

**Our democracy is at risk!
If we are complacent it will FALL**



Pride Season Continues

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**Charlotte's a
popular spot for
Gen Z travelers**

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**Scorpio
reopening in
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front page

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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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New data: 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people choose not to report discrimination at work

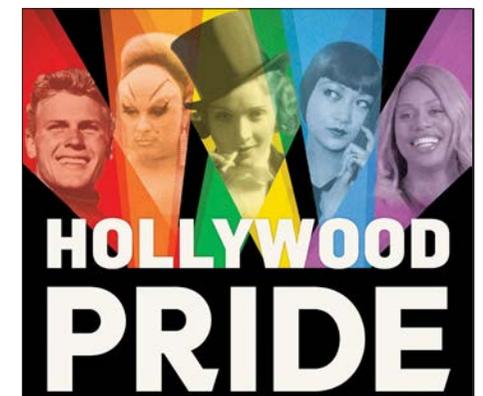
Research shows 63 percent of LGBTQ+ people face discrimination in their career. With 15 percent of reported discrimination going unaddressed by HR departments and managers, 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people choose not to report incidents that occur at work, while others simply quit jobs and are passed over for promotions.

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New book on film for LGBTQ+ movie buffs

"Hollywood Pride" explores the obvious that often goes overlooked: the city that makes movies has been a magnet for LGBTQ+ people for over a century. Classic movie-lovers will be thrilled with this well-illustrated and highly-readable look at LGBTQ+ films and stories of the queer people who made them. Come to this book with a movie-lover's sensibility and you'll dive deep into the wealth of photos and side-bars.

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Examining potential Trump VP picks and their LGBTQ+ policy records

Four known conservative politicians have received vetting documents, according to reporting from CBS News



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

The countdown to Nov. 5 is officially underway as both Republicans and Democrats are scrambling to come out on the other side of their campaigns victorious.

Former President turned convicted felon Donald Trump and his previous Vice President, Mike Pence, had a public falling out after Pence refused to challenge the electoral college votes after Trump made the false claim then President-elect Joe Biden stole the election.

Now with just a few weeks before the Republican National Convention and being convicted of 34 felonies, the former president finds himself in need of a “safe pick” for vice president.

According to reporting from CBS News, Trump has sent vetting paperwork to four potential vice president picks: Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott and Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance.

Each of these candidates are staunch conservatives and have records to reflect such. **Qnotes** has looked into each candidate reported to have received vetting papers from the Trump Campaign and how they each stand on LGBTQ+ rights and equality.

Here’s what we found.

Marco Rubio

The Florida U.S. Senator has been called out multiple times by LGBTQ+ advocates and organizations for anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and stances.

In 2022, the Human Rights Campaign released a statement saying Rubio received a “score of 0 out of 100” for a HRC Congressional Scorecard for the 117th Congress, which scored members of Congress based on a range of indicators regarding their support for the LGBTQ+ support.

“Sen. Marco Rubio is one of the most anti-LGBTQ+ politicians in America and a threat to every LGBTQ+ person in Florida,” said then Human Rights Campaign National Campaign Director Geoff Wetrosky. “He has a dismal voting record, supports restrictive abortions laws, and opposes marriage equality and nondiscrimination protections. And, on more than one occasion, Rubio has used anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that makes clear he doesn’t care about LGBTQ+ people and our families.”

Rubio faced criticism for calling the Respect for Marriage Act a “stupid waste of time,” and then he went on to vote against the act, which passed bipartisanly.



Reports suggest the Trump Campaign is strongly considering these four potential VP picks: Tim Scott, J.D. Vance, Doug Burgum and Marco Rubio. (clockwise).
CREDIT: Graphic by Taylor Heeden Larkins

“I believe the definition of the institution of marriage should be between one man and one woman,” Rubio said in an interview on CBS. In the same interview he said, “I don’t believe same-sex marriage is a Constitutional right.... I also don’t believe that your sexual preferences are a choice for the vast and enormous majority of people. In fact...I believe that

sexual preference is something that people are born with.”

According to the GLAAD Accountability Project, Rubio also has targeted drag, falsely claiming it exposed children to “sexually charged content.” He has also opposed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would make it illegal to discriminate in hiring or firing employees based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Most recently, Rubio came out against the Biden administration’s new guidance around Title IX protections, which were expanded to include trans and gender-nonconforming students in public schools.

“Equally disturbing is the likelihood that your department will weaponize Title IX to force a radical gender ideology in K-12 classrooms,” Rubio wrote in a letter addressed to the Secretary of Education. The letter also misgendered trans students.

Doug Burgum

Doug Burgum is the 33rd Governor of North Dakota, and according to reporting from MSNBC, he’s known as the poster child of small-town America.

He founded Great Plains Software in 1981 and then sold it to Microsoft in 2001 for \$1.1 billion. Burgum was elected in 2016 as Governor, and many

North Dakotans believed he was a better alternative than a career politician, but LGBTQ+ advocates claim he is as fickle as the corrupt politicians North Dakotans fear.

In July 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Burgum made headlines for going against his party when hundreds of state Republican legislators proposed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

According to reporting from ABC News at the time, the GOP-led state legislature voted in favor of several dozen resolutions claiming to reinforce the state’s “conservative morals and values on marriage,” which it defined as a union between one man and one woman.

Burgum denounced the controversial proposal — which stated “LGBT practices are unhealthy and dangerous, sometimes endangering or shortening life and sometimes infecting society at large” — in

a public address, calling it homophobic and divisive.

“As I’ve long said, all North Dakotans deserve to be treated equally and live free of discrimination,” Burgum said in a statement. “There’s no place for the hurtful and divisive rhetoric in the NDGOP resolutions.”

Burgum also vetoed a bill that would make it illegal to use a child’s preferred pronouns in schools, citing the proposed law would violate free speech.

“The First Amendment already prohibits compelled speech and protects teachers from speaking contrary to their beliefs,” he said.

In recent months, however, it appears Burgum has shifted in his beliefs. Just last year, the North Dakota GOP advanced 10 anti-LGBTQ+ laws, a record according to the Human Rights Campaign. Burgum signed HB 1254, which criminalizes medical care for trans youth and HB 1522, which bars policies on pronouns and requires separate accommodations for trans people.

Kristin Nelson, an advocate for queer youth in North Dakota, wrote in an op-ed for MSNBC that Burgum has disappointed LGBTQ+ people and allies in North Dakota.

“He slid from an independent governor exercising rational acceptance of queer people to a culture war champion aligned against them in just two short years, and it is pretty disconcerting to see a leader affected by misinformation in this way,” Nelson wrote. “Simply put, children and families in North Dakota have been let down by Burgum.”

Tim Scott

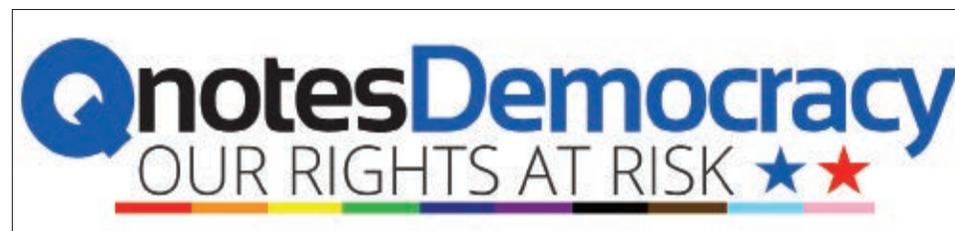
Scott is a U.S. Senator hailing from South Carolina, and if selected and Trump is victorious, he would become the first Black man to be sitting Vice President.

Despite being a marginalized individual himself, Scott has a record of supporting policy and legislation targeting other disenfranchised groups, including the LGBTQ+ community.

According to the GLAAD Accountability Project, the senator voted against the Employment Nondiscrimination Act and “considers homosexuality a morally wrong choice, like adultery.”

Reporting from conservative news outlet Fox News said Scott had “pushed a bill to ‘combat indoctrination in schools’ by cutting off federal funds from public elementary and middle schools whose staff addresses a student by a different pronoun or name without parental consent.”

Newsweek has also reported Scott “supports ‘don’t ask, don’t tell,’” and “op-



see next page ►

Politically exhausted: how to fight voter and election fatigue

More than half of Americans say they are following news about candidates for the 2024 presidential election very or fairly closely



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

Unless you live under a rock, you are more than aware we're in an election year, one which many have said could alter the fate of America as we know it. This year's matchup is a revisit to 2020 with President Joe Biden facing former President and now convicted felon Donald Trump.

Coverage for this election cycle has been almost nonstop, and the American public is already starting to feel the strain of election anxiety and stress. In fact, there's a term to define this phenomenon: voter fatigue. Characterized by a sense of weariness and disillusionment with the political process, election and voter fatigue has been increasingly prevalent in recent years.

According to the Pew Research Center, 62% of American adults say they are already worn out by the amount of coverage regarding campaigning and candidates, while 35% say they like seeing a lot of coverage.

As November's elections approach, a rising tide of voter and election fatigue threatens to dampen turnout at the polls. Research has shown voters are more likely to start following the election more closely once fall comes. According to the same Pew study, the amount of respondents who said they were paying attention to the 2020 election increased to 75% in October. However, that trend isn't guaranteed to continue as voter burn out and election fatigue surges. Understanding the root causes and po-



tential solutions to this issue is crucial for ensuring a robust democratic process.

The Symptoms and Causes of Election Fatigue

Election fatigue manifests in several ways, including decreased political engagement, lower voter turnout and a general apathy towards election-related news. Several factors contribute to this fatigue:

Frequent Elections play somewhat of a role in voter fatigue. In many regions in the United States and across the globe, voters are asked to participate in multiple elections each year, including local, state and national contests. The sheer frequency can overwhelm and exhaust voters.

Polarization and negative campaigning have been on the rise, especially in American national politics. Because of the increasingly polarized political climate and the prevalence of negative campaigning,

ter "what happens to Ukraine one way or another."

He also has consistently spread misinformation on his social media platforms, including posting "I'll stop calling people 'groomers' when they stop freaking out about bills that prevent the sexualization of my children."

Vance also introduced the so-called "Protect Children's Innocence Act," which if passed, carries a Class C felony penalty for healthcare providers who give trans minors gender-affirming treatments.

"Under no circumstances should doctors be allowed to perform these gruesome, irreversible operations on underage children," said Senator Vance.

The act also seeks to ban all taxpayer funding for gender-affirming care (citing specifically the Affordable Care Act), prohibit institutions of higher education from providing instruction on gender-affirming care and would deem individuals who are not citizens of the United States who have performed gender-affirming care on a minor ineligible to receive visas or admittance to the country. ::

there can be disenchantment and a desire to disengage from the political process.

"We have reached an extent of polarization in this country, combined with a complicated media environment, where people are exhausted by politics," said Sunshine Hillygus, a professor of political science and public policy and director of the Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology. "We see increasing numbers of people who don't identify with either party. We see increasing numbers of young people disillusioned with politics generally."

Complex ballots and misinformation from various media channels also overwhelm voters. Long and complicated ballots, featuring numerous candidates and propositions, can be daunting and time-consuming for voters to navigate. The constant bombardment of political information — often laden with misinformation — can overwhelm voters, leading to a sense of confusion and mistrust.

In the case for the 2024 election, it's a repeat situation. The American public has been presented with the same candidates from before, but there's a twist: A lot of Americans don't like either option.

Multiple polls find voters in each party want someone else to vote for president, but primary voters delivered a scenario where voters will have to relive the election of 2020.

Both candidates are also very well-known to the public with most folks' opinions on Biden or Trump already solidified, leaving few undecided voters well before Election Day comes.

"Everyone knows who these folks are. It's baked into the cake," said Alison Dagnes, a political science professor at Shippensburg University. "Unless there's something catastrophic, I don't think anybody's really interested anymore."

Strategies to Combat Voter Fatigue

Addressing voter and election fatigue requires a multifaceted approach aimed at making the voting process more accessible, engaging and trustworthy.

Consolidating elections to reduce their frequency can help alleviate voter fatigue. Fewer elections mean less strain on voters and election workers, potentially increasing turnout.

Clearer, more straightforward ballots and comprehensive voter guides can help demystify the voting process. Educational campaigns explaining the issues and candidates in plain language can also be beneficial.

Investing in civic education can help voters feel more informed and empowered. Schools, community organizations and public campaigns can play a vital role in teaching citizens about the importance of their vote and how to engage effectively.

Encouraging candidates to focus on positive messaging and issue-based campaigning can reduce the negativity that contributes to voter disillusionment.

Implementing online voting tools, secure absentee voting options and mobile-friendly voter information resources can make voting more convenient and accessible.

Combating misinformation through fact-checking and transparency initiatives is crucial for maintaining voter trust. Clear communication from election officials about the integrity and security of the voting process can help reassure the public.

"Media operations make more money through things like advertising, so they're incentivized to make people want to have emotional reactions and then stay engaged for their programming," Blankenship said. "It's important for us as consumers of media to evaluate the framing that the media we are consuming is providing."

Encouraging Voter Participation and The Path Forward

Beyond addressing fatigue, proactive measures to boost voter turnout are essential. Initiatives such as automatic voter registration, extended early voting periods and making Election Day a national holiday can significantly enhance voter participation. Engaging directly with the electorate through targeted outreach and social media campaigns can also help motivate people enough to make it out to the polls.

As election fatigue continues to pose a challenge, it is imperative for policymakers, community leaders and citizens to work together to create a more engaging and accessible electoral process. By implementing these strategies, the hope is to not only mitigate the effects of election fatigue but also to foster a more vibrant and participatory democracy.

With concerted effort and innovative solutions, it is possible to overcome the barriers posed by voter fatigue and ensure a higher turnout in November, reflecting a truly representative democracy. ::

Continued from previous page

poses same-sex marriage," all of which stems from what the senator has labeled "timeless principles."

J.D. Vance

A U.S. Senator from Ohio, Vance has been a loud voice in the anti-LGBTQ+ movement, and his GLAAD Accountability Project file shows just that.

He was first elected to his seat in 2020 and has been vocal in his opposition to LGBTQ+ equality. One of the first things he did in office was attack Supreme Court justices from his own party for ruling LGBTQ+ employees should be protected from job discrimination in *Bostock v. Clayton County*. Vance tweeted: "The conservative legal movement has accomplished two things: libertarian political economy (enforced by judges) and betrayal of social conservatives and traditionalists." The post has since been removed.

Vance also went on infamous conservative conspiracy theorist Steve Bannon's podcast, where he claimed it didn't mat-

NC floral shop Soirée Pines refuses service to LGBTQ+ couples

Five days into LGBTQ+ Pride Month, Southern Pines-based florist business Soirée Pines posted on the store's Instagram and Facebook pages, announcing the establishment refuses to provide services for same-sex weddings.

"We do not endorse treating anyone unkindly because they identify with the LGBTQIA+ community because we too, fall short of the righteous demands of God," some of the post reads. "However, we believe that feeling shame or guilt may actually be a call to reconciliation with God, and because we believe this feeling may be an effectual call to some to repent and place their trust in Christ Jesus who met all of the righteous demands of God in His life, death, resurrection and ascension, we do not service LGBTQIA+ couples."

The post, filled with references to Bible verses and Christian scriptural texts, cites the business's supposed Christian morals as the reason for not servicing queer, trans and gender-nonconforming couples.

"Salvation is not earned through human effort or merit but is a gift of God's grace, received through faith in Jesus Christ," the post states. "Christ Jesus' sacrifice is central to our belief, as He atoned for our sins, offering us forgiveness and eternal life..."

The shop has received backlash online for the post, with many commenters from Southern Pines, calling out Soirée Pines' alleged discriminatory practices.

One comment stated: "I suspect it is pandering and you were not having to post it because you were overrun with requests to do gay weddings. Just inspired to be a jerk

for Pride Month."

Another comment read: "Perfect example of why people are turning away from Christianity in droves. Here's an actual quote from Jesus: 'Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.' Maybe try that! You soulless, soon to be unemployed bigot."

PFLAG Southern Pines President Erica Street called the post "disappointing," according to reporting from WRAL.

"While Soirée Pines is certainly free to service whomever they choose, our community is also free to hire any florist of their choice," Street wrote. "We have many other florists here who are welcoming and affirming."



Graphic from Soirée Pines' Facebook page. The floral shop, located in Southern Pines, did not answer any questions after posting they will refuse services to LGBTQ+ couples.

Qnotes reached out to Soirée Pines for comment, but didn't hear back in time for publication. ::

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

U.S. Senate Democrats unveil new in vitro fertilization protections

Senate Democrats are set to reveal a policy package designed to protect access to IVF (in vitro fertilization) nearly two years after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. The proposed package is a part of the Democratic Party's strategy of pushing reproductive rights as a central part of their platform.

IVF has become the next target in the legislative war against reproductive healthcare access, as an Alabama court ruled embryos are children under state law, forcing healthcare providers to pause providing fertility treatments such as IVF. The Alabama State House, which is a Republican majority, did pass laws to protect IVF, but Democrats were quick to blame the opposing party as it opened the floodgates as to what other states could do regarding restricting IVF access.

"In the nearly two years since the Supreme

Court threw out Roe v. Wade, our nation has seen the horrific consequences of Republicans' anti-science, anti-woman crusade that has put IVF at risk for millions of Americans who rely on it to start or grow their family," Sen. Tammy Duckworth said in a statement to CBS News. An Illinois Democrat, she is a part of the group creating the package.

IVF is a frequently used method for same-sex couples to have biological children, whether it be via surrogacy or one of the partners who decide to undergo the treatment. According to the Pew Research Center, one in three American adults say they've used fertility treatments like IVF. With more than 100,000 same-sex couples raising children in the U.S., and even more looking to expand their families, access to IVF and other fertility treatments is essential.

The Right to IVF Act is made up of four bills

sponsored by Duckworth, Sen. Patty Murray of Washington and Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey. The combined policies would protect IVF access via the Access to Family Building Act, which Duckworth originally tried to pass in February. The package would also include expanding access to fertility treatments to Veterans and require insurance plans to cover IVF to lower the cost and make it a more affordable option.

"Democrats will never relent until we reverse the immense damage that the Supreme



IVF is a frequently used procedure for same-sex couples to have children. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

Court has inflicted on this country, and the American people have a right to know where their elected officials stand on protecting the rights and reproductive care," Senate Majority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer said. ::

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

'The greatest threat to our community: Donald Trump going back to the White House'

North Carolina LGBTQ+ elected officials and local community leaders gathered at Fiction Kitchen, a local LGBTQ-owned restaurant in Raleigh, yesterday to warn of the threat Donald Trump poses to the freedoms and rights of LGBTQ+ communities in North Carolina if he is elected for a second term.

State Representatives Allison Dahle, Marcia Morey, Vernetta Alston and Deb Butler, alongside Raleigh City Council Member Stormie Forte gathered to underscore Donald Trump's record of attacking the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Some of this record includes, but isn't exclusive to, gutting Obama-Biden anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ Americans, appointing judges who oppose same-sex marriage and banning transgender soldiers from enlisting in the military. They

also emphasized the dangerous agenda he and his allies would implement if elected, including plans to restrict access to IVF and surrogacy, which would harm LGBTQ+ individuals and families.

"As a member of the LGBTQ+ community in North Carolina and one of only six LGBTQ+ legislators in the state, I feel a responsibility to sound the alarm about the greatest threat to our community: Donald Trump going back to the White House," said State Representative Allison Dahle. "When our fundamental rights are challenged and our safety and wellbeing are threatened, going backwards is not an option. We aren't going to let our rights be stripped away..."

"If Trump is elected again, all of our rights are at risk," said State Representative Marcia

Morey. "The kind of 'leader' Donald Trump promises to be in a second term is a president who rips Americans' freedoms away and who will put more extreme judges in power ... With Donald Trump, we are all at risk."

"We've seen the effects of Trump's anti-LGBTQ+ agenda right here in North Carolina and our state legislature has been emboldened by his dangerous agenda," said State Representative Vernetta Alston. "Just last year, Trump's allies in Raleigh voted to pass extreme legislation that targets LGBTQ+ youth and prevents



'I feel a responsibility to sound the alarm about the greatest threat to our community: Donald Trump going back to the White House.' - LGBTQ+ State Representative Allison Dahle. CREDIT: Facebook

teachers from creating inclusive classrooms where students are free to be themselves ... The level of extremism we're seeing in our state, and in states across the country, is because of Donald Trump." ::

—QNotes Staff

Rock Hill jumps into the bathroom and gender debate

School board VP Peter Nosal endorses discriminatory bill

By Mykah Buff

A Rock Hill, S.C. school board member recently proposed a new policy following a budget provision that would require transgender students to use bathrooms and changing rooms based on their biological sex.

The Student Physical Privacy Amendment (H3477) enforces schools that receive funding from the state to ensure public school restrooms and other spaces – like Physical Education locker and changing rooms – be utilized only by individuals presenting in their sex assigned at birth.

Senator Wes Climer introduced the provision, saying he feels “it will help right a wrong that he’s seen statewide.”

During Climer’s proposal he refers to one specific student who is a transgender female as being an “18-year-old man.”

“This is to correct an immediate wrong in the Rock Hill School District, where there is an 18-year-old man inhabiting bathrooms and locker rooms with 14, 15 and 16-year-old girls,” Climer said. “But then more broadly, to solve this problem for the entirety of the state,” he added.

Senator Tamioka Devine objects to the provision and fears this legislation will create long standing barriers between transgender students and necessary resources. She said she fears this provision will negatively impact the mental health of this population,

“Children who struggle with differences, seen and unseen, are prone to being targeted by policies and practices that threaten to make their challenges even more daunting. H3477 is one of those policies.”

MARTHA EDWARDS, MD

SC UNITED
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Pediatrician in
Rock Hill, SC



which are literally thousands in number.

“It does not allow the schools to work with young people,” Devine said. “It threatens school’s funding and I think, what you’ll find is, that you’ll have school districts and teachers having a lot of issues with children not feeling comfortable, and potentially bullying.”

If the provision survives and remains in the final version of the budget, it will take effect on July 1, 2024.

While waiting for the provision’s final decision by lawmakers to be made, Rock Hill school board Vice Chair Peter Nosal proposed that a policy be put in place

requiring students to use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their sex assigned at birth.

“It was brought to my attention that we have a boy, or boys, using the girls’ bathroom at Rock Hill High School,” Nosal said at the board meeting. He cited the same individual student that Senator Climer mentioned during his proposal on the senate floor.

In response to Nosal’s proposal, retired Rock Hill pediatrician Dr. Martha Edwards expressed concerns over Nosal’s proposal at the board meeting, noting that, “she’s never had an encounter with a child who

came in due to being harmed by a transgender person.”

Nosal objected to Edwards’ comments and asked the pediatrician where she received her medical degrees.

Dr. Edwards said that as a pediatrician, she takes the role of advocating for children very seriously, especially when it relates to things like politics where they don’t really have a voice.

“Children don’t really have a voice in politics,” Edwards said. “They can’t vote, so it’s kind of up to adults when we’re making policies.”

During her career Edwards has followed some children who are in the LGBTQ community, and said she’s watched them struggle with certain issues related to their identity in terms of gender and sexuality.

“In order to avoid singling out and causing harm to a small group of students who are already significantly struggling, I think it’s best we trust the administrators and teachers that we have hired to serve all our students,” said Edwards.

School Board Chair Helena Miller said if the budget provision is passed Nosal’s proposal for a policy won’t be necessary. In this scenario, transgender students across the Palmetto state would be forced to use bathrooms, showers and changing room spaces based on their sex assigned at birth. ::

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Scorpio announces reopening

Iconic LGBTQ+ nightclub relocating to South End area



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

On Sunday June 16, owners and management of Scorpio (previously located at 2301 Freedom Drive prior to closing its doors last November) posted a major development to social media: they're reopening.

Although an exact date has not been set yet, a new site has been acquired. Considering the bar began its life in 1968 in the South Boulevard area, it seems fitting that it's returning to a spot in the same part of town. A lot has changed in what is now known as South End since 1968, and the space the bar will be moving into is currently known as RSVP South End, located at 225 Fairwood Avenue.

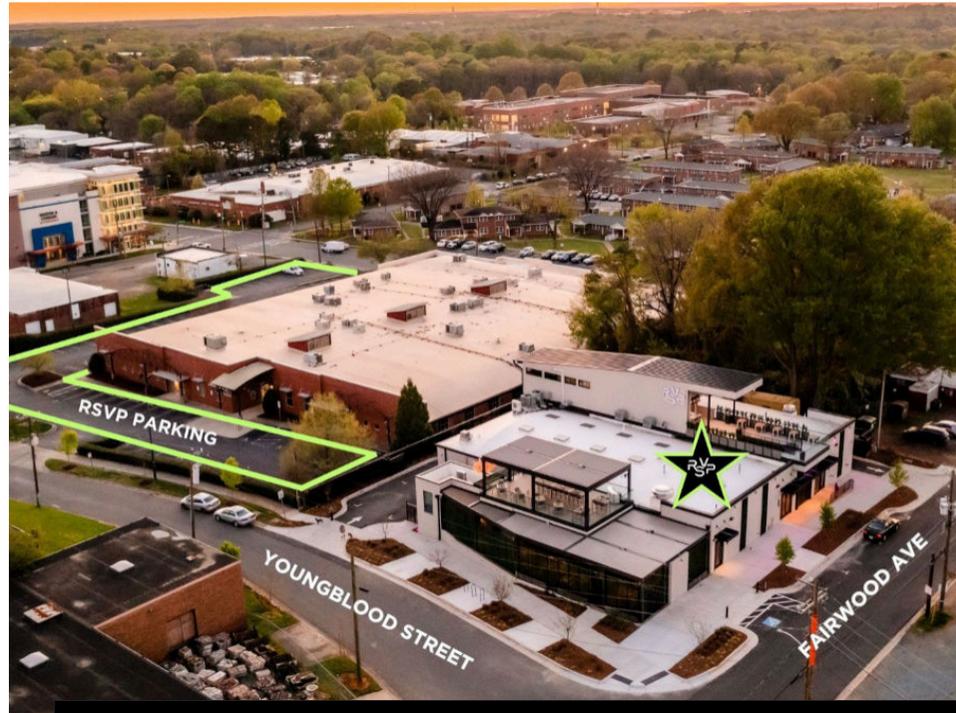
In the Instagram post, owners of Scorpio announced they had acquired the business, which boasts 15,000 square feet and includes a sizable dance floor, three bars and two rooftops.

Ownership of the club is shared by three individuals: Michael Sharpton who had previously served as the GM of Scorpio for several years; Drew Wofford, who has 20 years of nightlife experience and brings along the bonus of making Scorpio a sister club to the popular Greensboro nightclub Chemistry; and a third silent partner who was also involved with Scorpio at the previous Freedom Drive location.

Qnotes spoke with Sharpton and Wofford about the latest developments with the club and what's in the future for RSVP Southend, a nightclub that recently refocused their business strategy to special events facility just over a year after originally opening.

According to both men RSVP South End will continue to offer its special events facility and availability during the day and on off hours for private events. Scorpio will helm access to the bars, dance floor and the overall social environment during public hours. Depending on attendance, the bar may be open as often as seven days a week. The culture of the club will remain distinctly focused on the LGBTQ+ community.

Says Wofford: "RSVP has been pur-



Coming to a location in South End: the Carolinas' oldest nightclub will soon reopen as the Scorpio RSVP Complex. CREDIT: RSVP Southend website

chased by Scorpio. We are offering previous RSVP staff the opportunity to stay on by interviewing for positions at Scorpio."

Interestingly enough, one club isn't canceling out the other, and the acquisition of RSVP by Scorpio will allow both brands to continue doing what they do best.

"Both brands will continue to operate," Wofford confirms. "RSVP will handle the events element of Scorpio, leveraging its highly successful event business and experienced staff to maximize the use of the space, similar to how other large gay bars like The Manor in Wilton Manors operate."

"We are currently working on a new logo that will incorporate elements of both RSVP and Scorpio. The full name will be Scorpio RSVP Complex," Wofford explains. He also indicates that Scorpio signage will be added to the exterior of the building and some branding will be implemented inside.

At the time Scorpio on Freedom Drive closed down, Sharpton told Qnotes that some of the interior architectural ele-

ments were being placed in storage for repurposing once another suitable location could be found.

"Yes, that is [still] our plan, says Sharpton. "The extent to which we can repurpose architectural elements before opening, and how much we will continue to add over time is still being determined."

"The name and legacy of Scorpio will move forward with us," Sharpton adds. "Scorpio has successfully navigated a location change before and it will do so again."

"A building does not define our identity, it's the people and memories we create within it. The space [will] allow us to expand and, equally important, provide the flexibility to create a more intimate atmosphere for weeknights, when needed."

"We [also] plan to restore many elements that were lost in the later years of Scorpio, such as our legendary house cast, drag pageants and diverse activities."

According to the social media post, Scorpio has hired veteran drag per-

former Paisley Park as the club's new entertainment director. Park brings with her over 30 years of experience in North Carolina's drag scene, along with numerous titles, including Miss Millennium 2021 and Miss Catawba Valley Pride 2019. She's also host of one of North Carolina's longest running drag shows, "The Sex Kitten Roundup," which will likely hit the stage of the new Scorpio.

Despite the unconfirmed opening date, Wofford and Sharpton are excited as staff and management work diligently to ensure all necessary changes are made and staff is in place for a smooth transition.

"RSVP will continue to operate previously scheduled events," says Wofford, "while the nightclub element of the business, Scorpio, is finalized and integrated."

Sharpton concurs. "Our goal is to have the smoothest possible opening, though we know that moving into a new space always presents challenges. It will take some time to get everything in place."

Scorpio was the center of substantial controversy in the LGBTQ+ community last year when it was announced they were closing and the Christian mega church Elevation would be moving into the space. To date, that has not happened and the former home for the club has remained completely vacant. In the past two months, there has been interest in an effort presented to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission so the site could possibly be declared historic.

"There has been an ... appeal to Mecklenburg County to make 2301 Freedom Drive a historic landmark," says Sharpton. "We fully support this effort and feel this is an appropriate recognition of a place that has meant so much to our community."

A recent social media post by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (CMHLC) called for community members with stories to tell and an interest in the preservation of the old Scorpio facility to contact CMHLC by visiting <https://mecklenburg.co/3egeM62>.

For more information on the latest developments with Scorpio visit their social media or website. For historic data, check out the archives of Qnotes. ::

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Celebrating the Black LGBTQ+ Experience with Charlotte Black Pride

by Miles Perry (he/him), Charlotte Black Pride Young Adult Liaison

In a world where the intersections of identity are often overlooked, Charlotte Black Pride stands as a powerful celebration of both Black and LGBTQ+ culture. In this month's column, Charlotte Pride passes the baton to Charlotte Black Pride Young Adult Liaison Miles Perry to explain why Charlotte Black Pride remains an essential and vibrant part of our community.

I am often asked why Charlotte Black Pride is needed when we already have Pride and my response is always the same: "Pride has always been Black." Pride was Black when

Marsha P. Johnson threw that brick at Stonewall, sparking a revolution that forever changed LGBTQ+ rights. Pride was Black when the first Voguer dipped with elegance and defiance, carving out a space in the ballroom scene that celebrates the beauty and resilience of Black queer culture. Pride was Black 19 years ago when a group of passionate individuals in Charlotte decided to enrich our community by establishing Charlotte Black Pride.

experience and joyous celebrations at the Expo. Every moment is crafted to inspire, uplift, and connect. Beyond July, Charlotte Black Pride will continue to make its presence known with the "Black on Purpose" stage at Charlotte Pride in August! This stage is the definition of For Us, By Us (F.U.B.U.) and will highlight the best of Black artistry and community. It is a space where our voices are not only heard but are prioritized and celebrated.

Beyond the festivities, some may still ask, why is Charlotte Black Pride so important? It is a vital platform for visibility and representation. It is a space where Black LGBTQ+ individuals can see themselves reflected in the celebration, where their identities are not just accepted but celebrated. Representation matters, and seeing our diverse community thrive at CBP instills a sense of belonging and pride in who we are. Charlotte Black Pride serves as a powerful counter-narrative to the pervasive stereotypes and prejudices that



PHOTO CREDIT: Charlotte Black Pride

Charlotte Black Pride is more than just a week in July or an organization; it is a celebration of the intersection of Black and LGBTQ+ identities. It is a space where we can celebrate our unique culture, traditions, and experiences without fear of erasure or marginalization. It is a testament to our resilience and strength, a celebration of our achievements, and a platform to advocate for our rights and visibility.

This year, Charlotte Black Pride promises a vibrant lineup of events that showcase the rich tapestry of Black queer culture and our *Pride on Purpose (P.O.P.)* theme. In July, we will feature everything from an electrifying Kiki ball and a workshop for empowering creatives to an enlightening movie discussion on the trans

often plague our community. It is a space to reclaim our narratives, celebrate our contributions, and highlight our resilience. In a society that frequently undermines Black and LGBTQ+ lives, Charlotte Black Pride stands as a powerful declaration that we are here, we are proud, and we are unstoppable.

Charlotte Black Pride fosters community and solidarity. It brings together people from all walks of life to celebrate, support, and uplift each other. It is a reminder that we are not alone, that we have a community that understands, supports, and loves us. Join us in this celebration, and we hope to see you at our events this year.

Stay up to date on the latest by following us on Facebook and Instagram @CharlotteBlackPride.



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Two LGBTQ+ organizations file Title IX Complaint against Moore County Schools

The complaint alleges school district discriminates against students by 'targeting LGBTQ+ content for censorship'



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

After the removal of a children's book featuring gay parents, Moore County Schools is facing a Title IX complaint filed by two groups — PFLAG Southern Pines and Public School Advocates. The complaint alleges the school system violated students' rights by "targeting LGBTQ+ content for censorship and removal from instruction, from the classroom and from libraries, which created a "hostile educational environment."

"We raise this issue in an effort to protect the LGBTQ+ community, including faculty, students and their families, from Moore County Schools' harmful and outright discriminatory policies and guidelines," said the complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

This is at least the second Title IX complaint of its kind filed against a North Carolina school system. Three LGBTQ+ advocacy groups — Youth OUTright, PFLAG Asheville and Campaign for Southern Equality — filed a federal complaint in December in Buncombe County in response to policies passed to adhere to the state's



new "Parents' Bill of Rights."

SB 49, also known as the Parents' Bill of Rights, was passed into law in August, and it censors LGBTQ-related content from school curriculum, as well as forces educators and staff to "out" LGBTQ+ students to parents. Most districts across the state have passed policies to adhere to the new laws, including Moore County.

This past fall, the district advised school administrators to remove books with gay parents and gender-questioning characters

in order to comply with SB 49's requirement of banning "instruction" on sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through fourth grades. The law, however, doesn't mention public libraries, and it states books should only be removed if they are a part of the curriculum or materials given to K through 4th Grade students.

The complaint from PFLAG Southern Pines and Public School Advocates says Moore County Schools have removed books from school libraries. In addition to

this, earlier this year, President Joe Biden's administration updated Title IX regulations to include discrimination against people for their gender identity or sexual orientation as a part of sex discrimination.

Based on this interpretation, PFLAG spokespeople have stated singling out books with gay parents violates Title IX, as well as far exceeds what is required by North Carolina law. The group is also requesting for a list of the books that have been barred by the district.

"Implementing policies and practices that favor heterosexuality and cisgender identities equates to preferential treatment based on gender identity and sexual orientation, which is prohibited under Title IX," according to the April complaint from PFLAG and Public School Advocates to the district.

Charlie A. Batchelor III, a spokesperson for the Moore County school system, said the system would work with the Title IX office to handle the complaint.

"Moore County Schools recognizes the equality and rights of all persons and seeks to ensure that all students, teachers, administrators and other school employees respect the dignity, rights and differing opinions of others," Batchelor said. ::

New data: 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ people choose not to report discrimination at work

New research shows 63% of LGBTQ+ people have faced discrimination in their career

By Qnotes Staff

A new report has found 44% of LGBTQ+ workers have had to quit their job because of discrimination and lack of acceptance.

EduBirdie surveyed 2000 people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community about their experiences with discrimination and to determine if there is actual equality in today's workplace.

New research shows 63% of LGBTQ+ people have faced discrimination in their career. Despite increased efforts for inclusivity, the data shows employers aren't working hard enough. With 15% of reported discrimination going unaddressed with HR departments and managers, one in five LGBTQ+ people choose not to report incidents that occur at work.

The survey of 2,000 queer-identifying individuals by Edubirdie found almost half of LGBTQ+ workers feel their company is bad at raising awareness of their struggles. Moreover, sexual orientation or gender identity still hinder career advancement: 44% of LGBTQ+ workers have quit a job because of discrimination or a lack of acceptance and 45% have been passed up for promotions.

The consequences of discrimination make nearly half of LGBTQ+ people experience impostor syndrome at work, fearing they might be seen as a "diversity hire."



Around 45% avoid corporate events due to discomfort, while half alter their appearance to blend in.

"Despite progress in LGBTQ+ human rights, societal stigma persists. Our findings show 70% of LGBTQ+ people feel lonely, misunderstood, marginalized or excluded at work and 59% believe their sexual orientation or gender identity has hindered their careers, Avery Morgan, productivity expert at EduBirdie, said. "One of the biggest challenges businesses should be aware of is avoiding tokenism and appearing inauthentic in their actions. Employers must be genuine with their decisions to bring a more diverse workforce into the organization."

The research shows basic acceptance remains elusive. Thirty percent of LGBTQ+ people are concerned they will face discrimination if they come out at work, while 1 in 4 fear for their safety. Alarmingly, two in five have had their orientation or identity disclosed without consent.

"A lot of the politics at work are about being well liked by your supervisors and colleagues. LGBTQ+ employees have to weigh

the risks of revealing their identity at work, considering how it might affect their workplace relationships, career advancement and job security," Dr. Jenna Brownfield, Licensed Psychologist, specializing in therapy for LGBTQ+ people explains. "Trust that the LGBTQ person knows how to spot LGBTQ discrimination better than you do.

"Blind spots occur when we assume LGBTQ+ discrimination can't happen in our workplace because we've met some basic DEI standard. Actions speak louder than words. Build a workplace culture that immediately responds to and discourages anti-LGBTQ statements.

"Model openness and humility in team meetings and conversations. Even if it's not about something LGBTQ-specific, it says a lot if a workplace shows openness to feedback that they did something wrong.

"Include multiple LGBTQ+ people in leadership and decision-making. The more that LGBTQ+ employees are part of steering company culture, and not being the sole LGBTQ+ person or token, the more you'll develop a genuinely inclusive workplace.

"And remember that LGBTQ+ people are not a monolith. A workplace should focus on building genuine relationships with each of their employees, instead [of] only being broadly LGBTQ-affirming." ::



Announcement: The Next Chapter for Scorpio

We are thrilled to announce an exciting new chapter in the history of Scorpio's, one of Charlotte's most iconic and beloved gay bars. Scorpio is relocating to 225 Fairwood Ave, Charlotte, NC 28203.

Acquiring RSVP South End, which boasts 15,000 sq ft spread across three bars and two rooftops. From the large modern dance floor known as Stage, to the intimate speakeasy vibes of Parlor, the climate-controlled garden bar Veranda with a private rooftop, and our rooftop bar known as Rooftop. We are elevating Charlotte's LGBTQ+ nightlife. Each venue will offer its own unique vibe and sound, with different DJs and events on weekends, creating a true nightclub complex that offers something for everyone. Our aim is to continue and expand on RSVP South End's private event venue business, ensuring it remains a vibrant and inclusive haven for all.

This means our new location will allow us to continue operating Scorpio seven nights a week and RSVP South End's private event business. Enabling us to cultivate a rich, inviting space for a variety of private events. From weddings to corporate functions, we will offer our facility for rent during the day and off-hours, providing a versatile venue that meets the needs of our diverse community. This new space will be designed with flexibility in mind, ensuring that it can be easily transformed to suit the specific requirements of each event. We are excited to provide a venue where our community can celebrate, connect, and create lasting memories.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to RSVP South End's Managing Partners for their enthusiastic embrace of this transition. Their support and collaboration have been invaluable in making this dream a reality.

This move is not just a change of address; it's an evolution that ensures the Scorpio legacy continues to thrive and serve the LGBTQ+ community in Charlotte and surrounding area.

This new chapter represents a significant milestone in our commitment to providing a safe and welcoming space for the underserved LGBTQ+ community and we remain committed to

preserving the legacy of Scorpio. Since its establishment in 1968 by Marion and Floyd Tyson, Scorpio has been a cornerstone of the LGBTQ+ nightlife, providing a safe haven and vibrant social hub for our community.

After Marion and Floyd Tyson, Rick Wilds took over the ownership in 1991, guiding the club with generosity and vision until his passing in 2008. Rick's leadership expanded Scorpio influence and solidified its status as a beacon of LGBTQ+ culture in Charlotte. Following Rick, Donald O'Shields took the reins and continued to uphold the club's legacy until 2019. Under Donald's stewardship, Scorpio maintained its reputation as a beloved institution in the community. He was instrumental in navigating the club through changing times, ensuring its continued relevance and vibrancy.

Donald's time at the club left an enduring legacy characterized by his unwavering dedication to fostering an atmosphere of warmth and inclusivity. His influence on both the club and the broader community will remain etched in memory.

As we continue the next chapter, we are beyond excited to announce two additional owners: Michael Sharpton, with years of experience as the GM of The Scorpio, and Drew Wofford, bringing his 20 years of nightlife experience and adding the bonus of making The Scorpio a sister club to the long-standing institution in

Greensboro, Chemistry Nightclub.

Finally, we are beyond thrilled to announce our new entertainment director, Paisley Parque. With over 30 years in the drag community, Paisley has become a staple in North Carolina's drag scene. She has garnered numerous titles, including Miss Millennium 2021 and Miss Catawba Valley Pride 2019. Paisley also hosts one of the longest-running drag shows in North Carolina, The Sex Kitten Roundup, and we can't wait for it to come to Charlotte. Her dedication and vibrant performances have made her a beloved figure in the community.

We invite you to join us in celebrating this new chapter and look forward to welcoming you to our new location. Together, we'll create even more unforgettable memories and continue the proud tradition of Scorpio.



A look at the US Association of Prides

National organization offers help to Pride celebrations throughout the country



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

In our previous examination of Pride development culture, we took a look at InterPride, a global organization that provides help in development, planning and networking for Pride events and planners around the globe. In our second of the two-part series for the nationally recognized month of Pride, we're exploring the United States Association of Prides (USAP).

Somehow, there's a touch of irony to the fact that InterPride was founded in the United States in 1982 and evolved into an international organization, which later led to the need for a more specific US-centric organization for Pride events, once again, here at home.

That brings us full circle to USAP, which was established in 2018. Their focus is to engage in activities to promote education and awareness of the personal and civil rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, with a lens on the specifics of the American experience.

"We are a relatively new organization, and we focus mainly on domestic Pride[s]," offers Matt Comer, a former Qnotes editor who worked with Charlotte Pride and now serves as the USAP Communications Chair. "We work with all 50 states, along with US territories."

Another interesting point about USAP: Even though it was designed to serve the United States, it was actually created in Canada. That just confirms the importance of the international meetings and how a group of 24 US citizens, members of InterPride, connected and networked in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Canada) during the world conference held there in October 2018.

USAP maintains a solid partnership with InterPride, although the necessity for the



Members of USAP came together in Minneapolis for the 2023 meeting. CREDIT: Facebook

stateside organization is readily apparent with the current American political atmosphere, the growing need to combat opposition and continuing development of Pride events in small towns and rural areas.

Comer points to the challenges that Pride events face in a small town in the United States, and how they would be culturally very different from what a similar event would experience in a European country, confirming one of the many reasons a US specific group is needed.

With the growth of Pride celebrations in smaller towns and cities, the organization also offers scholarships for developing Prides that are lacking funds.

"We also provide the opportunity for networking, which is really essential," Comer continues. "We're now reaching smaller organizations that weren't aware we were available. That's the value of having this kind of a domestic organization."

According to the organization's website, USAP was created to connect the ever-growing community of Pride organizations in all 50 states and American territories.

The organization encourages LGBTQ+ groups and other organizations that produce Pride events to get involved if that is their main focus, or at least one of their

primary focuses. That can include parades, rallies, festivals, arts and cultural events and other related activities.

From their website:

"Membership in [USAP] provides significant value, with opportunities to network, collaborate, share resources and learn with fellow Pride organizers. These opportunities are provided on a regional level through our four districts."

Pride events in the Carolinas are part of the **Southern District**, which also includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Tennessee, Texas, the Virgin Islands and Virginia.

With the United States divided into four different regions, the **Central District** covers Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The **Eastern District** covers Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia; and the **Western District** includes Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, the North

Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

As with all organizations and the passage of time, membership and leadership changes. Today's executive committee is comprised of co-presidents Ron De Harte (Palm Springs Pride) and Eve Keller (Indy Pride); Secretary Dave Wait (Motor City Pride); and North Carolina's own Cristal Robinson, from Union County Pride, who serves as the treasurer.

District Representatives include (Eastern) Alan Reiff of New York City Pride and Jayne Walters of Annapolis Pride; (Central) Jonathan Balish of Spencer, Indiana Pride and Mark Lieberman of Chicago Pridefest; (Southern) Matt Comer, a Charlotte Pride volunteer and the USAP communications director and Vanessa Rodley of Memphis, Tenn.'s Mid-South Pride; and (Western) Jerry Mai of Southern Nevada/Henderson Pride Fest.

In a statement released last month in the USAP newsletter and posted to the USAP website, co-presidents Eve Keller and Ron de Harte shared these thoughts about the upcoming Pride season.

"This year, more than ever, our theme is Collaboration, Communication and Connection. These pillars are not merely words but the essence of our collective strength. Collaborating together, we have the power to create inclusive spaces where everyone feels seen, heard, and celebrated for exactly who they are.

"We come together to celebrate Pride, [but] let's also keep safety, planning and celebration at the forefront of our minds. Let's ensure that our events are not only joyful and empowering but also safe spaces where everyone can express themselves authentically without fear of discrimination or harm. Remember, Queer Joy is an act of resistance."

For more details on the United States Association of Prides is available at <https://www.usaprides.org>.

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“Hollywood Pride: A Celebration of LGBTQ+ Representation and Perseverance in Film”

Out in Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Qnotes Staff Writer

“Hollywood Pride: A Celebration of LGBTQ+ Representation and Perseverance in Film” by Alonso Duralde
c.2024, Running Press
\$40.00
322 pages

You plan to buy lots of Jujubes. They'll stick to your teeth, but whatever, you'll be too busy watching to care. You like the director, you know most of the actors as first-rate and word is that the newcomer couldn't be more right for the role. Yep, you've done your homework. You read Rotten Tomatoes, you've looked up IMDb and you bought your ticket online. Now all you need is “Hollywood Pride” by Alonso Duralde, and your movie night is complete.

William Kennedy Laurie Dickson likely had no idea that what he'd done was

monumental.

Sometime in the very late 1800s, he set up a film camera and a wax cylinder to record a short dance between two men, hands around one another's waists, as Dickson played the violin. It “was one of the very first movies ever shot” and probably the first film to record men dancing rather intimately alone together.

Back then, and until well into the twentieth century, there were laws against most homosexual behavior and cross-dressing and very rigid standards of activity between men and women. This led to many “intense relationships...between people of the same gender.” Still, in World War I-era theaters, and though LGBTQ+ representation “was somewhat slower to get rolling” then, audiences saw films that might include drag (often for comedy's sake), camp, covert affection and “bad girls of the era.”

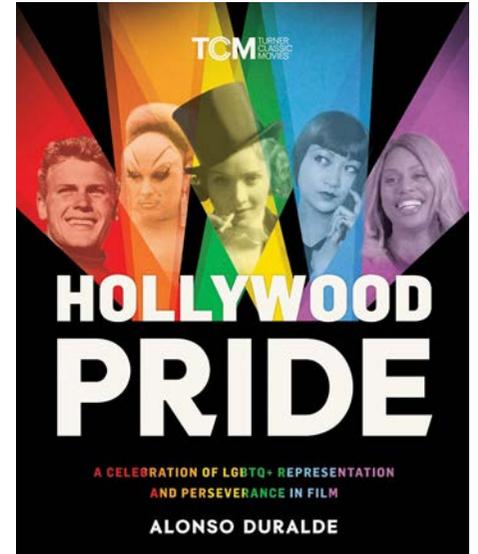
Thankfully, things changed because of people like Marlene Dietrich, Ramon Novarro, Claudette Colbert, George Cukor, Alfred Hitchcock and others through the years, people who ignored social mores and the Hays Code to give audiences

what they wanted. Moviegoers could find LGBTQ+ actors and themes in most genres by the 1940s; despite politics and a “pink scare” in the 1950s, gay actors and drag (still for comedy's sake) still appeared on-screen; and by the 1960s, the Hays Code had been dismantled. And the Me Decade of the 1970s, says Duralde, “ended with the promise that something new and exciting was about to happen.”

So have you run out of movies on your TBW list? If so, get ready...

You never want to start a movie at the end, but it's okay if you do that with “Hollywood Pride.” Flip to the end of the book, and look up your favorite stars or directors. Page to the end of each chapter, and you'll find “artists of note.” Just before that: “films of note.” Page anywhere, in fact, and you'll like what you see.

In his introduction, author Alonso Duralde apologizes if he didn't include your favorites, but “Hollywood has been a magnet for LGBTQ+ people” for more than a century, making it hard to capture it completely. That said, movie-loving readers will still be content with what's inside this well-illustrated, well-curated, highly-



readable historical overview of LGBTQ+ films, and of the people who made them.

Come to this book with a movie-lover's sensibility and stay for the wealth of photos and side-bars. If you're up for binge-reading, binge-watching or Date Night, dig into “Hollywood Pride.” Popcorn not necessary, but welcome. ::

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Hot Gen Z travel destinations for LGBTQ+ Pride include Charlotte

Airbnb study analyzes where Gen Z and Millennial customers are going for Pride celebrations around the country



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

In honor of LGBTQ+ Pride Month, Airbnb released a data analysis exploring where its customers are traveling to for Pride events. The report revealed a 300% surge in nights booked by Gen Z guests globally, indicating a broadening of the travel market as more destinations — both traditional and new — attract younger travelers.

“As we head into Pride Month, new Airbnb data reveals a fresh wave of travelers are shaping the landscape of global Pride celebrations,” the press release from Airbnb reads. “From spectators to trailblazers, Gen Z travelers are exploring new spaces for the LGBTQ+ community to come together.”

Millennials continue to lead bookings to traditional Pride celebration destinations, maintaining their strong presence and celebrating in familiar spaces, while Gen Z is exploring both the newer Pride celebrations and traditional ones.

QNotes has collected the list of cities where Gen Z folks are flocking to this year to celebrate Pride based on Airbnb’s data.

New York, New York

Airbnb’s data indicates one of the most popular destinations for Pride celebrations among Gen Z individuals is New York City, where most argue the LGBTQ+ equality movement was born.

The NYC Pride March, which started in 1970 after the Stonewall Uprising, is one of the most attended Pride events in the entire United States, with last year’s event bringing nearly two million people out to the streets of the Big Apple.

The website reads:

“The inaugural March took place in 1970, one year after the Stonewall Uprising, and has since evolved into an annual civil rights demonstration. Its purpose has expanded over time to encompass raising awareness about the fight against AIDS and honoring those we have lost to illness, violence and neglect.”

This year’s march is set to take place on June 30 and will start at 25th Street and 5th Avenue. You can register online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2024-nyc-pride-march-registration-767785476027>.

Cleveland, Ohio

Pride in the CLE Festival and March in Cleveland, Ohio, was another one of the favorite Pride travel spots for Gen Z travelers, according to Airbnb.

This year’s event took place on June 1, bringing thousands of folks to the Cleveland area. According to reporting from Fox 8, more than 7,000 people registered for the Pride walk and even more attended the festival.

Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb participated in this year’s march, later sharing this message on X (formerly Twitter):

“#PrideInTheCLE isn’t just a celebra-



Uptown Charlotte lit up in the colors of Pride celebration. North Carolina’s largest city was confirmed by Airbnb as one of the top Gen Z Pride travel destinations. CREDIT: Facebook

tion; it’s a powerful statement of visibility, acceptance, and the ongoing fight for equality. Our city welcomes everyone to celebrate who they are!”

Next year’s Pride in the CLE is scheduled for June 7. More information can be found at <https://gbtcleveland.org/pride/>.

Richmond, Virginia

Richmond is one of the top destinations for Gen Z LGBTQ+ folks and allies this year. The city has a month filled with events, ranging from drag brunches and the “PRIDE Month Kickoff Kiki” to art and historical exhibits.

One of the most highly anticipated events is Pridefest, which doesn’t happen until Sept. 14 this year. Richmond is known for its inclusive environment, with a perfect Municipal Equality Index score of 100 from the Human Rights Campaign.

Pridefest is a collaborative event hosted by multiple sponsoring organizations and is expected to draw thousands to the capital city of Virginia. For more information, go to <https://www.diversityrichmond.org/virginia-pride>.

Charlotte, North Carolina

Our own city of Charlotte was dubbed as one of the most popular Pride destinations for Gen Z travelers, according to the Airbnb release.

Over 260,000 people clad in every color of the rainbow strolled down Tryon Street and through Uptown Charlotte at last year’s two day festival. Pride weekend was filled with many events, with the most highly attended being the festival. Hundreds of tents lined Tryon Street and adjoining roads, each attended to by various vendors, LGBTQ+ rights organizations

and more.

tion in April, welcoming thousands of folks to the beachfront city. Some events at the Pride celebration included the iconic parade, live performances, cultural exhibitions and more.

The parade, renowned for its colorful floats, dazzling costumes and high-energy atmosphere, wound its way through the heart of South Beach, drawing thousands of participants and spectators.

For more information on next year’s event, you can go to <https://www.miami-beachpride.com/>.

San Juan, Puerto Rico

San Juan Pride is Puerto Rico’s most highly anticipated Pride event, and for Gen Z, it’s one of the hottest events to travel to per the Airbnb data analysis.

Folks donned their favorite hot weather-friendly queer gear and joined San Juan’s LGBTQ+ community at this major, official Pride Month celebration. The festival kicked off with a parade, filled with rainbow-colored floats, people on stilts and roller skates, go-go dancers, drag personalities and more.

Next year’s event doesn’t have a date yet.

Salt Lake City, Utah

Despite being located in a rather conservative state, Salt Lake City, Utah, has made the list as one of the most traveled to cities for Gen Z folks traveling for Pride celebrations.

SLC Pride is one of the largest LGBTQ+ celebrations in the state and welcomes thousands of people to Utah’s capital city. The two-day festival is slated for June 29 and June 30, with an entire weekend filled with queer, trans and ally-owned vendors, performers, a parade and more.

More information can be found at <https://www.slc-pride.org/>.

West Hollywood, California

WeHo Pride is one of the largest Pride celebrations in the U.S., and in 2024, it was one of the most traveled to Pride festivals by Gen Z folks.

Held annually in early June, WeHo Pride features a wide range of events that highlight the creativity and diversity of the LGBTQ+ community. The centerpiece of the celebration is the Pride Parade, a colorful procession which draws tens of thousands of participants and spectators.

Beyond the parade, WeHo Pride offers a variety of activities and events throughout the weekend. The festival grounds host live music performances, dance parties, art exhibits and food vendors, creating a lively and festive environment. The event also includes educational and advocacy-focused programming, such as panel discussions, workshops and resource fairs, aimed at addressing important issues within the LGBTQ+ community and promoting awareness and support.

More information can be found at <https://www.weho.org/community/weho-pride>.

and more.

One of the biggest traditions at Charlotte Pride is Sunday’s Pride parade, which broke records with over 200 contingents, more than 40 floats, and roughly 10,000 participants.

This year’s Charlotte Pride will take place on Aug. 17 and Aug. 18. More information can be found at <https://charlotte-pride.org/>.

Orlando, Florida

Orlando is one of the most traveled cities in the country, and for Gen Z it’s a premier Pride vacation destination.

Every October on National Coming Out Day, Orlando hosts the Come Out With Pride festival, the city’s annual Pride celebration. Last year saw over 220,000 guests, making Orlando’s annual LGBTQ+ Pride celebration one of the largest in the American Southeast and in Florida.

The website for the event states the following:

“Every October, we gather around National Coming Out Day, knowing that for many, Pride may be the one day of the year people can live their true authentic selves ... Pride is so much more than just a party. Through our Pride celebration and year round initiatives, we want to guide people to help the organizations and causes that are making a significant impact.”

More information can be found at <https://comeoutwithpride.org/>.

Miami, Florida

Miami remains one of the largest tourist spots in Florida and for Pride, it was a hit among Gen Z attendees.

The city held its annual Pride celebra-

Our People: Denise Furr

An original Charlotte Pride participant talks about love, life and pride



by L'Monique King
Qnotes Staff Writer

It's Pride Season and during this interview, you'll have the opportunity to meet Denise Furr, co-owner of Rainbow Maid (a residential and commercial cleaning service), and one of Charlotte's earliest Pride volunteers. Originally from Concord, Furr has called Charlotte home since the mid-90s and shares her life and home with her partner and an assortment of canine friends.

During our interview, Furr sits on her back patio, surrounded by Crepe Myrtles and yellow Lilies and sipping a cold beer while sharing thoughts about life and her personal history.

L'Monique King: What brought you to Charlotte?

Denise Furr: I think it was lust. <laughter> I came out the year that I moved to Charlotte. I had a really good friend while I was living in Concord. She and I had a pretty big argument one day, and I really didn't want to be in the Concord area any longer. It was a small town and I really needed to get away to find love and be happy.

LMK: Where in Charlotte do you live?

DF: In a single-family home in the Mint Hill area. My wife and I have lived here for 12 years. We're happy here. The only thing I dislike about Charlotte is the changing of my neighborhood. It's really sad to see so many people begging on the main streets. People I've tried to help with food, clothing and other things – but it doesn't seem to make an impact – they are still there.

LMK: You mentioned having a wife? How'd you meet?

DF: We worked together. My dad and I started a cleaning company, he was a silent partner and she came to work for us. We were both with other people at the time and started off as friends. We were just friends for 20 years. We'd see each other at parties with our partners and at church. When our relationships dissolved – practically at the same time, about 14 years ago we maintained a friendship. We ended up living and working together and having many adventures together. I still help her clean houses every now and then. She's a fabulous butch woman. I love her like I have never loved any woman in my life. She is the love of my life. I wish to God we had gotten together 20 years earlier.

LMK: You described your wife as Butch, a word many younger lesbians now seem to shy away from. What are your thoughts on the apparent disdain for the older term?

DF: I wish newer generations didn't feel that way. We, as LGBTQ+ elders, are listening to them [our younger community members] and trying to use new pronouns and new language. So, I think they should give our words, our language, our ways of defining ourselves a chance too. Just listen to us – I guarantee you – you will learn something.

LMK: What's the best thing about your relationship?

DF: Our humor. She makes me laugh. That's what attracted me to her. We have so much fun together. There was this one time, when we were on our way to clean a house in Dilworth and this song came on the radio. It was "More Than a Feeling" by Blue Suede. We both love it. We were singing it to each other when she pulled over, we got out and danced, a little dirty dancing <chuckles>. When the song was over, we got back in our car, kissed and drove off to our cleaning job for a client we've had for 25 years.

LMK: What do you currently do for a living?

DF: I have three jobs. I have the cleaning business and I also work for a company that cares for seniors. I'm a caregiver and I do that for the company I'm employed by and privately.

LMK: Are you caring for any aging LGBTQ+ clients?

DF: No, I'm not. I wish I could. I'd love that but it's been challenging – finding and connecting with our aging community in need.

would it be?

DF: Knowing what everyone is thinking, because I'm a very curious person and always asking questions.

LMK: You possess such a warm and jovial demeanor. What if anything annoys you?

DF: Protesters and Republicans. I could say more about that last one, but I think I'd better just leave it at that.

LMK: Seems like the perfect time to ask: What does Pride mean to you? Why is it important?

DF: Because out there somewhere there's a kid that hasn't seen the letters LGBTQ before and may now be realizing that they are part of our community. They may also not know that there are churches and synagogues that are open to the LGBTQ+ community. Faith based organizations participate in our Pride Parade every year. My church, Caldwell Presbyterian Church participates and welcomes everyone. In fact, before attending my church I really didn't understand what it meant to be Transgender. I've learned a lot since then and have been able to share that with community. I am so grateful for that and an affirming faith



Denise Furr walked in the first Charlotte Pride Parade in 1981. CREDIT: Facebook

but well attended and we were all pretty open and [not afraid] to show our pride or affection for each other. We chanted, "We're here! We're Queer! Get used to it!" Though we were small, there were protesters. They were pretty far away [from the Parade route] and CMPD did a good job keeping them away.

LMK: After long days or stressful moments, what's your self-care routine like?

DF: I get pedicures. I do that quite often. My wife has been out of town a bit lately and honestly, in her absence I sit around watching TV or playing on my phone – it's terrible actually <giggling>. When my wife is gone, her absence is felt immensely. But I try to be good to myself and get rest. I love what I do, but it can be demanding in many ways.

LMK: What's your Favorite TV show?

DF: "Mike and Molly" and "King of Queens." They're both sitcoms.

LMK: Share something with our readers that might be surprising about you.

DF: <Pausing thoughtfully> I have ridden horses up mountains and on the beach.

LMK: So you're an equestrian?

DF: <Giggles> Yes, and I love that word – sounds so bougie <giggling>. In the early '90s I was vacationing in Jamaica and Lake Tahoe and we rode in both spots. But that was ages ago, I haven't been horseback riding in a very long time.

LMK: Having discussed your past, let's fast forward to your future. What do you see yourself doing 10 years from now?

DF: I don't know. I would love to be retired but I really don't know. I'm not a big worrier. I trust in God and believe that everything and anything that happens to me is a God moment and I don't take those moments or life for granted. My life is not where I want it to be [currently], but it is moving in that direction. I have love and security and as I've grown older I've changed a lot – because I am still willing to learn and grow. ::



Members of the Scorpio softball team at Charlotte's Pride event in 1981. Denise Furr is pictured front and center wearing a cap/shades and tube top.

LMK: Any words of advice for aging LGBTQ+ folks and couples?

DF: Be kind to one another.

LMK: Let's have a little fun with some random questions. Choose your preference. Michael Jackson or Prince?

DF: Michael Jackson, honey! Ooooooh, I love that guy.

LMK: White or Wheat?

DF: Wheat.

LMK: Strawberries or Bananas?

DF: Strawberries.

LMK: If you had a superpower, what

leader like John Michael Cleghorn.

LMK: What has been your involvement in Pride?

DF: I walked in the first Pride Parade that Charlotte had in 1981. I felt such a part of the community. I knew it was where I belonged. Club Scorpio had a softball team [The Stinging Scorpions] of mostly butch women, a few gay men and some straight male allies. Several bars had softball teams back then – so a softball game [between them] became the kickoff to the Pride Parade. It was a wonderful feeling of belonging and our team won the softball tournament. That first Pride Parade was small

SUNDAY, JULY 14

Denim 'N DIAMONDS Drag Brunch

SEATINGS AT 11A & 1:30P



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