the Gaston-Lincoln-Cleveland Continuum of Care, serving as an advocate for individuals and families experiencing homelessness so they can receive access to Health Care.

Kellogg feels his experience and his connection to the moderately sized city (population 80k+) and its people make him uniquely qualified to serve as mayor.

Preparing to go up against an incumbent candidate for the mayor of Gastonia, Kellogg knows the election might not be an easy challenge to win. Seemingly always one to look for a silver lining, he points to the success of a previous unaffiliated mayor who served Gastonia for multiple terms and his years on the city council as a recipe for potential success.

"It's about connecting with the people and getting to know them," Kellogg tells QNotes. "If they know who you are, know you have their best interests in mind and you're not a one issue candidate, they will vote for you."

Throughout most of its years, Gastonia has been home to conservative working class voters. Many residents there and in

the surrounding county previously worked in the mills that once populated the area and held steadfast to the culture and values of the region.

"It's changed a lot," says Kellogg. "Especially over the past ten years. A lot of new development and opportunities for the people who live here."

Although Kellogg isn't a North Carolina native, he's originally from a small town called Loweville in upstate New York (population less than 5,000), and says he feels right at home in Gastonia, especially after 20 years.

Reflecting on his first city council election in 2015, he concedes there were some initial challenges.

"It wasn't easy," he recalls. "People had to get to know me. I got involved in the community. I went to various events and I developed a reputation for who I am. Once they understood what I was about and I ran for city council, they came out to vote for me."

When Kellogg ran for his second term on



Gastonia's Independent Mayoral Candidate Robert Kellogg: 'I am ready to serve in a fair and visible way and to represent all of Gastonia.' CREDIT: Courtesy Robert Kellogg

city council, he won by a whopping 60 percent of the vote, but acknowledges he only had one other candidate running against him. By the time his third run rolled around, he won by a substantial five percent, but this time he was pitted against multiple candidates all vying for the same seat.

When asked if he thought he could be elected as mayor running as an unaffiliated, independent candidate, he points out that former Gastonia mayor Jennie Stultz did just that and held the office for

multiple terms over 10 years.

Kellogg says that with his status as an independent candidate, he is also eager to work for all of the people, regardless of what party they might be affiliated with.

He's proud to point out that he has and continues to work directly with State Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Josh Stein on the opioid crisis that plagues Gastonia and that among his priorities for the city are helping the homeless and solving infrastructure issues.

"There's something about the people here in Gastonia I feel very strongly about,"

he says. "I identify with them. They're not scared to get dirt under their nails and they're hard-working, good people."

A statement from his website nicely sums up who Robert Kellogg is and why Gastonia voters have embraced him so.

"As a young boy growing up in a small town in upstate New York, I learned the meaning of service and the importance of helping others.

"Both of my parents were disabled, and we grew up in extreme poverty. That experience taught me what the value of a dollar really was. I went to work at age 16 delivering papers, and in my senior year worked for a local drugstore. I purchased my first vehicle for \$800. It wasn't anything great, but it was mine and I paid cash for it.

"My parents loved me and they knew if I was going to escape the grip of poverty, I needed to work hard. That work ethic is still with me today, and because of those values I'm committed to serving my community and assisting others along the way.

Studies have revealed that Gastonia has a relatively sizable LGBTQ community — one that could potentially provide an even larger support base for Kellogg if they show up to vote come election day.

"I am running for mayor because I believe every Gastonian deserves a chance to build a better future for themselves and their family," Kellogg says on his website.

"I am ready to serve in a fair and visible way and to represent all of Gastonia. I am ready to continue serving you, the people because we are Gastonia and we are Gastonia strong."

For information on upcoming Gastonia elections visit gastongov.com ::

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UNC-Chapel Hill's controversial new 'School of Civic Life and Leadership'

Already facing criticism for an all-white faculty, professors and leaders say they'll define the new school themselves

By Joe Killian | NC Newsline

When UNC-Chapel Hill announced the inaugural faculty for its controversial new School of Civic Life and Leadership during the first week of October, it was difficult to miss a through-line across the nine faculty members from various departments and disciplines: They are all white.

That wasn't by design, said Sara Treul Roberts, a political science professor named interim dean and director of the new school last week.

"I can tell you that candidates of color were nominated, but then chose not to apply," Roberts said. "And no candidates of color were self-nominated. The reasons why that's the case, though, you would have to ask those people."

Over the summer, faculty members in the new school's home in the College of Arts and Sciences were invited to nominate themselves or other faculty members to become part of the school's initial faculty. Those selected would serve dual appointments in their existing department and in the new school, Roberts told Newsline in an interview this week. The only requirement was that faculty considered for the new school, like the 10 to 20 faculty the N.C. General Assembly has mandated the university hire from outside the campus, be tenured or tenure track. The pool was ultimately about 50 applicants, Roberts said, but included no applicants of color.

Several current and former faculty members of color told Newsline this week they were nominated or privately approached about joining the new school. Each said they were put off by the unprecedented nature of the General Assembly's conservative majority and its political appointees initiating the school and dictating specifics down to who is to be hired, when that will happen and from where they will come.

"You have some of these people at very high levels saying openly the goal of this school is to bring in more conservative voices, to 'level the playing field' and to push back on how liberal our faculty are," one such faculty member told Newsline this week.

The individual — like other faculty of color who spoke to Newsline this week — asked not to be named due to concerns of political reprisal.

"There may be faculty members who are comfortable with that or who think they can change that, or control the process if they're part of it," the faculty member said. "But I don't think you're going to find Black faculty members who are that naive, frankly."

The school was described as a "conservative center" by UNC System leaders from its earliest conceptions and more recently as a means of "leveling the playing field" on a campus where conservatives believe liberal views are over represented. Several faculty members of color told Newsline that the way politically appointed members of the UNC System Board



Faculty and leaders of UNC-Chapel Hill's controversial new School of Civic Life and Leadership say they hope to define the school without political intervention. CREDIT: Clay Henkel/NC Newsline

of Governors and the campus Board of Trustees have characterized the new school while criticizing the campus and its faculty has created a stigma that will be difficult for the new school to shake.

"There is no part of this process that hasn't had the hands of the legislature or people they appoint all over it," the faculty member said. "When they tell you what it's going to be and what it's going to do, when they go on Fox News and to the Wall Street Journal to say conservatives are marginalized while they attack any attempt to deal with the real and long-time racial diversity concern on our campus, you need to believe them the first time. I wasn't interested in being a Black face they could point to while they were putting together a school this way."

Partisan rhetoric in highly partisan outlets is a curious way to begin a school whose stated goal is to teach students to bridge ideological divides and foster civil discussion, the faculty member said. The all-white initial faculty is the result of that, they said, and the administration plowing ahead without dealing with why no faculty of color are interested in participating is a further demonstration of the problem.

Treul said she understands those concerns, but believes the school will be able to bring more diversity to the school with new hires and include the perspectives of faculty of color already teaching at Carolina.

"We had the pool we had," Treul said of the initial appointments. "And I certainly look forward to working with other partners across the university and connecting with scholars and instructors of color across Carolina to engage with them and bring their perspectives to the School of Civic Life and Leadership as well."

Roberts, who directed the new school's precursor, the Program for Public Discourse, said she trusts the initial faculty will be given the opportunity to build the school on their own terms, without outside interference. If faculty on and off campus see that happen, she said, she believes there will be more interest from

all quarters.

"My primary goal is to build trust and transparency," Roberts said. "And to make sure that this is something that is uniquely Carolina. This is an amazing opportunity, as a faculty member, to get to build something and develop an entire new school from more or less scratch. It's one of those opportunities that I think there will be ample interest in across all viewpoints, backgrounds [and] ideologies."

Faculty leaders said they also hope that happens.

"I certainly hope that the entire faculty won't be limited to people who are white," said Beth Moracco, chair of the faculty at UNC-Chapel Hill. "I think it's important for understanding — a variety of perspectives and lived experiences are important to understanding civic life and discourse as you discuss current issues."

It was heartening to see the diversity of disciplines and quality of faculty among the first appointments, Moracco said, and administrators say they intend the formation of the school going forward to be faculty-led.

"We all hope that will be the case, of course," Moracco said.

The First Faculty

Newsline reached out to each of the nine initial faculty members at the new school the week of October 11. Most declined to be interviewed on the record or directed questions to the new interim dean or Jim White, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. White's office said he was not available for an interview [at that time], but directed Newsline to his previous public statements on the new school.

All nine initial faculty are either registered Democrats or unaffiliated, according to publicly available voter records — something that came as a surprise to faculty who assumed Republican faculty members would flock to the school.

Three of the nine initial faculty members are women — Roberts, the new interim dean and director; Inger Brody, a professor of English and comparative

literature; and Molly Worthen, a professor of history.

The other five are men — Kurt Gray, a professor of psychology and neuroscience; Fabian Heitsch, a professor of physics and astronomy; Matthew Kotzen, a professor of philosophy; Christian Lundberg, a professor of communication; and Jason Roberts, a professor of political science.

Jason Roberts, who is also the husband of the new school's interim dean and director, did speak with Newsline this week. While he declined to comment on the lack of faculty members of color among the initial group who will help forge the new school and its direction, he said he believes faculty can make the school what it should be.

"I hope it's something first and foremost, that everyone at Carolina can be proud of," he said. "I come on to it from a political science point of view. And I hope we can develop citizen scholars who can be good democratic citizens."

"When I look at the political landscape today, I see that we have to castigate people we disagree with," Roberts said. "And I think that that's bad for democracy. It doesn't really help us work through our differences. And so, I want to help build a place where students can learn to respectfully disagree and learn to have civil discussions, express those disagreements, be a part of democratic process, accept democratic outcomes and be involved in in their community."

Jason Roberts also serves on the Orange County Board of Elections. In that role, he said, he's seen firsthand what the breakdown of civil discourse means not just at the national but at the local level.

"Something that is critical to the functioning of democracy is running elections," he said. "And we're having a crisis in this country of people not wanting to be poll workers, because of the kind of vitriol and things we have towards people who are giving their time to help our democracy function."

The new school can be part of that solution, he said, by preparing university students at a formative period in their lives to go into their communities, act as good citizens and help protect democracy.

That can only happen if there is confidence in the school from faculty, students and the public, he said. The school shouldn't be a place where people are hired because of a certain political persuasion, he said, but should be a place where all views are respected and given their due.

"That is something I'm committed to, regardless of what people's views are," Roberts said. "I want to I want my classroom and the school to be a place where we can have open and free discussion. I think that's what we all want."

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Gov. Cooper sues over a new law that strips governors of state elections board appointments

Gov. Roy Cooper is suing Republican legislative leaders over a new law that takes away his ability to appoint members of the state Board of Elections. This is the second lawsuit Cooper has filed over new laws. He's challenging a separate bill that reduces a governor's appointments to state boards and commissions.

The lawsuit filed Tuesday is over a law that changes the structure of the state elections board and local boards before the 2024 elections.

As it is now, governors appoint all five state board members based on recommendations from the major parties. The governor's party has three seats. Under the new law, the state board would grow to eight members. Republican legislative leaders would appoint four members and Democratic leaders would appoint four.

Republicans said the evenly-split

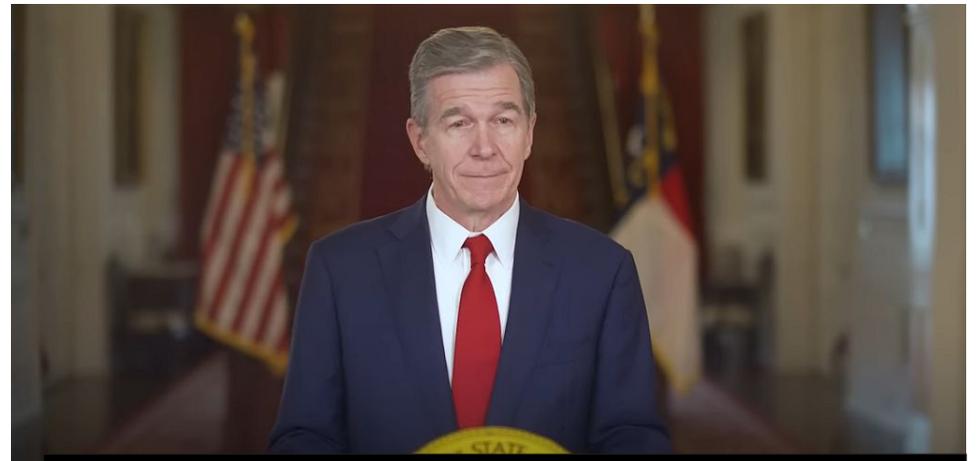
board would force bipartisan cooperation. Opponents said it will lead to gridlock and reduced early voting access.

County elections boards would have four members: two appointed by Republican legislative leaders and two appointed by their Democratic counterparts.

Republicans overrode Cooper's veto of this bill last week with party-line votes.

Cooper's lawsuit says the law violates the principle of separation of powers, because legislators take executive duties for themselves.

"Showing flagrant disregard for these constitutional principles, the North Carolina General Assembly takes direct aim at established precedents and once again seeks to significantly interfere with the Governor's constitutionally assigned executive branch duty of election law enforcement and to take much of that power



Republicans say the evenly-split board would force bipartisan cooperation, while Governor Cooper and other opponents believe the law will lead to gridlock and reduced early voting access. CREDIT: Screen capture from video feed

for itself," the lawsuit says.

Republicans have tried before to change the Board of Elections and give legislators all the appointments.

The state Supreme Court in 2018 rejected Republicans' attempt to create an even-numbered elections board.

Republican legislators voted to put a constitutional amendment on the 2018

ballot that would have created an eight-member state board and given legislators all the appointments. The voters rejected it by a 2-to-1 margin.

Cooper filed the suit in Superior Court. *This article appears courtesy of our media partner NC Newsline under Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND 4.0*

—Lynn Bonner

Nine-year-old and family sue North Carolina over gender-affirming care ban HB 808

Legal agencies Lambda Legal and the National Health Law Program filed a lawsuit against North Carolina on Wednesday to block HB 808, the Act to Prohibit Gender Transition Procedures For Minors. The law — which prohibits doctors from giving gender affirming health care to children under 18 — was implemented on Aug. 16 after the General Assembly voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto. Some of the treatments barred because of HB 808 include puberty blockers, hormone therapy and surgical care.

The law punishes doctors who continue to provide gender-affirming care by revoking the individual's license. In addition, state funds for North Carolina

Medicaid participants can't be used to pay for gender-affirming medical care to minors.

"This law will inflict harm on North [Carolina] families by denying transgender youth critically-necessary medical treatment that has been proven effective and safe," Lambda Legal Senior Counsel Tara Borelli said. "Reflecting on National Coming Out Day, this lawsuit fights for the ability of every adolescent to feel cared for and safe. This ban puts LGBTQ youth at risk and creates an unsafe environment for them."

The complaint notes nine-year-old Victor Voe, a pseudonym to protect the child's identity, is "terrified of going through a puberty that is completely

foreign to him" and "his anxiety is growing." The suit also says Voe's parents Vanessa and Vance, "cannot bear to witness their child go through physical changes that will profoundly harm him." and "do not wish to uproot their lives, nor can they imagine bearing the long-term financial costs associated with leaving the state to get care for Victor."

"The ban will harm transgender youth and their families across North Carolina, especially those enrolled in Medicaid," National Health Law Program Senior Attorney Catherine McKee explained.

"To put it plainly, these families lack the financial resources to seek care outside the state or to cover the cost of that care themselves. As a result, HB 808 will force transgender adolescents to forgo the gender-affirming care that both their doctors and parents deem necessary."

— Taylor Heeden



The family of a nine-year-old trans child is suing the state in federal court to block the implementation of HB 808. CREDIT: Screen Capture




Campaign for Southern Equality says NC's new Parents' Bill of Rights violates federal law

CSE urges state schools to refrain from complying with the law

By T. Keung Hui | The Charlotte Observer

An LGBTQ advocacy group is urging North Carolina school districts to not follow the "Parents' Bill of Rights" law because it says it violates a federal law that bars discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in schools. The new state law requires public schools to notify parents if their child changes their name or pronoun. It also limits discussion of LGBTQ issues in elementary schools.

In a legal memo released on Monday, the Asheville-based Campaign For Southern Equality said the Parents' Bill of Rights violates federal Title IX law by creating a hostile educational environment for LGBTQ+ students. "The harmful provisions of S.B. 49 (Senate Bill 49) discussed above make it harder for educators to teach and for students to learn by casting a pall over the schoolhouse," according to the Campaign For Southern Equality's memo. "In doing so, these provisions violate Title IX. Accordingly, schools receiving federal educational funding in North Carolina cannot comply with these pernicious and dangerous portions of S.B. 49." The memo was shared with the state Department of Public Instruction, State Board of Education and local school boards.

New State Law Defended

"The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is aware of the Campaign for Southern Equality's memo, and our legal department is reviewing this matter," Jeanie McDowell, a DPI spokesperson, said in an email.

But the N.C. Values Coalition says the Parents' Bill of Rights is in total compliance with Title IX.

"Anti-parental rights groups seek to distort the facts and misstate the law trying to deny parents their fundamental right to oversee the education and upbringing of their children," Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the N.C. Values Coalition, said in a statement Monday. "These radical activists continue to try and lure children into questioning their gender resulting in mental illness while keeping parents in the dark, which are classic grooming tactics."

Does Title IX Include Gender Identity?

In June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the *Bostock v. Clayton County* case that federal employment discrimination law applies to transgender people. Based on the court ruling, the Biden administration issued federal guidance saying Title IX's prohibi-

tion of sexual discrimination in institutions receiving federal education funding includes discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Campaign For Southern Equality says the new state law means students are no longer free to express themselves in ways challenging gender norms or to check out a library book without the risk of educators reporting their activities to their parents. In addition, the group says the ban on instruction on sexuality or gender identity in kindergarten through fourth-grade classrooms means students are prohibited "from learning about or even seeing examples of role models or families who are not straight and cisgender."

Should NC Schools Follow New Law?

State lawmakers gave school districts an extension to Jan. 1 to implement the Parents' Bill of Rights. School districts across the state are adopting policies recommended by the N.C. School Boards Association to



comply with the requirements.

But the Campaign For Southern Equality recommends that compliance be postponed or suspended until DPI has a chance to address the group's Title IX issues. The group also urges DPI to contact the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. "Schools cannot comply with Title IX while following the portions of S.B. 49 gratuitously harming LGBTQ students," according to the memo. "The choice between Title IX and S.B. 49 is no choice at all; schools must follow Title IX."

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U.S. Census shows same-sex married couples less likely to be same age, race, ethnicity

In contrast, same-sex partners were more likely to have similar income and education levels than opposite-sex spouses



by Taylor Heeden
Qnotes Staff Writer

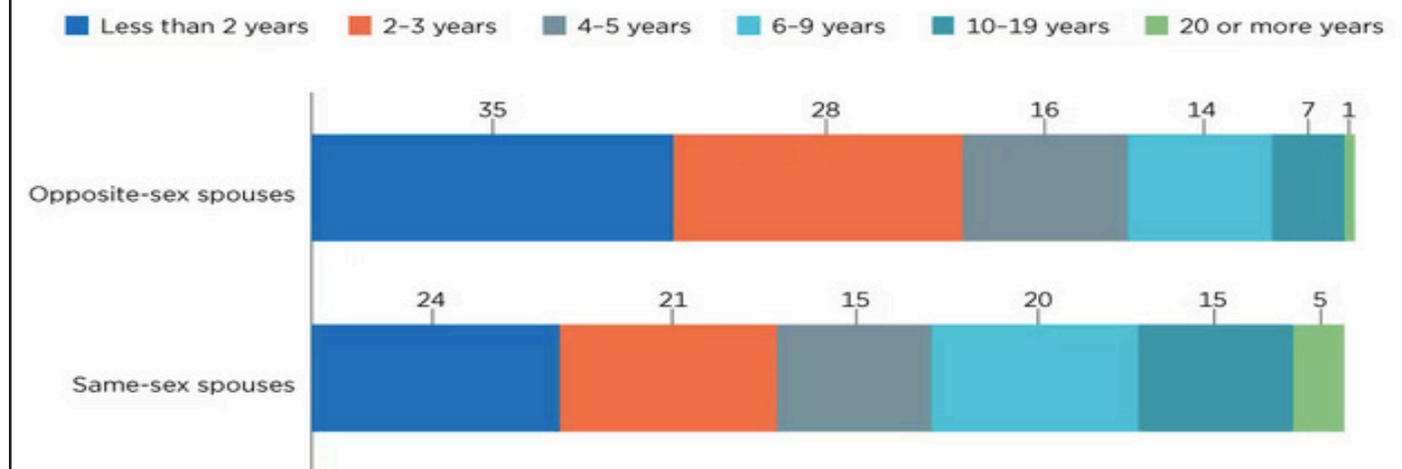
The Latest data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau shows same-sex married couples are less likely than heterosexual couples to be the same age and the same race, according to the 2021 one-year American Community Survey. The survey also revealed same-sex partners are also more likely to have similar income and education levels in comparison to opposite-sex couples.

In many years prior to any known studies, married opposite sex couples were historically more likely to share the same demographics, such as race and ethnicity, income and age. This phenomenon — known as homogamy — was previously studied in the U.S. in 1999 and 2000, over 15 years prior to same-sex marriage legalization. The 2000 study showed same-sex male couples were less likely to have a homogamous pairing than their heterosexual counterparts.

Over 80 percent of opposite-sex couples have a spouse of the same race while 66 percent of same-sex couples are the same race. On a similar note, 35 percent of adults in opposite-sex relationships have an age difference of less than two years while in same-sex couples the rate is 24 percent. Around 18 percent of opposite-sex couples and 21 percent of same-sex couples have spouses with incomes within \$10,000 of one another.

Same-sex spouses are also more likely to have larger age gaps in comparison to opposite-sex couples. According to

Figure 2.
Age Gap of Spouses in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples: 2021
(In percent)



Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

the 2021 one-year American Community Survey, five percent of same-sex couples have an age difference of over 20 years compared to the one percent of opposite sex couples.

If they're Hispanic, opposite-sex relationships are also more likely to share the same origin (94 percent) than same-sex couples (86 percent). According to the U.S. Census Bureau:

"Combining race and Hispanic origin status reveals the same pattern: 80 percent of opposite-sex married couples involved spouses who share race and Hispanic origin, whereas two-thirds (66 percent) of same-sex couples did so."

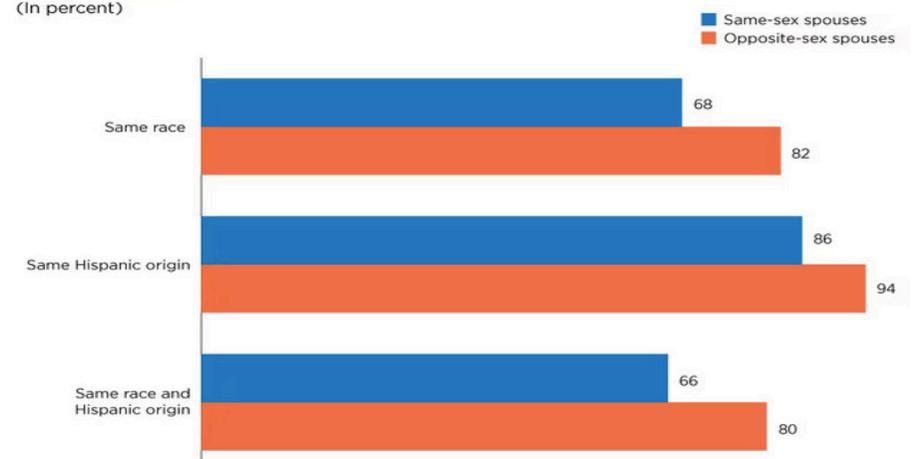
Men in same-sex relationships were

also statistically more likely (24 percent) to be born outside of the U.S. than their heterosexual peers (21 percent). For women, however, it's the other way

have lower socioeconomic status.

The Pew Research Center's study revealed men in same-sex marriages also have a higher income than their hetero-

Figure 3.
Race, Ethnicity Similarities of Spouses in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples: 2021
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

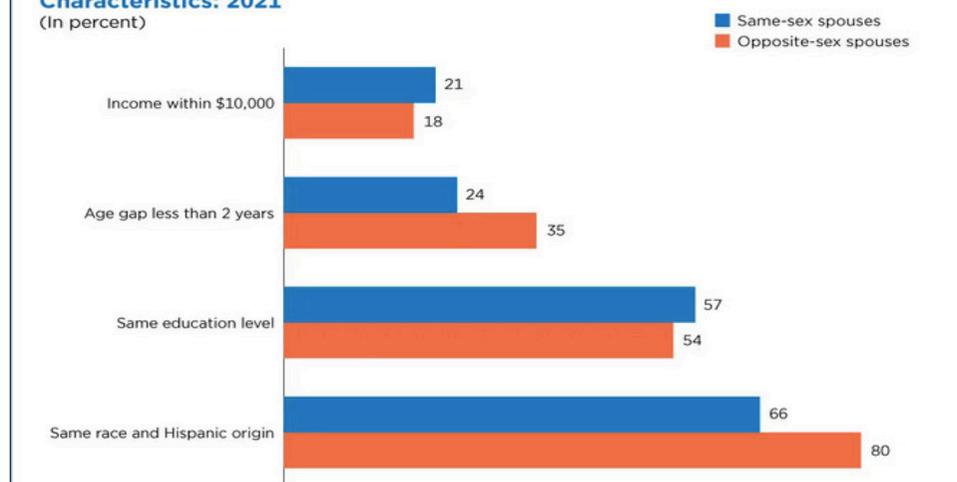
around: 21 percent of women in opposite-sex marriages were born outside of the U.S. compared to the 10 percent in same-sex relationships.

Same-sex spouses are also statistically more likely to earn within \$10,000 annually of one another at a rate of 21 percent in comparison to heterosexual couples at 18 percent. Opposite-sex couples, on the other hand, are more likely to have income gaps exceeding \$50,000 at a rate of 37 percent, which can be more impacting if one or both spouses

sexual counterparts. The median annual household income for men in same-sex marriages was roughly \$132,300 in 2019, which was significantly higher than the median income for men in opposite-sex marriages at \$90,700.

There is also an income gap between women in same-sex and opposite-sex marriages, but the gap itself is less drastic with same-sex marriages having a median income of roughly \$101,900 and about \$91,100 for women in opposite-sex marriages.

Figure 1.
Similarities of Spouses in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples by Selected Characteristics: 2021
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

Make a Difference in Your Community and Volunteer with Charlotte Pride!

by Liz Schob (she/her), Communications Manager



Heterosexual men, however, are more likely to be employed at a rate of 89 percent compared to gay men (80 percent). For women it's the opposite: women in same-sex marriages (76 percent) are more likely to be employed than their straight counterparts in opposite-sex couplings (72 percent).

It's more likely for both spouses in a

The Pew Research Center released a report in 2021 which found men in same-sex relationships had higher levels of education and higher incomes than men in heterosexual relationships. Over 50 percent of men in same-sex marriages have at least a bachelor's degree compared to 38 percent of straight men. Meanwhile for women, the data is fairly

Hey, Y'all.

As I am nearing the one-year mark on the staff of Charlotte Pride, I can't help but look back on all that our community has been through this year. From the lows of devastating legislation that attempt to censor the existence of the LGBTQ community out of public spaces and deny young people the right to safe and affirming healthcare to the highs of celebrating Pride around the region and hosting a record-setting parade in Charlotte, I stand in awe of the resiliency of our community. No matter what we go through, we have each other and the Charlotte Pride family is a shining example of that.

With only two full-time staff, it's impossible to accomplish all our organization does without the incredible group of volunteers that help make up our Charlotte Pride family. They sacrifice hours of time and energy to make our year-round events come to life and I'm so grateful for them. Even during the most stressful moment, when I'm with our volunteers, I become grounded and reminded of why we do what we do. The Pride Movement was founded on the concept of liberation, which would never be possible without community, and I am so glad to be in community with the most incredible people.

As we begin the transition from one year to the next, I would like to invite everyone, including our allies, to consider joining the Charlotte Pride volunteer team. This can be your first volunteer experience ever or you can have worked with a variety of organizations for years – it's truly open to everyone! But don't take my word for it, hear directly from a few of our volunteers:

I became a volunteer with Charlotte Pride after attending my first Pride festival. I

felt for the first time that I had found a place where I was valued, and I want anyone else who needs that safe space to find it at Pride. My favorite thing about volunteering with Charlotte Pride is the comradery with others who share my goal of providing inclusive programming for the entirety of our community. Seeing the smiling faces of festival goers enjoying themselves, being their authentic selves, and the reward of knowing

that I am a part of something that continues to thrive and grow despite the overwhelming pushback from those who don't understand us is the reason I do this work. I encourage people to volunteer with Charlotte Pride because it's one of the most rewarding experiences you can have and because we need everyone in order to do the work of uplifting our community and bringing visibility to the struggle for equality.

~ Anthony (they/them)

I became a volunteer because it seemed like a perfect way to feel like a greater part of the Charlotte LGBTQIA+ community. I love the sense of the community that I've found, all of the new friends that I've made, and learning how Charlotte Pride is active all throughout the year, not just during the festival and parade weekend. It really is life changing! I appreciate all the people I met and all of the fun I've had hanging out with other queer folk. If you're looking for a welcoming, inclusive, positive space where you can really make a difference, this is the opportunity for you!

~ Frankie (she/her)

Interested in learning more? Visit charlottepride.org to learn more about the specific volunteer opportunities available and apply to join our team.



CREDIT: Poprock Photography/Courtesy of Charlotte Pride

Figure 4. Income Gap of Spouses in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples: 2021 (In percent)

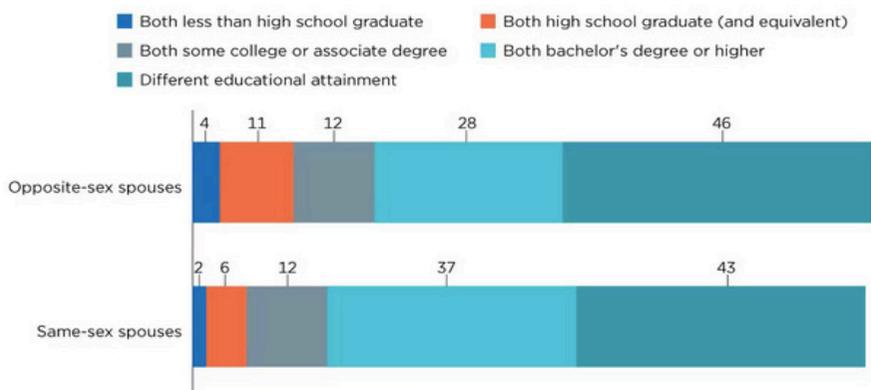


Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

same-sex marriage to have a bachelor's degree as their highest education obtained — 37 percent — in comparison to heterosexual couples, which sit at a rate of 28 percent.

consistent: women in same-sex marriages hold bachelor's degrees at a rate of 47 percent while women in heterosexual marriages have a bachelor's degree at a rate of 45 percent. ::

Figure 5. Educational Attainment Similarities of Spouses in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Couples: 2021 (In percent)



Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.



LGBTQ History: When NOW Purged Lesbians

Discrimination once ran rampant against lesbians in the country's leading feminist organization

By Victoria A. Brownworth

The website of The National Women's History Museum (NWHM) describes Betty Friedan as "co-founder of the National Organization for Women" (NOW) and "one of the early leaders of the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Her 1963 best-selling book, *The Feminine Mystique*, gave voice to millions of American women's frustrations with their limited gender roles and helped spark widespread public activism for gender equality."

The 1964 Civil Rights Act had banned sex discrimination in employment, yet the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the government agency that had been established to enforce workplace equality, did not acknowledge the sex-discrimination clause, effectively nullifying the Civil Rights Act's addition of gender.

As NWHM details, Friedan's groundbreaking book "helped transform public awareness" of such discrimination and propelled Friedan into the leadership of the nascent women's liberation movement where she was often referred to as the "mother" of second wave feminism.

In 1966, Friedan, Pauli Murray and Aileen Hernandez co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). Friedan was NOW's first president and authored NOW's mission statement: "...to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly

feminist treatise, tried to make a joke of Friedan's comment by calling it a "lavender herring," but that just further alienated lesbians in the organization.

Mainstream media had already dismissed the feminist movement as "a bunch of bra-burning lesbians," so Friedan and other straight feminist leaders were acutely sensitive to this labeling — and dismissal — of all feminists as lesbians. Friedan wanted "feminine feminists" in the movement.

Friedan, like many straight feminists, did not want feminism associated with and tainted by "man hating" and lesbianism. As lesbian activist Karla Jay later wrote in her memoir, *"Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation"*, "I'm tired of being in the closet because of the women's movement."

The blatant hostility toward lesbians and the move by Friedan and others to disassociate the feminist movement from lesbianism took on its own activism. NOW established policies that were exclusionary of lesbians in the early years of the organization. NOW newsletter editor Rita Mae Brown stated that "lesbianism is the one word which gives the New York NOW Executive Committee a collective heart attack."

The lesbian purge at NOW was momentous and had a ripple effect for lesbian activists. It was also surprising and even ironic as lesbians had been so pivotal in the founding of NOW and in the impact and influence of second wave feminism. Many of the key figures of that wave of feminism and of NOW itself were lesbians. This included NOW co-founder Pauli Murray; then-lesbian theorist Rita Mae Brown, member of The Furies collective and author of the first mainstream lesbian novel, *"Rubyfruit Jungle"* and editor of the NOW newsletter; and graphic designer Ivy Bottini, who designed NOW's logo (still used today) and was president of the largest chapter of the organization, New York NOW.

Yet the taint of the "lavender menace" was perceived by Friedan and others who identified as straight feminists at the time, Shirley Chisholm and Gloria Steinem among them, to be problematic: Lesbians were perceived as "man-hating" and mainstream feminism was intent on presenting the movement as pro-woman, not anti-male. Lesbians were still viewed as perverts and even as mentally ill. It would be several more years before the psychiatric community's DSM would change its view that homosexuality was a mental disease.

As Hannah Quayle wrote in a blog post about the purge, "Lesbians were placed within an unnatural category of the 'third sex.' This 'third sex' was associated as a gross abnormality which violated female anatomy, heterosexual desire and gender behaviour by associating masculine features upon the female body. In this sense, lesbians were not considered 'real women,' and stood outside the category of 'woman' in a physical, sexual,

personal and political sense."

Quayle asserted that within the mainstream feminist movement and NOW, "Lesbians had to find an effective way to address the accusation that their masculinity was somehow complicit with men and the patriarchy, and that lesbian influence would not in fact dismantle strict heterosexual categories as it was widely believed. Heterosexual feminists excluded lesbians from the feminist movement in the 1960s based on this discomfort towards their sexuality."

In 1969, the same year as the Stonewall riots, president of the New York chapter of NOW Bottini broached the subject of lesbianism and the movement in a public forum titled "Is Lesbianism a Feminist Issue?" Bottini — like Brown, Murray and others — thought lesbians were leaders of the feminist movement, not background players. It was lesbians like Susan B. Anthony, who had also led the first wave of feminism in the U.S.

But Friedan was adamant that lesbians not derail the feminist movement and the work that she and others were doing to establish equity in employment and reproductive rights (Friedan was also co-founder of NARAL). Lesbian visibility, Friedan believed, would allow men to dismiss the feminist movement as fringe and something most women didn't want to be associated with. Trumpeting her assertions and coining the term "lavender menace" (which a group of New York lesbians would later adopt to form a group of radical activists), NOW president Friedan fired openly lesbian newsletter editor Rita Mae Brown.

Friedan then orchestrated the purge of lesbians, including Bottini, from NOW's New York chapter. That action did not go unremarked. At the 1970 Congress to Unite Women, 400 feminists from NOW and elsewhere were in attendance. Brown, Bottini, Karla Jay and a dozen other lesbian feminists marched to the front of the auditorium wearing T-shirts that read "Lavender Menace."

One of the women, Charlotte Bunch, who was also a member of The Furies collective with Brown, read the Lavender Menace's manifesto, "The Woman-Identified Woman." That paper was considered the first major lesbian feminist statement. That action was among the first to challenge the heterosexism of heterosexual feminists and to present lesbians not as that "lavender menace" or mentally ill perverts, like the DSM defined them, but rather as more feminist than anyone, because they were women independent from and unconnected to men and to compulsory heterosexuality.

In the treatise, the "woman-identified woman" defined herself without reference to male-dominated societal structures. She "gained her sense of identity not from the men she related to, but from her internal sense of self and from ideals of nurturing, community, and cooperation that she defined as female."



Pauli Murray seated in her study.
CREDIT: Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute

Later Bunch would write, "It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution," articulating the principle of the woman-identified woman that would become a cornerstone of lesbian activism in the 1970s in the post-purge feminist movement.

Friedan's action did not end with that Lavender Menace demonstration at the Congress to Unite Women. Pushback from within NOW's ranks resulted in a near-embrace of lesbians within NOW just two years post-purge. In 1971, NOW passed a resolution declaring "that a woman's right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to choose her own lifestyle [sic]." There was also a conference resolution about lesbian mothers that declared it was "unjust" to force lesbians to remain in heterosexual marriages or remain closeted to keep custody of their children.

The NOW Task Force on Sexuality and Lesbianism was established in 1973 and NOW resolved to introduce and support civil rights legislation designed to end discrimination based on sexual orientation. Del Martin was the first open lesbian elected to NOW, and Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were the first lesbian couple to join NOW. Martin and Lyon were co-founders of Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian civil rights organization in the U.S.

Over the next 20 years, NOW would go on to support lesbian fights for everything from those custody battles to same-sex marriage and lesbians in the military. NOW supported the right of a lesbian co-parent to seek visitation by filing an amicus brief in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court case *T.B. v. L.R.M.* That right was upheld "where the child has established strong psychological bonds, with a person who ... has ... provided care, nurture, and affection, assuming in the child's eye a stature like that of a parent."

NOW also supported hate crimes legislation that included lesbians and trans women as early as 2002 and came out in support of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which expands the 1969 federal hate crimes law to include sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability.

It all started with a purge. The history of that purge made history — and redefined the feminist movement. ::



From left, Linda Rhodes, Arlene Kishner (sometimes misidentified as Arlene Kushner), and Ellen Brody participate in the "Lavender Menace" action at the Second Congress to Unite Women, in Chelsea on May 1, 1970.
CREDIT: Diana Davies/Manuscript and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

equal partnership with men."

Among the objectives of NOW were "securing the enforcement of anti-discrimination law; gaining subsidized child care, abortion rights, and public-accommodations protections; and passing the Equal Rights Amendment. NOW was able to bring about changes large and small — to hiring policies, to credit-granting rules, to laws — that improved the lives of American women."

NOW was itself a groundbreaking organization, which made Friedan's purging of lesbians from that organization in 1970 — after calling lesbians the "lavender menace" in an interview with the *New York Times* magazine — significant on a myriad of levels. That action effectively separated lesbians from mainstream feminism, just as they had been separated by gender from the decidedly male gay liberation movement.

NOW's Susan Brownmiller, whose book *"Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape"* would become another critically important

“Glitter and Concrete: A Cultural History of Drag in New York City”

Out in Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Qnotes Staff Writer

“Glitter and Concrete: A Cultural History of Drag in New York City” by Elyssa Maxx Goodman
c.2023, Hanover Square Press
\$32.99
464 pages



“From the mid-1800s to 1900, gender impersonation became a beloved genre of theater” in New York, she says, but social attitudes and morals changed in the early twentieth century. Female drag performers were often scrutinized, and worked under sometimes-unpredictable rules while male impersonators might’ve enjoyed the ability to live as a man, travel alone and keep company with women in public.

By the beginning of World War I, social reformers had begun to shut down places where they thought homosexuality might be found, and that included drag venues. They did so, despite that gender impersonations were important to the morale of soldiers.

Says Goodman, “... female impersonator roles were incredibly popular with enlisted men,” and one drag show became

“an instant hit.”

Prohibition sent both booze and drag underground, but while the former was widely available again in 1933, the latter was not. And yet, it was impossible to keep drag performances from happening; in fact, the mob ran several drag clubs, including one owned by Anna Genovese, the bisexual wife of mobster Vito. Yes, drag could be found in the years 1933 to 1968, but audiences both straight and gay had to search for it.

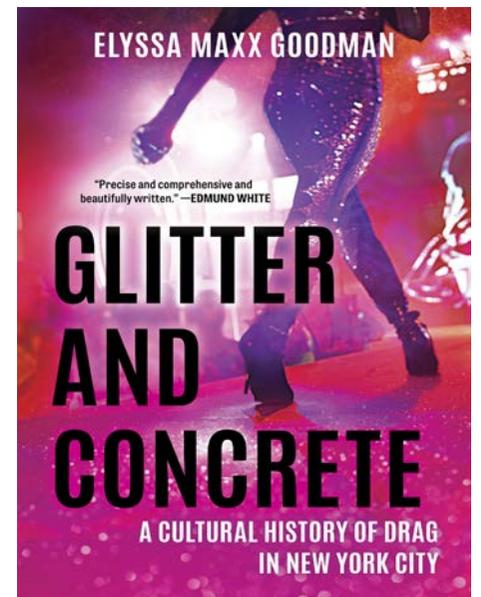
Still, change was coming...

Then again, doesn't it seem like change never stopped happening in the world of drag? Like, a now-you-see-it, oops, now-you-can't kinda thing? Understanding that, and the future of drag, entails knowing it's history, and that's easy to do, once you've read “Glitter and Concrete.”

In taking readers back some 170 years, author Elyssa Maxx Goodman shows how New York City led the way for drag to be both condemned and enjoyed in the rest of America, often seemingly in the same breath. Intuiting the difference between illegal and permissible was a matter of splitting hairs then; the scandalous nature of drag was often you-know-it-when-you-see-it, and not always firmly defined. That repeating juxtaposition, a social flip-flop-flip, if you will, is fascinating to follow here. Indeed, it was

sometimes a case of one man's trash being another man's pleasure.

So what's changed about that? So much and not much, and the rest of the story is inside this necessary book. Read it, and “Glitter and Concrete” will make you wear a smile. ::




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Spooks and specters: a guide to haunts in the Carolinas

A compiled list of some of the most famous ghosts of North and South Carolina



by Taylor Heeden
QNotes Staff Writer

Ghost stories serve as a way of preserving local history — from tales of Blackbeard and his pirate crew to legends from the several indigenous tribes in North Carolina. While the accuracy of these tales may be up for debate, they remind people of the local history and provide an entertaining way to remember the past.

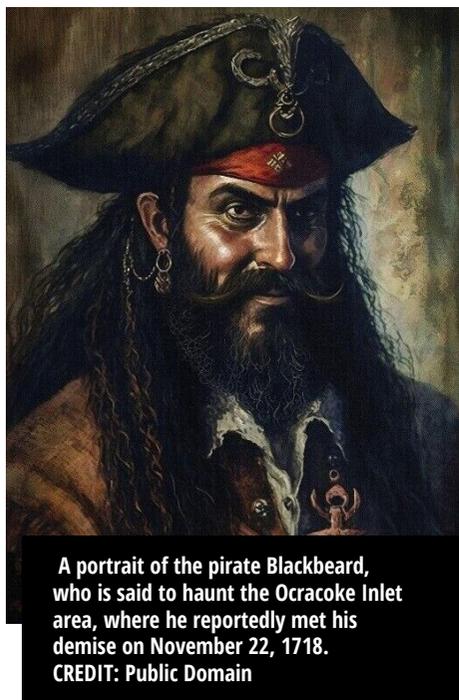
With Halloween just around the corner, QNotes has compiled a list of some of the most famous ghoulish tales from across the Carolinas. For more information about each haunt, go to the online version of this story where hyperlinks will be available.

Blackbeard's Ghost

One of the most infamous ghostly characters in North Carolina is none other than Blackbeard, a pirate who wrecked havoc along the coast of Ocracoke Island. Most North Carolinians have heard legends of Blackbeard — from his ruthless reputation to his habit of weaving fuses into his black beard and lighting it on fire.

His reign, however, came to an end on Nov. 22, 1718, when Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood had a ship sent to the North Carolina coast to track down and kill Blackbeard. John Maynard, the captain of that ship, and his crew shot Blackbeard five times, as well as stabbed him 20 times. Blackbeard's crew was all captured or killed, and Maynard took the pirate king's head as a consolation prize from his victory in battle. Legend has it Blackbeard's headless body swam around the ship three times before sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

Today, it's alleged Blackbeard still haunts the area around Ocracoke Inlet where he was killed, which is known as Teach's Hole. People have reported seeing a ghostly light illuminating the waters sur-



A portrait of the pirate Blackbeard, who is said to haunt the Ocracoke Inlet area, where he reportedly met his demise on November 22, 1718.
CREDIT: Public Domain



The Grove Park Inn, historic hotel for many famous guests, including one that just won't leave.
CREDIT: Facebook

rounding the cove, as well as Blackbeard's phantom voice calling out into the wind.

The Governor's Mansion

It wouldn't surprise many to hear the Governor's Mansion is one of the more haunted places in North Carolina. Construction on the building started in 1883 with all materials coming from within the state — from marble for the steps mined in Cherokee County to sandstone trim originated in Anson County.

Former North Carolina Governor Bob Scott, who served in the office from 1969 to 1973, often told stories of some of the weird experiences he and his wife had in the mansion during his tenure. According to Scott, he chose to sleep in former Gov. Daniel G. Fowle's bedroom, which still had the custom bed in it made specifically for Fowle.

Scott found the bed to be too short for him, so he had it moved to another room and replaced it with a new bed meant to fit him. However, shortly after Scott moved Fowle's bed, he began to hear knocking behind his wall at the same time every night. He and his wife thought it was the pipes at first, not paying much mind to it.

Staff later revealed to Scott, however, there weren't any pipes in the wall where Scott heard the knocking. The Scotts remained puzzled until Fowle's daughter called, asking if his bed had been moved. Since then, Scott believed the knocking was the spirit of the former governor asking for his bed to be moved back to his room.

The Wampus Cat

Weird things happen in Appalachia — tales from Native American legends have served as a reminder to be wary of what you may hear or see in the wooded areas of the mountains. One of these legends is the Wampus Cat, which many believe to be the spirit of a beautiful Cherokee woman who was punished for observing a ritual women weren't supposed to take part in.

The punishment in question: she was turned into a cougar/human hybrid creature and was cursed to roam the woods

alone for the rest of time, never to enjoy the company of humans ever again.

Some say the Wampus Cat is responsible for stealing farm animals or ruining farm equipment, acting on her anger and resentment for humans for not being able to join them. Others say the Wampus Cat will roam the mountains and villages forever, lurking where people live but unable to ever live with them.

The Devil's Tramping Ground

Located in Bear Creek, The Devil's Tramping Ground has served as one of North Carolina's most notorious haunts. The tramping ground, which is an eerie circle where nothing grows in the middle of a heavily wooded area, is located on State Road 1100 and is behind a red iron gate with a large "No Trespassing" sign.

Legend says the devil himself walks through the woods, "tramping" in a circle, which is one of the various theories as to why nothing grows at the location. According to those who have visited after sundown, mysterious things happen without explanation. Some people hear voices saying, "Follow me into the woods." Others will see shadowy figures among the trees. Some say they've heard footsteps following behind them. Others see what they describe as "phantom animals," while some claim to see ghostly girls appearing in photos they take.

QNotes writer Taylor Heeden, the author of this article, has covered the Devil's Tramping Ground and experienced the inexplicable while investigating the location in October 2021. "As I was walking past the circle and onto the trail leading away from it, I felt something take a piece of my hair, put it behind my ear, and lightly tug it" she recalled. "I thought it was my fiance, but he was in front of me navigating through the path." Her original article can be read on the website chapelboro.com.

The Horseshoe at the University of South Carolina

The Horseshoe is an area of the University of South Carolina's campus that is home to the Caroliniana Library, student housing and the McKissick Museum. It's

also known as one of the most haunted places in South Carolina, according to the university's website. Three of the haunted locations in the Horseshoe include the McKissick Museum, DeSaussure College and Longstreet Theatre.

The McKissick Museum is allegedly haunted by its namesake, James Rion McKissick, who was so beloved by the student body, it was petitioned for his body to be buried on campus after his untimely death in 1944. According to the website: "Those who work in the museum report hearing footsteps at night and feeling cool breezes indoors. Objects mysteriously moving about are believed to be moved by the president himself, because if you've got it, haunt it, right?"

DeSaussure College is an upperclassmen dormitory in the Horseshoe and served as a hospital during the Civil War. The building later became the university's first location for the medical school from 1866 to 1873. According to the website: "One wing was also used during the Reconstruction Era as a federal military prison. Several of our students are believed to have heard the footsteps and voices of the Civil War soldiers that haunt the building."

Longstreet Theatre — which is now used for theatrical and dance productions — has its own haunting history. The building also served as a field hospital during the Civil War, as well as a morgue. Strange sightings and noises are common, and door slams have continued to haunt visitors to the theater.

Alice of The Hermitage

The Tale of Alice Flagg of Georgetown is one of South Carolina's most infamous ghouls who continues to look for closure after her untimely death at the age of 15.

Flagg was a student at a boarding school when she contracted malaria and fell ill. Her fiance gave her a ring, but Flagg's brother disapproved of the union and demanded she return the ring. Instead, Flagg placed the ring on some ribbon and wore it around her neck. When she fell into a coma, Flagg's brother took the ring and threw it into a nearby creek and it was never seen again.

It's believed her spirit still walks the riverbanks near her resting place at All Saints Waccamaw Episcopal Church Cemetery, searching for the ring that was lost.

The Old Charleston Jail

Easily one of the most haunted locations in one of the most haunted cities of the South, the Old Charleston Jail is filled with stories of some of the most vile and evil criminals in Charleston's history.

One of the most infamous murderers in Charleston, Lavinia Fisher, is believed to still haunt the jail to this day. Fisher and her husband, John, were the owners of the Charleston Inn, which is now known as the Six Mile Wayfarer House. While they were the managers, the sheriff's office received complaints of guests disappearing, but no action was taken at the time because the Fishers

Continued on next page

Halloween: The Great Gay Holiday

Jesse's Journal



by Jesse Monteagudo
Qnotes Contributing Writer

Like other groups, our LGBTQ community observes and celebrates various holidays: Pride Month, National Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, etc. But our most popular holiday predates recorded history and captures the essence of sex and gender variance to a much greater degree than any activist holiday: Halloween, "the great gay holiday." Once thought to be a children's holiday, Halloween (or Hallowe'en) is almost as popular with adults. According to Nicholas Rogers, author of *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night*, "Halloween has become a major party night for adults, arguably the most important after New Year's Eve. The amount of money spent on Halloween has more than doubled in the last decade, making it the second retail bonanza after Christmas."

Halloween (or Hallowe'en) is a corruption of All Hallows Eve, which is traditionally observed on the night before All Saints Day (All Hallows Day). Like other Christian holy days, Halloween was adapted from a pagan festival, in this case the Celtic feast of Samhain (pronounced sow-end). Rich Wandel, an openly gay high priest of Wicca,

told the authors of *The Gay Almanac* that "Samhain is a time of connection to those who have gone before and will return again. It is my favorite ritual and is one we never let the students lead. We do it ourselves, because it is important, particularly in terms of the many friends that all of us in our communities have lost."

While Halloween is enjoyed by everyone, Rogers reminds us that "it has been the gay community that has most flamboyantly exploited Halloween's potential as a transgressive festival, as one that operates outside or on the margins of orthodox time, space and hierarchy. Indeed, it is the gay community that has been arguably most responsible for Halloween's adult rejuvenation." In *Another Mother Tongue*, her cultural history of queer communities, Judy Grahn wrote about its significance to LGBTQ people, who in many societies served as priests, witches, shamans, healers and intermediaries between the mortal and spirit worlds. "Impersonating a spirit is the only safe way to travel outdoors on Halloween. And who could better imitate spirits than the gay people whose traditional priestly role required just such intercourse with the spirit world? The qualities of impersonation and the dangerous business of crossing over from one world to another help explain why Halloween is the most significant gay holiday."

According to William Stewart,



"Hallowe'en has always been a time of year when the gay communities experienced greater freedoms. Even in the 1940s and 1950s when police harassment of gay bars was at its height, Hallowe'en was the one fairy-tale evening when the drag queens could come out with impunity." Halloween's appeal to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities goes beyond that holiday's historical or spiritual connotations. I believe that it has a lot to do with our role as outsiders in society; our propensity for cross-dressing and gender-bending; our love for the unusual and the fantastic; our ability to find humor in the absurdities and misfortunes of life; our fascination with festive costumes and the world of make-believe; and our special capacity to have fun. While others might treat Halloween as just trick or treat for children, LGBTQ people observe and cherish it as a day and night in which we can do away with dull, ordinary, dumb reality and be our fun, exotic, erotic selves. ::

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Continued from page 14



An aerial view of The Devil's Tramping Ground, described as one of North Carolina's most haunted locations. CREDIT: Courtesy of Tamara Owens

were well respected in the community.

However, that all would change when David Ross was held captive by the Fishers and somehow escaped, running to authorities in Charleston with what he had witnessed. The Fishers were sentenced to death for their crimes, and John is said to have sought repentance before his execution date. Lavinia, however, is rumored to have said the following as her last words: "If you have a message you want to send to hell, give it to me, and I'll carry it!"

The Fishers are believed to roam the halls of the empty jail, with some paranormal investigators claiming they've captured the duo on camera.

The Pink Lady of Grove Park Inn

Asheville's Grove Park Inn has had its fair share of famous guests — from George Gershwin to Harry Houdini, F. Scott Fitzgerald and even President Barack Obama. However,

it's one of Grove Park's phantom guests that puts the hotel on the map.

Employees and guests at the hotel have reported seeing a woman in a pink ball gown perusing the grounds, and her spirit is beloved by everyone who has an encounter. It's believed the ghost is the spirit of a woman who fell to her death on the fifth floor in the 1920s and is either seen as a pink mist or a fully formed apparition.

Guests report she has a preference for children — specifically children who get sick during their stay — holding their hands and comforting them in bed. In fact, one guest left a note during check-out asking the staff to thank the woman in the pink ball gown for playing with his children. The Pink Lady is also known to participate in mischievous schemes, such as turning on and off lights, air conditioners and other electrical devices. ::

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The ultimate guide to gay gift giving in 2023

List of holiday items includes something for everyone

By Mikey Rox

Searching for special deliveries for that special someone? Holiday season gifts that slap? Consider these elf-approved, consciously curated presents perfect for everyone from roommates to soulmates.

Star Wars Home Collection



Movie nights in bed get a comfort upgrade from the Force – for those who uphold Jedi code in the streets but embrace the Dark Side in the sheets – with Sobel Westex’s Star Wars Home Collection, five- to seven-piece twin, queen and king sets suitable for either alliance. Cop a bootleg of the infamous “Star Wars Holiday Special” (legal copies don’t exist, nor has it been rebroadcast since its one-and-only airing in 1978) and settle in for a snacky screening with premade Johnson’s Popcorn (a Jersey Shore staple) or Pop ‘N Dulge’s DIY gourmet kits. *SobelAtHome.com*, \$350-\$390; *JohnsonsPopcorn.com*, \$27+; *PopNDulge.com*, \$23

Bird Buddy Smart Feeder



Avian enthusiasts get up close and semi-personal with feathered friends thanks to the Bird Buddy smart feeder that allows safe viewing via a solar-powered, app-enabled camera, along with adorable add-ons like a suet ball holder and three-in-one nutrition set to keep the neighborhood’s bird population happy and healthy. *MyBirdBuddy.com*, \$299-\$415

Link x Lou Permanent Jewelry



Jewelry – but make it an experience. That’s the premise behind Link x Lou, a quick-fitting accessory service that provides recipients with in-person appointments for custom-linked, clasp-less 14-karat white- and yellow-gold necklaces, bracelets, anklets and rings that wear until they’re worn out. Money’s on ‘em lasting longer than the situation you’ve got goin’, but may the odds be ever in your favor. *LinkxLou.com*, \$55-\$500

Polaris General 1000 Sport



Resort-ish communities across the country have adopted golf carts as a preferred mode of transportation, and you can establish yourself as a local baddie in Polaris’ General 1000 Sport – in ethereal colorways like ghost gray – equipped with a four-stroke DOHC twin-cylinder engine, 100 horsepower, 1,500-pound hitch-towing capacity, and enough street cred for Boomers to shake their fists at. *Polaris.com*, \$17,500+

Lexington Glassworks Decanter Set



Pour one out for the homies from Lexington Glassworks’ handblown whiskey decanter, each one individually crafted in the company’s Asheville studio and detailed with an elegant crackle finish that lends an air of sophistication to any home bar cart. Pair with a set of LG’s complementary rocks glasses, in the same distinguished style, for a cherished gift to cheers to. *LexingtonGlassworks.com*, \$280

‘Arquivistas’ Crystal Book



Brazilian crystal enthusiast Tatiana Dorow has curated an impressive collection of more than 1,000 rare and exquisite minerals – ranging from one ounce to over 5,000 pounds – the comprehensive record of which is now compiled in the sizable coffee-table tome “Arquivistas” (Portuguese for archivist) that’s sure to satisfy, delight, and provide endless holiday-party talking points to the New Ager in your life.

ArtAndAnthropologyPress.com, \$350

Bovem Globe Trimmer 2.0



There’s plenty of manscaping tools on the market, but perhaps none are designed with a guy’s delicate bits in mind like the handsome second-gen Bovem Globe body and groin trimmer with its ergonomic textured grip, powerful 6500 RPM with low vibration, varying guards, and replaceable TrimSafe blades that tidy you up without cutting skin or pulling rough hair. Deck the halls! – no more bloody Christmas balls. *Bovem.co*, \$60-\$87

Joule Turbo Sous Vide



Your fave chefs’ autopilot cooking technique hits home countertops in Breville’s sleek Joule Turbo Sous Vide stick, which cooks seasoned-and-bagged meats and veggies to a faster-than-ever optimal internal temperature (unattended, no less) before a lickety-split sear and serve results in restaurant-quality dishes deserving of at least a couple Michelin Stars for your minimal-mess kitchen. *Breville.com*, \$250

Outlines Shower Liner System



Holiday hosts can practice responsible replenishment amid our planetary plastic-waste crisis when you gift Outlines’ thoughtfully designed Shower Liner System that provides users with a machine-washable, long lasting cotton top piece and fully recyclable bottom to replace when it’s time to ditch the grime. Set it and forget it with three-, six- or nine-month auto-deliveries. *LivingOutlines.com*, \$50

AiRROBO Pet Grooming Vacuum



Posh pets enjoy salon-style luxury in the comfort of their homes when treated to a grooming session by the AiRROBO vacuum (think Flowbee for cats and dogs), a five-tool, one-stop solution for keeping furbabies’ hair, dander, allergens and mites to a minimum. The portable pamperer includes an electric clipper, crevice and de-shedding tools, and grooming and cleaning brushes housed in a space-saving, HEPA-filtered capsule. *US.Air-Robo.com*, \$110

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels. ::

Food to celebrate the season

Celebrity Recipes

By Qnotes Staff

The holiday season is just about here and will be front and center as we make our way towards the new year.

Qnotes has curated recipes from LGBTQ+ celebrities and allies to enjoy as we celebrate our journey towards 2024.

Dolly Parton's Hickory Grilled Ham

Originally published in Taste of Home

One staple of the classic Christmas dinner is the Christmas ham, and coun-

Directions:

In a large bowl, cover the hickory chunks with water and soak for 1 to 24 hours. In a small bowl, stir together the mustard, brown sugar and water until smooth. Brush 1/4 of the glaze all over the outside of the ham. Prepare your charcoal grill with hot coals, then drain the hickory chunks and arrange them around the outside edges of the grill.



try music legend and LGBTQ+ icon Dolly Parton has just the recipe. Her father always made a hickory-infused ham for the holidays, and Parton shared the recipe with fans so they could also have a taste of the holidays. Parton has been an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community for decades, speaking up for marriage equality, using her platform to make statements against bathroom bans and more.

Ingredients:

- 1 6-lb smoked ham, fully cooked with bone in (shank or butt half)
- 1/2 cup Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 1 large pineapple
- 4-5 tennis ball-sized hickory wood chunks

Adjust your grill's temperature to low heat (250° to 300°F). With your grill rack positioned about 8 inches over the coals, place the ham on the rack and close the cover. Cook for 1 hour, brushing the ham every 15 minutes with additional glaze. Remove the ham from the grill and score the ham diagonally to create a diamond pattern on the skin. Insert a clove into the middle of each diamond. Return the ham to the grill. Cook until the center of the meat registers 140° on an instant-read meat thermometer. Remove to a carving board. Meanwhile, slice a pineapple into 12 wedges, keeping the skin and leaves intact. Grill until charred, about 2-3 minutes per side. Remove the bone and carve the ham. Enjoy! ::

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LGBTQ+ people are more likely to develop breast cancer or other forms of cancer

Health and Wellness



by Taylor Heeden
Qnotes Staff Writer



LGBTQ+ people are at an increased risk of developing breast cancer because of differing factors, including historic lack of access to inclusive health care. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

Breast Cancer Awareness Month takes place every October and serves as a way to honor the over 42,000 people who die from the disease every year. Cancer doesn't discriminate, and upwards of over 21,000 LGBTQ+ people will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the next year.

In fact, LGBTQ+ people are at an increased risk of developing the disease due to lifestyle differences. For example, individuals who smoke or drink alcohol increase the risk of breast and other cancers, and LGBTQ+ people statistically drink and smoke more than their heterosexual counterparts.

In addition, individuals who give birth are at a lower risk of developing breast cancer and same-sex couples are statistically less likely to have biological children. However, the biggest reason for the increased risk in queer-identifying people is the lack of access to inclusive health care, according to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UMPC).

"LGBTQIA+ people don't receive cancer screenings as often as cisgender straight people," the report from UMPC reads. "Regular breast cancer screenings include breast exams, mammograms, and MRI scans. These screenings can find cancer and pre-cancerous cells early. Cancer is easier to treat and has better outcomes when found early."

Some of the Hurdles...

A 2022 study showed transgender people were half as likely to get breast cancer screenings than cisgender people, as well as were less likely to have a primary care provider. A separate study found screen-

ing rates among trans and nonbinary people ranged from two to 50 percent. The reasons found in the study ranged from stigmas to a history of poor treatment from health care workers. In other words, if someone had a negative experience with a doctor or found themselves in a non-affirming situation, that patient was less likely to return for further treatments.

"Even if an LGBTQIA+ person hasn't had a bad experience, they might fear how a healthcare provider will treat them," UPMC officials said in a statement. "One study from 2021 found that LGBTQIA+ people had the greatest distrust of the healthcare system. The rates of distrust were highest in Black LGBTQIA+ women."

In addition, 70 percent of radiologists are "unsure" what the guidelines are for screening a transgender patient for breast cancer. That same study also revealed 65

percent of radiologists don't offer breast cancer screenings for transgender men and only 13 percent of radiologists noted patients' gender or sex assigned at birth in their treatments.

Guidelines for Screening Trans Patients for Breast Cancer

There are three things doctors must consider when screening a trans or nonbinary patient for breast cancer: the sex that doctors assigned a person at birth, whether they use hormones and if their other risk factors include a family history of breast cancer or genetic cancer syndrome.

A trans woman who doesn't use hormones and doesn't have a family history will not have to undergo a breast cancer screening. However, if the patient does have a family history of breast cancer or is over the age of 40 and has used

hormones for at least five years, a screening that could include a mammogram is highly recommended.

Trans men who undergo top surgery may not have to submit themselves for a mammogram, but doctors do recommend evaluating the risks based on each patient's medical history. Trans men who have NOT had top surgery do need to undergo breast cancer screenings.

Breaking Down the Barriers

LGBTQ+ people — especially trans people — have a higher risk of death from breast cancer than cisgender, straight people. Not only are queer folks statistically less likely to get a diagnosis early in the disease's progress, but they are also less likely to receive care as quickly as heterosexual patients.

A 2021 study found treatment delays were most common in queer Black women, with Black queer women being upwards of five times more likely to have a delay in receiving treatment for breast cancer.

There are many organizations working to help break down the healthcare barriers for breast cancer treatment in queer and trans people. These organizations include National LGBT Cancer Network, CancerCare and their LGBTQIA+ support groups, The Fenway Institute, CoppaFeel!: Resources for Trans and Non-Binary People with Breast Cancer, Family Caregiver Alliance: LGBT Caring Community Online Support Group, The National LGBT Cancer Project, Young Survival Coalition Virtual Hangout for LGBTQIA+ Survivors, CancerCare LGBTQ+ Support Group - Women Caregivers, Queering Cancer and Live Through This. ::

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Our people: Ben Thompson

Local news anchor is out and proud



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

If you live in the Charlotte area and keep up with local news, there's a good chance you're familiar with Ben Thompson.

Thompson is an anchor for the early morning news program "Wake Up Charlotte" and "WCNC Charlotte MIDDAY." He also hosts a political affairs podcast known as "Flashpoint."

Needless to say, Thompson is a busy man. Now in his 12th year at WCNC, he loves his job and the city he calls home. He shares his life with his husband Brad and their Burmese dog (named Scout after a character with the same name from the novel and film "To Kill a Mockingbird") in the McCrory Heights neighborhood near uptown.

David Aaron Moore: You do both the early morning news show and the afternoon program. What is your sleep schedule like?

Ben Thompson: (laughs) You know, I love my job. I've been doing this [time slot] for years, but it still hurts when the alarm goes off at 3 a.m.

DAM: I don't doubt that. How do you make it work?

BT: I've come up with a schedule that seems to work for me. After the midday show I take a nap from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., then I go to the gym. You know what it's like when you take a nap in the middle of the day and you wake up you're foggy headed. I have to go to the gym to get that out of my system. After the gym, I head back home, spend time with my husband and my dog, have dinner and watch television. Then I'm in bed by 9:00 p.m.

DAM: Tell us what you feel comfort-



WCNC morning and mid-day news anchor Ben Thompson (left) with his husband Brad.
CREDIT: Courtesy Ben Thompson

able discussing about your personal life.

BT: I got married two years ago. Our anniversary was October 16, but we've known each other for 14 years and we were friends before. We met through mutual friends at a club that used to be called Liaisons in 2010. Now we have a house together and a big dog who always manages to squeeze her way in between us when we're sleeping.

DAM: What would you like to share with us about your husband?

BT: His name is Brad, and he works in

finance. As a journalist, I've always been a words person. He's definitely a numbers kind of guy so we approach things differently. It was a struggle in the beginning, because we really thought about things and approached them differently. But we overcame that and we share the same values, so I think we complement each other. We're both definitely Type As, but he's more organized than I am and I'm a bit chill. I'm easier (laughs).

DAM: So you're really the only out gay anchor in Charlotte?

BT: As far as I know I'm the only out and openly gay anchor here. I've been here 17 years. When I first came here I was still closeted, and I had been in the smaller markets I worked for before coming to Charlotte. I wanted to go to a market that was larger and someplace where I didn't have to be closeted. I saw people who were, and are, and they've told me stories about going out to bars with baseball caps and sunglasses. I knew that wasn't the kind of life for me. Representation matters and it's important to be out and proud.

DAM: Where were you before you came to Charlotte?

BT: I worked in much smaller markets. I was in Charleston, West Virginia and Cheyenne, Wyoming. They were both great places and I enjoyed the time I spent there, but I was young and not ready to be out, then or there.

DAM: What has it been like being out at WCNC?

BT: It's been great. I know I'm lucky because I get to make a living doing

something I love and I don't take that for granted. They've been very supportive and the station itself is extremely committed to diversity. I'm very proud of WCNC and for the opportunity to be working there. Part of our mission at WCNC is seeking solutions and representing the community. That includes the LGBTQ community. I think a lot of people feel that diversity and inclusion is political. But it's not. It's criminal not to have those diverse voices. Diversity makes us all stronger.

DAM: Have you ever had any negative reactions from viewers or people you've interviewed?

BT: No. In fact it's been completely the opposite. I've received letters from mothers - who have children that identify as being part of the LGBTQ community - thanking me for what I do and who I am. As for interviews, my experience has been that I've only had positive interactions with people.

DAM: Do you think being part of the LGBTQ community impacts the way you handle the news?

BT: Without a doubt. There's no way for it not to. I feel it allows me to approach news and handle it in a sympathetic way. Even though I'm a white man, and I know that's coming from a place of privilege, I know what challenges in life feel like and I see the struggles that people face.

DAM: Tell us about the podcast you do for WCNC, "Flashpoint."

BT: It's about politics. In Charlotte and the Carolinas. I enjoy politics and exploring the issues. We have all kinds of people on -- sometimes people that I might not agree with on issues -- but I know it's not personal. There are politicians who thrive on pitting people against each other, but that's just not where I'm coming from. I have found we can have civil and intelligent interaction. I've even had Republicans joke about taking their wives to drag shows!

DAM: Are there any stories that you have covered related to the LGBTQ community that have had a particularly strong impact on you?

BT: One we covered this past summer. Jacob Williamson. The young trans man (pauses). He was a teen. He was murdered near Monroe.

DAM: What kind of advice would you offer other individuals in the LGBTQ+ community who want to work in mainstream media?

BT: Follow your passion! There are times in this field when you don't always make so much money. Before I came to Charlotte and I was working in a smaller market, I was living in government subsidized apartments because I just didn't make enough money. But now I have an awesome job. If you had told me back then I would end up in Charlotte with a house, my husband, a dog and family [nearby], I don't think I would have believed it, but eventually things came together. It takes time, but I believe it's important to follow your passion. ::



Moving in: Ben Thompson (right) and husband Brad with canine pal Scout in their McCrory Heights home.
CREDIT: Courtesy Ben Thompson

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