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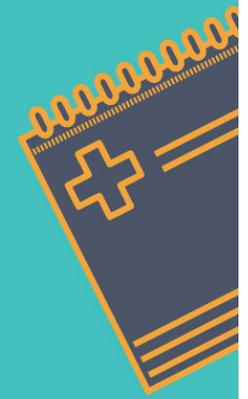
Drag legend Naomi Dix serves as the Durham Pride Grand Marshall.

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R&B/Electronica musician Halima plays Durham Pride's main stage.

-pg 10





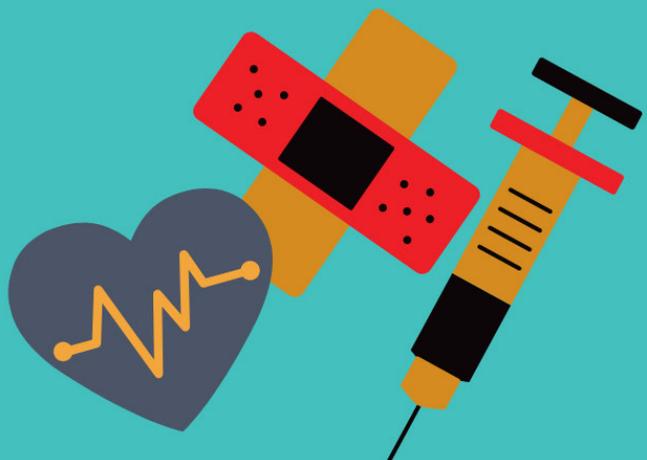
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front page

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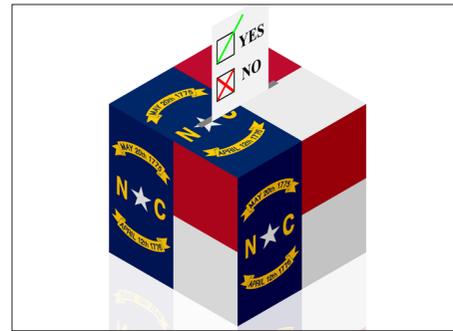
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For event listings, visit
qnotescarolinas.com/events-calendar.



Qnotes Democracy Project explores statewide elections

With less than two months until Election Day, North Carolina voters will have a ballot filled with more races than just the presidential and congressional. State offices, including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and multiple executive offices are up for grabs. More chances to change the political landscape exist by voting in new leadership in education, the judiciary, the treasury and more

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Burnsville Library quits multi-county program over Pride exhibit

In what has been a months-long battle between opposing views over a Pride month display, the board of commissioners for the county library has voted to sever their area branch from the larger region's system. At a meeting held earlier this summer, Yancey County Public Library in Burnsville withdrew from the Avery-Mitchell-Yancey (AMY) Regional Library System.

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In addition to the presidential race, there are many North Carolina state offices up for grabs

From Governor to State Treasurer, here's a look at who is running in each state race

Taylor Heeden Larkins and David Aaron Moore

We are officially less than two months from Election Day, and the closer that Tuesday gets, the more candidates campaign, urging voters to turn out at the ballot box. North Carolina voters will have a ballot filled with more races than just the presidential and congressional — state offices including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general and multiple executive offices are up for grabs.

This year presents voters a chance to completely change the political landscape in North Carolina by giving them the chance to vote in new leadership in key departments such as education, the judiciary, the treasury and more.

QNotes has created a list of the important state-wide races taking place this year, as well as summaries of each candidate running for those offices.



Josh Stein

N.C. Governor

The North Carolina gubernatorial election has garnered national attention, with current Attorney General **Josh Stein**, a broad-minded Democratic candidate who is capable of governing for everyone, pitted against controversial right-wing, anti-LGBTQ+ Republican MAGA conservative Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson for the Governor's Mansion.

Stein has grown in popularity in the last month in North Carolina, leading Robinson in head to head polls by over 10 percentage points in some cases. North Carolina based publication Carolina Journal had its own survey, and it found Stein was favored by likely voters with a total of nearly five percentage points. For the presidential race, Harris still trails Trump in North Carolina by one percentage point according to a poll through the John Locke Foundation, though it is believed she will likely overcome that number before early voting and election day.

"The poll indicates that Josh Stein holds an advantage in voter trust over Mark Robinson, on the issues of the economy, education and crime," said John Locke Foundation CEO Donald Bryson.

Robinson has been the subject of an undue number of national headlines for his notorious anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-reproductive freedom comments. Several of his sermon-like speeches have gone viral for the comments Robinson has made about LGBTQ+ North Carolinians, ranging from calling gay men, lesbians and trans people "filth" to suggesting arresting trans women for using the restroom aligning with their gender identity.



Rachel Hunt

Lt. Gov.

North Carolina's 2024 Lieutenant Governor Race: Candidates and Their Platforms

The 2024 North Carolina Lt. Governor race is shaping up as a pivotal contest featuring diverse candidates, including one name some voters may recognize. On the Democratic side, **Rachel Hunt**, a state senator with a focus on education and healthcare reform, easily won her primary. As the daughter of former Governor Jim Hunt, she leverages her family's political legacy, emphasizing expanding Medicaid, increasing teacher pay and supporting public schools.

The Republican race was more contentious, and in fact, resulted in a runoff between Hal Weatherman and Jim O'Neill. Weatherman, who served as chief of staff to former Lt. Governor Dan Forest, won the runoff to become the nominee for the Republicans. He advocates for conservative principles, economic growth and reducing government regulations. His campaign also emphasizes border security and support for law enforcement.

According to a poll from Public Policy Polling in March, almost 30 percent of voters were undecided on how they would vote in the Lt. Gov. race. Weatherman led Hunt 37 percent to 34 percent, which is within the 4.2 percent margin of error.

Most of the individuals surveyed weren't aware of either candidate's

position on abortion, but when the administrator revealed Hunt's pro-choice stance and Weatherman's anti-access one, Hunt gained a significant advantage.

That same survey also revealed that voters oppose North Carolina's 12-week abortion ban by a 13-point margin (49-36). Forty-two percent of North Carolina voters say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who supported the 12-week abortion ban, while only 27 percent say they would be more likely to vote for such candidate.



Jeff Jackson

Attorney General

North Carolina's attorney general election is set up to be a head-to-head matchup between two familiar faces in Mecklenburg County: Democratic Congressman and former state senator **Jeff Jackson** and Republican Congressman Dan Bishop.

Jackson decided to run for attorney general after Republicans gerrymandered him out of his congressional district. As a state senator, Jackson filed several bills to fully repeal the HB2 "bathroom bill," pushing the majority party in the General Assembly to repeal the bill. He has also continued to voice his support for LGBTQ+ North Carolinians, including voicing support for nondiscrimination ordinances.

"The LGBTQ+ community has been the target of hateful and discriminatory attacks under the Trump administration, from the transgender military ban to the rolling back of non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people looking for help from Health and Welfare programs," Jackson wrote in a statement. "We have to enact nondiscrimination protections in law now to protect against any such attacks in the future."

Bishop's legislative record is notorious — he's widely recognized for authoring the notoriously anti-LGBTQ+ "Bathroom Bill," (HB2, mentioned earlier). The bill was designed to prohibit trans-identifying individuals from using the bathroom that coincides with their gender identity. It was later revised to House Bill 142, which made no mention of trans individuals and bathrooms. But, it did temporarily nullify existing Non-Discrimination Ordinances (NDO) and prevented further passage of any NDOs across North Carolina.

The passage of HB2 and the remnants of HB 142 resulted in an estimated \$3.75 billion loss in the North Carolina economy when several national businesses and organizations, musical artists and others pulled their scheduled North Carolina-

based events.



Elaine Marshall

Secretary of State

Incumbent **Elaine Marshall**, a Democrat, is running for re-election as North Carolina Secretary of State against Republican challenger Chad Brown. The Secretary of State is tasked with overseeing the economic and business-related operations of the state government.

Marshall, who has held the position since 1996, emphasizes her experience, record of reducing business costs, and commitment to transparency. Before her tenure as Secretary of State, she served in the North Carolina State Senate and worked as a teacher and small business owner.

Brown, a Gaston County Commissioner and former mayor of Stanley, North Carolina, identifies as a conservative, purportedly prioritizing transparency, economic development and reducing government burdens on businesses.

Brown has voiced his concerns over the integrity of elections and has referred to misinformation regarding the results of the 2020 election, saying he wants to "protect our elections and ensure that every vote is counted."

As it stands, North Carolina's secretary of state doesn't oversee the state's elections. Marshall is worried if Brown is elected, a Republican majority could vote to move the oversight of elections into the department.

"What my opponent is saying to the crowd he's campaigning to is that if he gets elected, if there's a Republican in the secretary of state's office, then he will petition the General Assembly to move the election to him," Marshall said in an interview with Cardinal & Pine.

When asked if she believed the state legislature would attempt to change the powers of the office, Marshall said, "Absolutely. I feel very confident about that."

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mo Green (D) and Michele Morrow (R) are running in the general election for North Carolina superintendent of public instruction on Nov. 5, 2024. This position oversees the K-12 public education system in the state, including providing a standard curriculum and allocating funding for each of North Carolina's 100





Mo Green

counties' schools.

Green is a veteran educator and school administrator with a career spanning decades of dedication to North Carolina students. He served as the superintendent in Guilford County, North Carolina's third largest public school district.

Green also has served as the president of the board of directors of the N.C. High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA), where under his leadership, the entity appointed the first female and first Black commissioner of NCHSAA.

The former superintendent's plan has six "pillars:" invest fully in public education; prepare each student for their next phase of life; reverse public education educators; enhance community and parent support; ensure safe, secure learning environments; and celebrate the good in public education.

"There is much to celebrate about public education in North Carolina and its transformative power. However, it is long past time for our state to truly fulfill its promise to each of its students - that no matter who you are, you will receive high-quality educational opportunities that will prepare you to be successful," Green said in his announcement. "We can make that happen if we invest fully in public education, ensure safe and secure learning environments for our students, enhance parent and community support and reverse our educators."

Morrow, on the other hand, is a homeschool teacher for her kids and is running as the Republican nominee for superintendent. Morrow is a new name in the North Carolina political scene — she won the Republican nomination in March against incumbent Caroline Truitt in an unexpected upset. Prior to securing the nomination, Morrow was relatively unknown in North Carolina, but in the days following, unsettling information about her came to light.

Ranging from social media posts calling for the public executions of former President Barack Obama and current President Joe Biden to misinformation regarding the public education system, Morrow has begun to face criticism not only from Democrats, but also from people within her own party.

She has also referred to public schools as "indoctrination centers" and "socialism centers," saying if she were to win in November, Morrow would "identify, decrease or terminate wasteful programs at the state level, and end contracts with organizations that cannot demonstrate a direct, consistent, positive impact..."



Jessica Holmes

North Carolina Auditor

Three candidates are competing in the 2024 North Carolina Auditor race on Nov. 5: incumbent **Jessica Holmes** (D), Dave Boliek (R) and Bob Drach (L). The State Auditor oversees financial and performance audits to ensure the proper use of tax dollars.

Holmes, appointed in 2023 after Beth Wood's resignation, is running for the first time. She emphasizes accountability and transparency in her campaign.

Boliek, with a background in law and a member of the UNC Board of Trustees, identifies as a conservative and advocates for such policies.

Drach, running as an independent, focuses on maintaining staff excellence, continuing investigations, updating technology and emphasizing his nonpartisan stance for the role.

North Carolina Treasurer

Wesley Harris (D) and Brad Briner



Wesley Harris

(R) are running for state treasurer. North Carolina's treasurer is the state's chief financial officer, official banker and a member of the Council of State.

The treasurer works to manage the state's pension and healthcare plans, investments and unclaimed property, as well as provides financial support to local governments.

Before holding public office, Harris earned a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a graduate degree and a Ph.D. from Clemson University. Now, Harris serves as a representative in the state house and has previously worked as an economist and professor.

"As a PhD economist with a specialization in Public Finance, making sure our State's finances are in impeccable shape so that we can make the investments we need is definitely what I am most passionate about," Harris said in a question and answer style interview. "[I will] invest more of our pension plan to boost returns instead of holding cash, negotiate with health care providers for lower costs by promoting more preventative care, and focus on the financial aspects of a local government's investments instead of my political leanings."

Briner is a board member at UNC-Chapel Hill. He also serves as an investment manager and previously worked as a chief investment officer for Willet Advisors. Harris has said he wants to maintain the singular fiduciary plan and eliminating it would give more power to the legislature, which he does not support. On the website ballotpedia he said, "It's about accountability. This is a position that is elected by the people ... so the people get the say." ::



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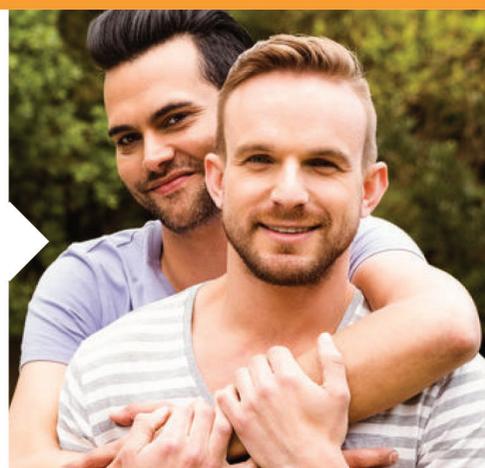

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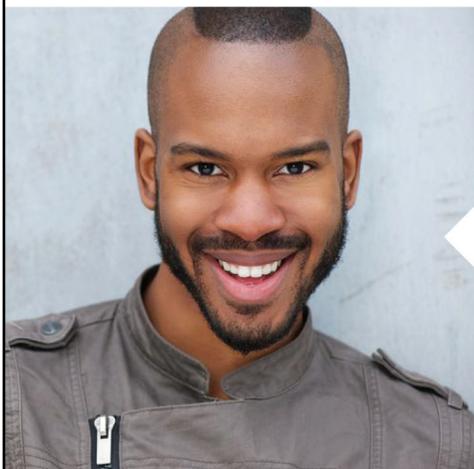


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Charlotte's Bar at 316 closes doors

After nearly a decade of controversy that included claims of racial discrimination against customers of color, purported misuse of COVID funding for small businesses, multiple citations for violations during the COVID pandemic, verbal abuse of drag performers and a pickup at the club that resulted in the death of a patron, Bar at 316 is closing its doors.

According to internet chatter and community conversation, it isn't for any of the aforementioned reasons. Reportedly, Bar at 316 has closed because they didn't pay their rent.

Public records show that property owner Douglas R. Stephen (additional records list a company called VV Dilworth Square as the current owner) has filed suit against The Rensselaer Group, the company that owns

Bar at 316, for unpaid back rent. At deadline, no sum total of how much rent is due was available.

Although much of the history of the building that has housed Bar at 316 has been lost with the passing of time, what is known is the following: It didn't begin its life at that location. The converted house was moved to its current address at some point during the 20th century. It's unclear how many businesses operated out of the structure, but it appears most of those that did either attracted a LGBTQ+ clientele or specifically geared their services to the gay, lesbian and trans communities.

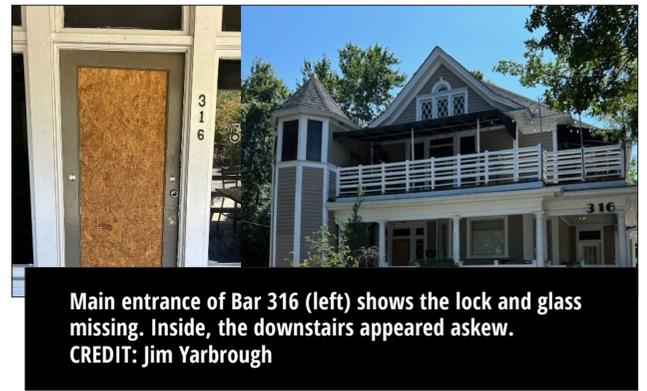
Among the businesses that called 316 Rensselaer home was a bar/restaurant named Amanda Rose and private clubs like Steven's, Liaisons and eventually Bar at 316.

For a building that has played such a prominent role in the LGBTQ+ community, it seems somewhat of a loss it may fall prey to the gentrification that has absorbed much of the surrounding area.

While no one in the community is denying the historic significance of the site, there are many who are glad to see the current owner and management team out the door.

A recurring claim of racist behavior towards non-white customers was regularly leveled at Bar at 316 owner Jeff Edwards. An occurrence last year that involved the Caucasian owner verbally attacking a Black drag performer on stage during a performance left a bad taste in the mouths of Bar at 316 clients and other individuals in the local LGBTQ+ community.

Not surprisingly, protests followed, and calls for Edwards to step aside. He later



came forward with an apology and what seemed like a renewed commitment to Bar at 316 and an environment of inclusivity. For that very reason, regular patrons found the abrupt closing unexpected, leaving them floundering for a new watering hole and pondering the fate of what will become of the historic house that became a gathering spot for Charlotte's queer community.

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

World Health Organization declares Mpox emergency

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has declared a public health emergency of international concern after a new and more dangerous outbreak of Mpox (formerly known as Monkeypox) has begun to spread rapidly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and other parts of Africa. The declaration comes after an International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee presented data from experts with WHO and affected countries.

"The emergence of a new clade of Mpox, its rapid spread in eastern DRC, and the reporting of cases in several neighboring countries are very worrying," Tedros said. "On top of outbreaks of other Mpox clades in DRC and other countries in Africa, it's clear that a coordinated international response is needed to stop these

outbreaks and save lives."

This is the second public health emergency of international concern declared in a span of two years for the virus.

Mpox was first discovered in humans in the DRC in 1970 and for decades was classified as endemic to central and west Africa. However, in July 2022, multiple countries experienced outbreaks largely attributed to sexual contact that were disproportionately impacting LGBTQ+ individuals. This latest outbreak is manifesting at an unprecedented rate, mostly among individuals who participate in heterosexual activity in the region.

Countries bordering the DRC who previously haven't reported Mpox cases — including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda — have started to see cases within their borders, triggering concern from public

health officials.

Committee Chair Professor Dimie Ogoina said, "The current upsurge of Mpox in parts of Africa, along with the spread of a new sexually transmissible strain of the monkeypox virus, is an emergency, not only for Africa, but for the entire globe."

Last week, the Director-General triggered the process for Emergency Use Listing for Mpox vaccines, which will accelerate vaccine access for lower-income countries that have not yet issued their own national regulatory approval.

Immunization Clinics in the Charlotte area are available to help individuals stay up to date with their vaccines by providing the routinely recommended vaccines for all age groups, as well as specific vaccines for high-risk groups. Mpox immunizations can protect our community from a dangerous infection that can spread quickly.

Among the sites for treatment in the Charlotte area are: the Huntersville Mecklenburg County of Health Department at 2845 Beatties Ford Rd.; the Charlotte Mecklenburg County of Health Department at 249 Billingsley Rd.; the Valerie C. Woodard



Community Resource Center at 3205 Freedom Drive; and the Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center at 430 Stitt Rd.

For information on making an appointment at any of these locations call 704-336-6500. Hours of availability are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Wednesday, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. ::

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

VA women's college bans trans women from admittance

Sweet Briar College, located 12 miles north of Lynchburg in Virginia, has implemented a new policy barring transgender women from being admitted, according to a story reported by Pink News. The college claims the decision was based in part by the last wishes of its founder Indiana Fletcher Williams, requiring the institution to be "a place of 'girls and young women.'"

While it is extremely unlikely Williams could have understood the concept of transgender women at that time, a new policy instituted by the school and extrapolated from Williams' own words, now requires an applicant "confirm that her sex assigned at birth is female, and that she consistently lives and identifies as a woman."

"Sweet Briar College believes that single-sex education is not only our tradition, but

also a unique cultural and social resource," President Mary Pope Hutson said.

Sweet Briar has a student body of 460 students. Founded in 1901 and opened in 1906 on Williams' estate — some of the school's buildings are part of a former plantation located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The policy has garnered criticism from both students and faculty, fearing the policy will push people away from attending the college, which has faced its fair share of financial challenges in the last decade.

Williams' will — the same one being used to defend the anti-trans policy — also states the school was to be a place "for the education of white girls and young women."

John Gregory Brown, an English professor and faculty senate chair at Sweet Briar College, believes the logic behind the new

admittance policy is "absurd."

"Williams also wouldn't have entertained the notion that somebody who was disabled would be a potential student," he said in an interview carried by AP.

The faculty voted 48 to 4, with one abstention, to call on the school's board to rescind the policy, according to Brown. In addition to the faculty vote, the Sweet Briar College Student Government Association also spoke against the policy, calling it "alienating, unnecessary, and it reflects the rise of transphobia in our country."

"And there are allies here who may identify as women but have friends and lovers and family members who are nonbinary, genderqueer and transgender," Association President Isabella Paul, a senior who identifies as nonbinary, told the AP. "So this is also affecting their pride in their institution."

Women's colleges in the U.S. began to admit transgender women about a decade ago, and now, there are 23 historically women's colleges admitting trans women. Only three all-women's colleges — including



Sweet Briar — bar trans women completely from applying.

"It really excludes any student who would be offended by those positions ... who doesn't want to be in a place where discrimination is codified in this way," Brown said. "I think it's a financially disastrous decision for the college." ::

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

Lowe's removes DEI policies regarding LGBTQ+ groups

Lowe's Home Improvement has become one of several corporations electing to remove all diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies surrounding LGBTQ+ issues and groups. This move comes as conservatives target companies for their inclusive policies, resulting in the removal of DEI or mentions of it in corporate rules.

An internal company memo is currently circulating on social media, where Lowe's shares with its employees its decision to end its participation in surveys for the Human Rights Campaign, the country's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy group. This memo also indicated groups designated for minority employees would be consolidated into one single group.

According to reporting from NBC, the changes appear to specifically target LGBTQ+ representation. Lowe's has previously been a staunch supporter of LGBTQ+ efforts, including in Charlotte.

As recently as 2023, the company was a sponsor for Charlotte Pride, and earlier this summer, Lowe's was listed on the Charlotte Pride 2024 site as a high level sponsor.

Charlotte Pride put out a statement on Aug. 28 calling out entities by name, including Lowe's and the UNC University System, for removing DEI initiatives.

"In the face of growing challenges for our state's LGBTQ+ citizens, it is more important than ever to stand in solidarity as a united community and to uplift each and every person," the statement reads. "We call on corporations, organizations and institutions to strengthen their support for DEI programs and for employees, stakeholders and customers who represent a variety of identities and perspectives ... Charlotte Pride urges its corporate partners like Lowe's Home Improvement, a longtime supporter of Charlotte Pride – as well as the UNC System and other organizations –

to recommit to DEI initiatives and resource groups."

DEI programs and resource groups are essential to create safe spaces in which people with shared identities, interests or goals can come together to share challenges, discuss shared experiences and support each other in both professional and personal development. It's these policies that allow for equity to be achieved, which is why Charlotte Pride believes Lowe's, the UNC system and other organizations should recommit to providing an equal playing field for all.

If these institutions fail to implement equitable policy, it will silence those historically oppressed groups more.

"Charlotte Pride shares our community's deep concern at the University of North Carolina (UNC) System Board of Governors' decision to eliminate DEI programs across the university system," the statement reads. "Academic institutions' DEI programs have fostered years of progress toward a more inclusive and equitable environment for students, faculty and staff. These impactful programs sent a clear message that diversity and inclusion were priorities



Lowe's Home Improvement is removing DEI policies regarding LGBTQ+ groups, according to an internal company memo. CREDIT: Facebook

within the UNC system, and the decision to eliminate them represents a setback not only for the people whom these programs served, but for the institution as a whole, with voices silenced and academic discourse and thought hampered." ::

—Taylor Heeden Larkins

Trans families suing SC over law blocking gender-affirming healthcare

In opposition of a recent ruling that bans gender-affirming healthcare in South Carolina, transgender residents are suing the state to stop the new law.

Signed into law by Governor Henry McMaster on May 21, House Bill 4624 prevents doctors from providing care via gender transition procedures, such as puberty delaying medications, hormone therapy and other procedures or treatment for transgender youth as well as transgender adults.

Within the lawsuit, Misanin v. Wilson, filed on August 29 with the U.S. District Court for South Carolina, are three provisions that plaintiffs are seeking a permanent injunction with;

1. A prohibition on medical professionals providing gender-affirming care to South Carolinians under age 18;

2. A prohibition on the use of public funds for gender-affirming care for South Carolinians regardless of age; and

3. A prohibition on gender-affirming care coverage under South Carolina's Medicaid program

One of the main arguments within the lawsuit lies with the specificity in the new law; while many of the same treatments would still be legal in the state, when used for cisgender individuals, for example in the case of treating precocious puberty and various cancers, or allowing for breast augmentation or reconstruction, those types of treatments would be prohibited if used as aid for gender dysphoria by transgender patients, as per paragraph seven of the lawsuit's introduction.

While many of the plaintiffs have chosen to remain anonymous, Sterling Misanin, a

32-year-old trans man and formally a patient at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) before May's law went into effect, chose to speak out about how the bill is affecting his life in an ABC 4 News interview.

"I feel so lucky and fortunate to be supported and affirmed by so many wonderful people who accept me for who I am. My family continues to be extremely supportive of me living as the man that I am. In Charleston, I have a wonderful community who make me feel safe and seen."

"But, the actions by MUSC have caused me significant harm, and I am devastated that my state has interfered in my access to life-saving health care.

I am an adult, and I know myself better than my state does, and I cannot stay silent about the very real harms that this law inflicts on transgender people like me." HB 4624 was only one of 23 other bills that, introduced by South Carolina Lawmakers, targeted transgender people.



House Bill 4624 was signed into law by Governor Henry McMaster on May 21. CREDIT: Facebook

Similar bills have been passed in the region, although the Fourth Circuit Of Appeals, which South Carolina is a part of, has started to amend many that fall under legal scrutiny, such as North Carolina's exclusion of coverage for gender-affirming care within the state employees' insurance plan, or West Virginia's exclusion of gender-affirming care for low-income transgender people enrolled in Medicaid. ::

—Jonathan Golian

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Yancey County library disengages from regional services over 2023 Pride display

Minority opposition votes themselves on to local library board, disconnects from library program serving three counties



by **Jonathon Golian**
Qnotes Staff Writer

In what has been a months-long battle between opposing views over a Pride month display at a local library, The board of commissioners for Yancey County (about 45 minutes northwest of Asheville) has voted to sever their area from the larger region's library system.

At a meeting held this past June 28, Yancey County Commission Chair Jeff Whitson directed County Manager Lynn Austin to pull the Yancey County Public Library (located in Burnsville) out of what is known as the Avery-Mitchell-Yancey (AMY) Regional Library System, which serves all three communities and the four branches within (two in Mitchell, one in each of the others).

The motion was passed unanimously while AMY Regional Library Director Amber Briggs was out of state attending a library conference in California in late June. In August, Briggs released a public statement in response to the Yancey County Commissioners:

"This past year has been a heartache, psychologically draining, and highly stressful for the employees of the AMY Regional Library System, and particularly, the employees at Yancey County Public Library. The employees at Yancey have been harassed, called pedophiles and groomers, all because of a book display.

"We are so well equipped to serve our communities, and that was made possible by directors across the state who serve on those committees, me included, and our representatives at the state level listened to and awarded funding. Why withdraw now? Why pay for what the State already provides?"

"I work with the best people, kind and giving, dedicated to competent service above self and to the adults and children they serve. To hear that the Yancey County commissioners decided to withdraw is heartbreaking to us."

The debate over the control of the library began, as reported by Carolina Public Press (CPP), in June 2023 when Yancey County resident Sheila Poehler made a complaint to the county over that year's display during Pride Month.

From a report carried by the publication/website Mountain Xpress: "During June 2023, three branches — Avery Morrison, Spruce Pine and Yancey (which is in Burnsville) — assembled Pride Month displays featuring books about LGBTQ+ topics and by LGBTQ+ authors. The display in Burnsville included a rainbow flag saying, 'Everyone is Welcome Here,' and a smaller 'Everyone is Welcome Here' sign at the front desk."

In an email sent to the Yancey Public Library to read, according to CPP, Poehler professed that, "Parents of young children should not be put in the position of having to explain LGBTQ, etc. to their kids."

During the commissioners meeting that followed, Whitson made the first



In a year-long dispute over a LGBTQ+ Pride display, Yancey County's library has cut ties with other libraries in neighboring counties.

motion to explore leaving the AMY Regional System, a move that was shortly put on hold in a special July meeting in order to have the matter discussed by the commissioners, the local library board and Briggs.

Since that time, Yancey County appointed seven new members to the local library board, three of whom became a part of the regional board. Poehler was among the names that were brought on locally. Of the current membership, only two of the tenured local library board members were re-appointed by commissioners in 2023.

"It's just very sad for them to withdraw and not give reasoning," Briggs told CPP in August after the final vote to withdraw

was confirmed. "Yet, the timeline really shows what the reasoning is."

In light of the recent conversations over the last few months, droves of local residents who rejected the changes, staged a support walk from the Burnsville library to the county courthouse, displaying apparel and signs that read "I Love My Library" and "I love AMY."

"I hope [the support walk] shows the commissioners that the vast majority of the community supports staying in the AMY regional system," Landon Beaver, a Yancey County resident and one of the supporters in the walk, told CPP. "Or that it convinces the community that we need new county leadership to keep us in the AMY regional system." ::

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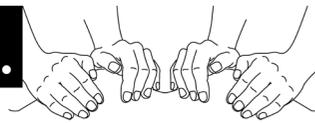
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U.S. District Court judge overturns Pentagon policy targeting HIV+ individuals

Previous rules prevented people diagnosed with HIV from serving in the military



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

In a landmark ruling, a federal court struck down the last categorical disqualification preventing people diagnosed with HIV from joining the U.S. Armed Services. Pro-LGBTQ+ law firm Lambda Legal filed a lawsuit in partnership with Peter Perkowski, Esq., Scott A. Schoettes, Esq., and Winston & Strawn LLP on behalf of three individuals who could not enlist or reenlist based on their HIV status.

"We are thrilled the court has ruled in our favor and agreed that the military's outdated policies blocking people living with HIV from enlisting are unconstitutional," said Peter Perkowski, plaintiff attorney and Legal & Policy Director, Minority Veterans of America (MVA). "Thanks to modern science, there is no legitimate reason to continue denying people living with HIV the ability to enlist.

I am proud to have fought and won for these brave American patriots, and we urge the Department of Defense to immediately comply with the court's decision."

Isaiah Wilkins, 24, wanted to join the Army after serving in the Georgia National Guard but was denied because of his HIV+ status. Carol Coe, 33, served in the Army in 2008 and left the service after contracting HIV, but she wants to return to duty. Then there's Natalie Noe, 33, who was denied entry into service in 2020 because she tested positive for HIV.

The plaintiffs contended the military's policy preventing HIV+ individuals from serving is illegal, arguing the current policy contradicts current scientific understanding of the virus. They challenged the rule based on the Fifth Amendment's due process clause and the Administrative Procedure Act, asserting the restriction unjustly targeted a specific group.

In court, the Pentagon defended its position by stating it's reasonable for the military to exclude individuals who might pose a known health risk to the armed

forces.

The Pentagon's arguments included the incurable nature of HIV, the potential for HIV+ service members to miss their daily medication and subsequently increase their viral load, the possibility of the virus spreading through blood exposure or transfusions, as well as the risk of those with the virus facing additional health complications.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema said the arguments the Pentagon made to prevent HIV-positive individuals from serving wasn't "supported by the evidence."

"Defendants' policies prohibiting the accession of asymptomatic HIV-positive individuals with undetectable viral loads are irrational, arbitrary and capricious," the judge wrote. "Even worse, they contribute to the ongoing stigma surrounding HIV-positive individuals while actively hampering the military's own recruitment goals."

Brinkema mentioned her landmark 2022 decision which terminated the Defense Department's policy of forbidding service members who were

diagnosed with HIV after enlisting from deploying in active duty outside the continental U.S. and being commissioned as officers.

Research has shown HIV+ individuals who have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus, which has been made possible by scientific breakthroughs with antiretroviral treatment. In fact, there's been so much progress in the medical treatment for HIV, enough to where the life expectancy of those living with HIV is practically the same as the national average.

Wilkins, the named plaintiff in the case, said the court opened doors for him and others who live with HIV and aspire to join the U.S. Armed Services.

"This is a victory not only for me but for other people living with HIV who want to serve," Wilkins said in a statement. "As I've said before, giving up on my dream to serve my country was never an option. I am eager to apply to enlist in the Army without the threat of a crippling discriminatory policy." ::

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Durham celebrates Pride Sept. 28-29

Event includes march, festival, national entertainers and local faves



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

Pride is returning to Durham on the weekend of Sept. 28 for two days of festivities and fun times. Saturday's schedule includes a music festival and walkable vendor market filled with local favorites. Sunday the annual Pride parade and community kick back will commence.

The festival is organized every year by the LGBTQ Center of Durham and is partially sponsored by the city itself, making it one of North Carolina's best attended LGBTQ+ Pride events.

On top of Durham Pride — which was the first celebration of its kind in the state — establishments across the city will be hosting Pride-centric events, ranging from LGBTQ+ history hikes to a Pride parade afterparty.

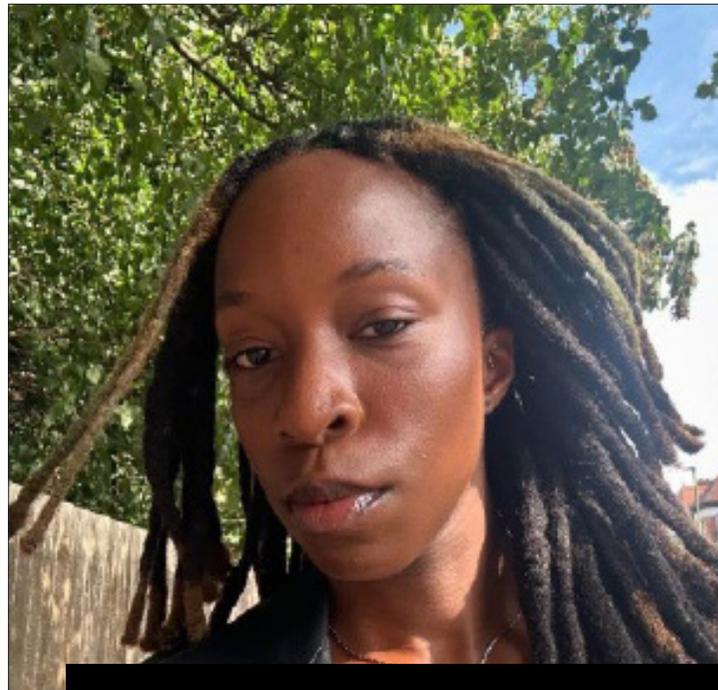
The History of Durham-Pride

On April 17, 1981, a group of 125 individuals, including men, women and children, gathered in front of the Durham County Judicial Building holding signs as a form of protest. Their demonstration was sparked by a violent event in their community, demanding justice and denouncing hate.

Just five days earlier on April 12, Ronald "Sonny" Antonevitch and three companions were sunbathing along the Little River near Johnston Mills Road when they were approached by two men shouting anti-gay slurs. The attackers assaulted the group, and according to Antonevitch's account, the men targeted him specifically due to his physical disability, beating him while threatening his life. Antonevitch, aged 46, died as a result of severe head and kidney injuries after three days in hospitals in Durham and Chapel Hill.

Following the attack, police charged two men in their early twenties with murder. As the judicial process began, the LGBTQ community and allies organized a vigil outside the courthouse, marking the first of many protests and parades that would shape the LGBTQ movement in Durham for years. One protestor, Carl Whitman, expressed to the Durham Herald the importance of taking a stand: "We just don't want to let this incident at the Little River pass. It's a question of the whole atmosphere that would let something like this happen."

As the trial of Antonevitch's killers unfolded, there was widespread concern that the defendants might receive lenient treatment due to the anti-gay nature of the crime. In response, local LGBTQ activists organized the first public demonstration for gay civil rights in North Carolina, held at the Durham Courthouse during the 1982 trial.



New York-based R&B/Electronica musician Halima and jazz and R&B artist Madison McFerrin (also a New Yorker) will perform on the mainstage at Durham Pride.

CREDIT: Publicity/Social media

In 1986, a second public demonstration for equal rights took place at Duke University. Initially a small gathering, it grew into a march that became an annual tradition, with the NC Pride March traveling to major cities across the state for the next 14 years to advocate for equal rights. With each passing year, the march grew larger as more LGBTQ individuals gained the courage to participate, and formerly hostile streets gradually became less threatening. Over time, attitudes shifted and Durham, the site of the first march, became home to many openly gay and supportive businesses.

However, in 2000, the NC Pride March faced a crisis when disorganization among the organizers threatened to cancel the June event just six weeks prior. In response, a dedicated group of 12 individuals rallied to save the march, which took place in 90-degree heat with 2,000 participants. Afterward, the committee restructured the event to better suit the new century, deciding to move the march to the fall for cooler weather and to establish a more manageable model. The parade would remain in Durham, with the goal of supporting additional Pride events across the state.

This new approach was highly successful, leading to the creation of numerous Pride festivals in cities throughout North Carolina, including Charlotte, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Salisbury, Asheville, the Outer Banks, Monroe and Apex, among others.

After years of impact, NC Pride eventually dissolved as its organizers pursued new projects. To continue the legacy, the LGBTQ Center of Durham,

with community support, launched Pride: Durham, N.C. in 2018, embracing a broader vision of inclusion.

This Year's Festivities

The theme for this year's festival is "GIVE THEM THEIR FLOWERS" to honor the nonbinary and trans community.

With the theme, Pride organizers "intend to commemorate our ancestors who sowed past seeds that still bear fruit today and to pay tribute to the LGBTQ+ people who are alive and help us be our best selves now, embodying our greatest values and visions for a more whole and liberated Durham."

Durham Pride always hosts a music festival throughout Saturday, with a lineup filled with local and national LGBTQ artists. This year's headliners are Halima and Madison McFerrin — two different queer, BIPOC identifying musicians.

Halima is a New York-based producer, and their sound transcends the genres of R&B and soul, giving their music an electronic, funky feel. Their latest release, *Awaken*, has nearly 10,000 views on YouTube, and you can find Halima's music on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3qL5Ls0farPWp4EHw3OCgw>.

McFerrin has earned accolades from The New York Times, NPR, The FADER and Pitchfork, who named her a Rising Artist in 2018. She also has performed at Lincoln Center, Central Park SummerStage and BRIC Celebrate Brooklyn, and shared stages with the likes of De La Soul, Gallant and The Roots.

Saturday will also feature a vendor market on Lot 8 and the Chapel Hill Street Lot from noon to 4 p.m., providing festival goers with a chance to shop local,

LGBTQ+ owned, ally-owned and BIPOC owned businesses. Food trucks will also be available from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, giving guests a wide variety of food and snacks to choose from.

Sunday is all about the parade and community kickback. This year's parade will see hundreds of participants, ranging from Durham-based, mom-and-pop shops to national corporations sharing pride in their queer clients and employees. This year's Pride Parade Grand Marshall is Durham's own Naomi Dix — Bull City's own drag superstar and owner of the new LGBTQ+ inclusive nightclub Club ERA.

Dix's goal is to pull from her own experience as a queen of color, saying she wanted to create a haven for the most vulnerable members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially for people of color.

"I never really felt as though I was able to find a space where I was accurately represented as a person of color, as an Afro-Latino, in the Triangle," she says. "I always felt like a lot of those spaces were very overrun by this idea of what society thinks a masculine gay male is ..."

"I want people to feel like they can let their hair down and they don't have to feel as though they have to dress a certain way or look a certain way in order to be within this space."

The Durham Pride Community Kickback will take place on Duke's East Campus from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, right after the parade. More information about Durham Pride can be found at <https://www.lgbtqcenterofdurham.org/program/pride/>.

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The Freedom Center for Social Justice is committed to building coalitions and deepening partnerships

Voting is a starting point as we work towards the world we want to live in



by **Cameron Pruette**
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

2024 has been quite the year, at times feeling like we're living through decades in minutes - a weird sense of doing the timewarp again and again. At times, we feel empowered and joyful at the progress LGBTQ+ folks have made. At others, we feel the strain and frustration as bigoted attacks spread against queer people, especially trans youth. Charlotte Pride celebrates literally hundreds of thousands of people who come to feel acceptance and proudly be their authentic selves.

address during this period until Saturday, November 2nd. There are usually no lines at all at early voting sites, so you'll be in and out quickly. Make sure to bring a valid photo ID with you to the polls - you can find a full list of what counts, such as a driver's license, at <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/voter-id>

Beyond the barrage of political advertisements and biased news stories, we need to keep in mind our collective power and responsibility to each other. Voting is the minimum, a starting point as we work towards the world we want to live in. We must continue our community-building work long past November, and we must be prepared to stand together regardless



North Carolina as a state can feel contradictory at times, as we see the success of Charlotte Pride juxtaposed with the struggles of Sylva or Union County Prides to find similar support. This echoes our political situation as well. We're a state that elected Democrat Roy Cooper as Governor and Republican Mark Robinson as Lieutenant Governor - our state is one where equality is within our reach but not guaranteed.

All eyes are on North Carolina this year, if you haven't already been buried in an avalanche of YouTube ads and mailers. Breaking through the noise and messaging, I want you to know one truth: your vote matters. From judges who decide our rights to state legislators who decide if LGBTQ+ youth will be safe, it is critical you vote for every office on the ballot.

In-Person Early Voting begins on Thursday, October 17th, across North Carolina. I highly encourage you to go during early voting! You can register to vote or update your

of who wins the election.

At the Freedom Center for Social Justice, we're committed to continuing to build coalitions and deepen partnerships. We believe in our collective power and what's possible when we're in solidarity with one another. From candidate fairs to voter guides, you can find out more about our Clack the Vote campaign and our partners at www.ClackTheVote.org. We know that the clack of a fan can be in celebration - or it can be in protest. We hope you'll join us in the fight for our future. ::



Sub-Radio comes to the Carolinas

Indie pop band will perform in Greenville and Charlotte



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

The indie pop band Sub-Radio is headed for the Carolinas. The first appearance is Saturday, October 12 at 7:00 p.m. in Greenville, South Carolina at the Radio Room. The following night they'll play at Boatyard Lake Norman in Cornelius, located about 20 minutes from Center City Charlotte, but still inside Mecklenburg County.

In case you're not familiar with the band, you should be. Lead vocalist Adam Bradley identifies as part of the queer community and confirms his fellow bandmates, Kyle Cochran, John Fengya, Michael Pereira and Matt Prodanovich are all staunch LGBTQ+ allies.

The members of the band met in 2008 while attending high school in Sterling, Virginia. They independently released their debut album, "Same Train/Different Station" in 2016. Two EPs would follow, "Head First" in 2018, and "Dog Years" in 2019 (most of their earlier material is available on Spotify).

That led to a concert tour that included more than 30 dates across the United States that same year.

"We started the project quite seriously" says Bradley. "We released music every year, and we were doing our best to do the DIY thing. We all quit our full-time jobs and went on a big national tour in 2019. It was really fun and it gave us some experience, but we lost so much money because, you know, we weren't selling tickets. We didn't really have a fan base. We just booked shows and went and played them."

In 2020 came "Thoughts Lights Colors Sounds," which featured the lead single "Disco" and captured a nominal amount of attention. But then, along came COVID-19 and a pandemic that would change everything.

"That affected everybody in different ways," recalls Bradley. "For us, it meant we had to reevaluate. [Were] we even a band anymore? What we ended up doing was getting on social media with marathon of live streaming shows on Tiktok and Reddit during 2020 and 2021. That exposed us to millions of people, and that is where the fan base comes from now. That's also what got us into doing this goofy social media stuff. We realized a strength and a skill of ours is comedy, so we started making these parody videos, like "Stacy's Dad." It turned out the stuff was not just funny, but people really liked it for being funny and that started selling tickets to our shows."

David Aaron Moore: So let's back up a little bit. Tell me about you.

Adam Bradley: I grew up in Northern Virginia, went to the same middle school and high school as most of the other guys.

DAM: And you guys are all still based in the same area?

AB: Yeah, we're right outside the DC

Beltway.

DAM: Wow. So you have a history of music, friendship, and a long time connection. That's cool.

AB: Yeah. Most of us went to the same middle school, high school, etc, here in Virginia, right up by Dulles, and we stuck together through college. After college, we committed to doing [music] for real. So we have known each other since we were, like 14, pretty much the whole time. We've been playing together since eighth grade, but the band, as it is now, we launched that in 2016.

DAM: I get that you all met in school, but how did you come together. I mean, musically?

AB: So Matt, our guitar player, has always kind of been the mastermind. To this day, he is kind of, you know, like the behind the scenes CEO. When we were in high school, he just sort of collected each of us as he saw that we had specific talents. He was in guitar class with John. He saw that John was a virtuoso guitar player, so he said to him, "you want to be in a band?" And he saw me singing in the talent show, so he was like, "Oh, he's a good singer. You want to be in a band?" So we just kind of collected each other over the course of high school. And then we spent basically a decade doing the weekend warrior stuff, playing cover sets and bars and playing beer festivals and just like whatever, whoever would book us playing in our little suburban venue out here in Virginia. And that was the band for a long time. It was something I did on the weekends, and we all worked it around our nine to five jobs after college. Just in the last few years has it become a real career pursuit.

DAM: So the earlier music was a good deal more serious and "we're a band" kind of sound when you first started playing together. Discovering your comedic side was a stroke of genius. Do you want to continue exploring your sound in different directions?

AB: We're in the process of rolling out a full length album over the next year. We're about to put out our first single. All of that is like, real music that we spend time and emotion and effort on. But as far as, like bringing people into the fold and like introducing them to us, we do lean on the funny, because we're just guys having fun. We truly never expected or even really wanted to be social media people. But it is what has introduced us to an audience, and there's really no other way I could have imagined it happening. We're doing it because it's effective. I guess it's a marketing tool. But that's good, though. The whole parody universe for us started with "Stacy's Mom." In our version, it's "Stacy's Dad." It was originally by Fountains of Wayne and their sound on that album really influenced us kind of backwards, so we started with that one, and we thought, okay, if this video doesn't fucking go viral, then we don't know what we're doing anymore, we're just going to give up. And it did, and people really liked the format.

DAM: Do you think you're always going to keep an element of comedy in your performance and presentation?



Sub-Radio's Adam Bradley keeps a mostly college-age audience entertained with a mix of music and comedy.

CREDIT: Courtesy Scott Appell Media

AB: Yeah, I hope that at the very least we keep an element like the sort of light-hearted aspect of our performance that we've had for a while. I really like that. I like that we don't claim to be doing too much, even with the original music. It's a low barrier to entry. Everyone is welcome. We're having fun. I really enjoy what we're doing now.

DAM: I wanna' talk about your musical influences, but I want to ask you about a parody clip I just saw. It was the Whitney Houston song, "I Wanna Dance with Somebody." Your version, "I Don't Wanna Dance with Nobody." Funny as hell! What made you choose that song?

AB: So we just started thinking of, okay, what other parody songs could we do? And we sort of landed on, well, if you're going to do them, you might as well do them with the biggest songs on earth that everyone already knows. And so that, frankly, that's how we landed on doing a Whitney Houston song everybody knows. "I Want to Dance with Somebody" is like one of the most popular songs of all time.

DAM: Did you actually create the music that for that one or was it an instrumental mix?

AB: Kyle Cochran made it, because he's talented enough to do that. I know well, and often, that's what people are doing for these parodies, and that's what we were doing. "I'll just find an instrumental on YouTube, and we'll use that." But we found that we were getting copyright struck all the time, and our videos were getting taken down. So we said, "Alright, we'll make our own track." And Kyle made that one so well. We still got a copyright strike even though we made the track. It stayed up long enough that it got all the views, and then it got, you know, then they turned the sound off on Tiktok.

DAM: It's still up on YouTube! But let's get back to some of your own personal musical influences.

AB: It's funny, the band has a very, very wide variety of musical taste within it, among the five of us. I am listening to a lot of left of center pop stuff. I'm seeing Mitski this weekend at a venue near here. She is

playing with one of my favorite bands of all time. It's called Always. They're a band from Canada. So I am into sort of indie indie pop, indie rock, etc. It's kind of the sound that we're making now. But for this [new] record, we have really been leaning into '90s alt rock, early aughts alt rock, kind of stuff that we grew up listening to, like Third Eye Blind, Fall Out Boy. Artists in that '95 to 2005 period. So we got way heavier with the guitars. We were doing a lot of synth stuff before this, like '80s, like Walk the Moon kind of stuff. And we have sort of pivoted from that to be a guitar band. So we got a little bit heavier with the sound, and I think a little bit lighter with the lyrics on this album, which is, I think, a fun contrast. But influence, as far as influences go, we've always been influenced by 1975, Walk the Moon and 21 pilots Sort of Alt, indie, pop rock legends at this point.

DAM: One of our staff members, when we initially talked about doing the interview, said that you guys were kind of like "21st century version of Weird Al Yankovic."

AB: I loved Weird Al growing up. And I think that's, I mean, if you're doing this kind of thing, that's exactly who you want to be, because, he is the king of parodies. That's high praise. And honestly, isn't it nice to be recognized for this stuff having actual quality, even though it is, like, goofy shit that we're not gonna record and release on Spotify or anything. It's just fun stuff we do on on Tiktok.

DAM: I think we're living in a world right now, where we need as much laughter as we can get, you know? And I think that started back during the Trump era, and then the pandemic. Until recently, with the changing political landscape, there just wasn't a lot of positivity going around for a lot of us.

AB: Absolutely. So many people who come to shows, who DM us on Instagram saying, "thank you for doing those live streams, thank you for posting these dumb ass videos. Because, I would not have made it through 2020 if it were not for you guys." And I mean, we wouldn't have either.

Frankly, we kind of posted through it. So it's really special to hear that. The whole aim of this album coming up is channeling positivity and optimism. I don't feel like me, or anyone I speak to in my life has felt optimistic in a while. And that's kind of sad. It shouldn't be that way, so we're trying to do our part to bring that back.

DAM: Let's talk about the other members of the band. Why don't you tell me a bit about each of them. Let's start with John Fengya.

AB: John is the keyboardist and guitarist. He's just this a virtuosic musician. He has perfect pitch. He can play stuff back to you after hearing it one time. And he's also just a lovely, a lovely person. He is our like strong, quiet man who doesn't say a whole lot, but when he does, it's important. He can play like a dozen instruments, really proficiently. And when we ask him what keys the songs are in he already knows.

DAM: Tell us about Matt Prodanovic.

AB: So Matt really is like the founder of the band. He's the one who put it together in the first place when we were kids. And he has always sort of been like the business manager and our actual manager when we didn't have one, doing all the admin stuff, reaching out to labels. He's a music business guy. It's what he went to school for, so he's always been good at the industry stuff, knowing who we need to be connected to and making those connections. He's the primary songwriter, aside from me, I'm writing lyrics and melodies. He's writing a lot of music.

DAM: What about Kyle Cochran?

AB: Kyle is, technically, the newest member of the band, but he joined five years ago. He was a college buddy for several of us. He's a sound engineer, a professional sound engineer, so that's a fantastic guy to have in a band. He was able to run our sound for us when we were playing those bar shows. He's the guy who really made it possible to do those online live streams, like he set up the mixer and cabled us in and figured out how we could broadcast an entire live set to Tiktok. He's also the shit poster in the group, for lack of a better word, he is the meme Lord, the guy who finds all the internet jokes for us to make.



Sub-Radio bandmates (left to right), Michael Pereira, John Fengya, Matt Prodanovich, Kyle Cochran and (front) Adam Bradley.
CREDIT: Facebook

DAM: Tell us about Michael Pereira.

AB: I mean, talk about positive energy. Mike is a perpetual motion machine. He never stops. Mike is like holding down a more or less full time job as a mechanical engineer and also in the band, and just brings constant positivity and energy to the group that is very much needed and appreciated.

DAM: So what's being on the road like this time around?

AB: Turing, to me, is like one of my favorite things that I've been lucky enough to do in my life, because we have been to nearly every big city in America at this point, and medium sized city and small town. We've have been to 48 states or something. It's pretty crazy. I look forward to getting back on the road and seeing these places and seeing these people that we know. At this point we're not so adventuresome, though. (laughs) After shows we just go to the hotel and go to sleep. A lot of our tour experiences have revolved around our our van breaking down over and over, because that's life on tour. We tour in this 12-passenger van towing a trailer. The van itself is awesome. We've had it since the beginning of the band. His name is Rufus, he's a GMC Savannah with 185,000 miles on him, so he's getting up there. Some of the the doors don't work, and there's a hole in the back from when we jackknifed the trailer one time. But he works, and he gets us over the Rockies.

DAM: Before we wrap up, let's get back to the new album. Can you give us a little more insight into what the process was like and the end result?

AB: I mean, it's like 13 or 14 of my favorite songs we've ever made. We got the opportunity earlier this year to record about half the record with producer Neil Avron, who is behind, like all of the biggest sort of pop punk stuff from the aughts and the 2010s, he produced Yellow Card and Fall Out Boy, and anyone else that you've heard of in that in that scene. So it's just kind of a dream. We went out to LA for three weeks and recorded at his house, so this stuff sounds incredible. We're very excited for people to hear it.

DAM: One of the last things I wanted to touch on, specifically because we are an LGBTQ+ publication, is how you and your band members identify. I've read before that you identify as bisexual?

AB: Yes, that's correct. And it's just me. But everyone else in the band is a wonderful and supportive ally.

DAM: Do you feel like you have a very large queer fan base?

AB: Yes! We certainly do, and a very rewarding element of the band for me has been connecting with young queer people, a lot of whom have basically only come out to me, like at the merch table. I came out a bit later in my life. I was 27, and really, for no particular reason other than it took me a while. The reaction and response and reception from everyone I know was lovely. I am very lucky in that way, so I feel like, having been blessed with that, I want to give other people the opportunity to come out in a safe and accepting place.

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Charlotte Pride 2024: A Weekend of Celebration, Resilience, and Community

The Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade weekend was the perfect Summer send off, showcasing the strength, unity and unwavering spirit of Charlotte's LGBTQIA+ community

By: Sheila Walsh (they/them)

As we step into September, it's hard to believe that the 2024 Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade weekend has already come and gone. The weeks since have given us time to reflect on the hard work and dedication that made this magical event possible. And as we head into election season, the importance of a weekend like Pride has never been clearer.

Charlotte Pride, like other Pride events across the country, is more than just a celebration. It's a powerful reminder of the progress we've made in the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights and a call to action for the work that still lies ahead. Standing on Tryon Street amidst hundreds of thousands of people, it was heartening to witness how essential it is to create spaces where LGBTQIA+ individuals can feel seen, supported, and empowered to live their most authentic lives.

This year's Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade was just that—a joyous, glitter-filled space where everyone was welcomed with open arms. It was the perfect way to close out the summer before we dive into the fall. Yet, as much as we celebrate, we're also reminded of the challenges our community continues to face. Recent decisions by corporations and academic institutions to roll back support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs are a stark reminder of the ongoing struggles. But if there's one thing we know, it's that our LGBTQ+ community is nothing if not resilient.

As November 5th approaches, and the stakes of this election season become more urgent, Charlotte Pride weekend offered a brief escape—a chance for our community to step away from the chaos and into a weekend filled with fun, joy, and solidarity. Here's a look at our impact:

By the numbers

- 240,000 — Initial estimate of how many visitors attended Pride weekend
- 17% — Estimated percentage of visitors who attended Pride weekend for the first time
- 20% — Estimated percentage of



PHOTO CREDIT: Mike Mazely/Courtesy Charlotte Pride

- visitors who traveled more than 50 miles to attend
- Pride weekend
- 200+ — Number of vendors at this year's festival
- 194 — Number of entries in the parade
- 108 — Number of parade entries with a vehicle or float of some kind
- 37 — Number of floats in the parade
- 10,441 — Estimated number of individual marchers in the parade
- 47 — Combined number of hours of entertainment on the Charlotte Pride Main Stage, Arts & Science Council Community Stage, Charlotte Gaymers Stage, Charlotte Black Pride Stage, and in Flourish: A Celebration of LGBTQ Arts and Culture, presented by the Mint Museum

It's a comfort to know that no matter what challenges arise, Charlotte's LGBTQ+ community will always find strength in unity through organizations like Charlotte Pride. As the fight for equality becomes more urgent, Charlotte Pride stands as a beacon of the progress we've made, and a reminder of the work still needed to ensure every individual can live authentically and without fear. Our annual event is more than a celebration of love and identity; it's a call to action for continued advocacy and community support.

Our mission is to keep Pride accessible and free for everyone. If you want to support this mission, consider becoming a Friend of Pride today! Visit charlottepride.org/friends to learn more about how you can help sustain Charlotte Pride's mission. ::



The Rainbow Age of Television

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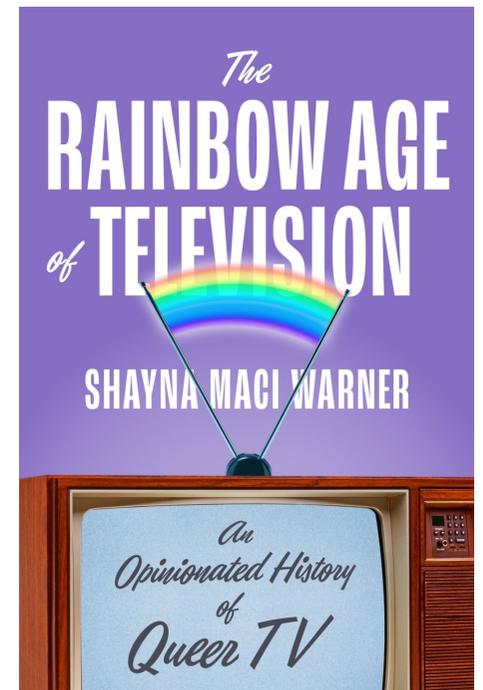
by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Qnotes Staff Writer

An Opinionated History of Queer by
ShaGyna Maci Warner
c.2024, Abrams Press
\$28.00
304 pages

Sometimes, you just need to step back a minute. You need time to regroup, to think things through, and a scenery change is the place to do it. Get past your current position, and situations can become clearer somehow. Thoughts can be re-organized. Problems pivot. As in the new novel "Blessings" by Chukwuebuka Ibeh, you'll have a different perspective. Obiefuna didn't say much on the road to the seminary. What was there to say? His father had caught him in a too-cozy situation with a young man who'd been taken in as an

apprentice and for that, Obiefuna was being sent away. Away from his mother, his younger brother, Ekene, and from the young man that fifteen-year-old Obiefuna was in love with. Life in seminary was bad – Obiefuna was always on alert for Seniors, who were said to be abusive because abuse was allowed, even encouraged – but things weren't as bad as he thought they might be. He made friends and good grades but he missed his mother. Did she suspect he was gay? Obiefuna wanted to tell her, but he hid who he was. Mostly, he kept to himself until he caught the eye of Senior Papilo, who was said to be the cruelest of the cruel. Amazingly, though, Senior Papilo became Obiefuna's protector, letting Obiefuna stay in his bed, paying for Obi's first experience with a woman, making sure Obiefuna had better food. Maybe Obiefuna loved Senior Papilo but Senior had other boys, which made Obi work twice as hard to be his favorite. Still, he hid. And then Senior Papilo passed his final exams and moved on. So, eventually, did Obiefuna. Sure, there were other boys – one who almost got him expelled, a chaplain who begged

forgiveness, and there was even a girl once – but Obi grew up and fully embraced his truth: all he wanted was to be accepted for himself, to be loved. As Nigeria moved toward making same-sex marriage illegal, though, neither one looked likely... So here's the puzzle: the story inside "Blessings" is interesting. Obiefuna is a great character who takes what happens with quiet compliance, as if he long-ago relinquished hope that he could ever control his own life. Instead, he passively lets those who surround him take the reins and though reasons for this are not clearly stated and it's uncomfortable, it's easy to grasp and accept why. This goes, too, for the Seniors whose actions readers will tacitly understand. What's not easy to accept is that author Chukwuebuka Ibeh's story often slows to a glacial pace, with great chunks of the books' multi-year timeline crunched into basically only highlights. You'll be left loving this story but hating its stride. The best advice is to embrace this moving novel's message and accept the slowness, love the excellent characters, but don't be surprised if you find yourself



checking to see how many pages you have left to crawl through. Yes, you'll enjoy the soul-touching cast in "Blessings" but if speed in a plot supersedes good characters, then step back. ::

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Our People: Naomi Dix

Former Durham Pride Director discusses identity, beauty and community



by L'Monique King
Qnotes Staff Writer

Durham, North Carolina is a global center for information technology, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and medicine. It's home to a diverse population that includes a mix of ethnicities and cultures. One such resident who could surely attest to the area's diversity is Naomi Dix.

An accomplished drag performer who proudly calls the city home, she makes her presence felt through drag performance, public health advocacy and entrepreneurship. During this interview, Dix shares some revelations with us about what it's like making a career as a multi-ethnic performer in a world that's not always as welcoming as it should be.

LMK: Are you originally from Durham?

ND: Yes. I was born and raised in Durham. I lived in Raleigh for about 10 years and moved back to downtown Durham almost 10 years ago and I've been in Durham ever since.

LMK: Seems like you enjoy the area. What's great about Durham?

ND: I think we all take where we grew up for granted. But when I became older and had lived other places, I developed more of an appreciation for Durham, the historical value and the Queer community that the city has. I think many people hear Durham and just think south. But Durham has a strong and present Queer community that's very relevant.

LMK: Is there someone special you share your life and home with? Are you partnered?

ND: I am and have been with my husband now for almost 10 years. He's a film editor and has been in North Carolina on and off for 15 plus years. He likes to be in the background, we're both extremely private people who enjoy being behind the scenes. I love that ginger Irishman more than anything.

LMK: What a blessing to spend your life with someone you're so endeared to. If today was your last day and you were asked to write your own headstone inscription, what would it say?

ND: Had a good time.

LMK: Do you have any siblings?

ND: Yes, an older sister. She's 15 years older than me – we were extremely close as I was growing up. She went out of her way to take care of me, even when she went to college and traveled with her friends; she always made me a major part of her life, including after marriage and having children. She was a very good big sister. Unfortunately, I haven't spoken with her in almost eight years. She doesn't agree with my Queer identity, me being married to someone of the same sex or my decisions

in life regarding my involvement with the Queer community. But the wonderful thing about the Queer community is that we support one another and have access to having chosen family.

LMK: Speaking of identity and support, how do you identify?

ND: My mom is Dominican, Black and Jewish. My father is Puerto Rican and Chinese. I identify as Afro-Latinx.

LMK: Wow! Sounds like meals must be interestingly delicious with such cultural fusion going on. Do you cook?

ND: I love southern food, so that's what I mainly cook. My husband [now] has a behind because of my cooking <chuckling>. He always says I've reignited his taste buds. Before me he just put salt and pepper on everything. But now he's become accustomed to well-seasoned food with spices. I cook all the time and I cook everything from scratch. I'm very in touch with my southern roots, more than my Latin. My family is the Spaulding family – they founded Durham's Black Wall Street and NC Mutual Life Insurance in 1898; the first and oldest Black owned life insurance company in North Carolina.

LMK: What's living in the south been like for you as a multi-ethnic person of color?

ND: Growing up was confusion as to what beauty was because the only sense of beauty I had [from media] was white and whiteness. People of color weren't on TV. So, my mother, who has a degree in African American Studies, found it very important to teach me that beauty lies within everyone, no matter what the color of their skin. She taught me that my curly hair, features and caramel colored skin were beautiful – even though beauty itself is subjective. Today, I think I've acclimated to the lack of education when it comes to my ethnicity and who I am as a person. When it comes to people asking me, "What are you?" [racially or ethnically] and having questions about the texture of my hair it's something I deal with every day; and dealt with even more during the '90s. However, as I've become older and representation has become greater, people are starting to understand that not every Latino person looks like Jennifer Lopez or Rickie Martin.

LMK: What's the source of your livelihood?

ND: I work for a program called Latinos in the South as a Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator. We're housed under a larger nonprofit based in New York City, The Latino Commission on AIDS. The work we do is centered around giving southern Latinos access to health care; specifically, health care surrounding HIV/AIDS intervention and prevention. I take on more of a direct role in the coordination and organizing of our annual conference; Encuentro – which means gathering in English. It's very rewarding work. Probably the most rewarding work I've ever had.

LMK: What's your involvement in



Naomi Dix is both an advocate and entertainer. CREDIT: NaomiDix.com

Durham pride?

ND: I was one of two Directors of Durham Pride (previously known as North Carolina Pride until 2018) since 2021 and just stepped down two months ago. My main focus was entertainment, concerts, community outreach and engagement. I was the primary point of contact when it came to the facilitation of any relationship between Durham Pride and local and international artists. My responsibilities included staying on budget and making sure the representatives of the artist weren't taking advantage while arranging all concert and festival bookings.

I stepped down because I needed to be more present in my personal life. So, though I really enjoyed the position, I also decided to open up the very first (in over 30 years) a trans-gay-queer night club: Club Era. We opened June 1st in conjunction with National Pride Month. Our opening was extremely successful, we sold out our door tickets within five minutes. It was great.

My idea was to create a space that really gave vibes of New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Berlin. It's a basement club but it's not just a club it's also a bar. Our people are so diverse – we have [young] patrons and people in their 50s, 60s and even 70s.

LMK: Entertainment seems to be in your blood. What led you to become a drag performer?

ND: A college friend and I used to go to local drag shows. I became annoyed that I didn't see a representation of myself in the drag world, Then I went to Pin Hook and saw Vivica C. Coxx; a beautiful, red headed Black queer woman.

LMK: Knowing how successful you've been would you share a little about your beginnings in the drag world. Have you always been welcomed in the drag scene?

ND: No, but I've never been very concerned about other people or their opinions of me. Not to say I've never taken someone's view or bigotry to heart. But I have always marched to the beat of my own drum – doing what I want to do and feel comfortable with. But no, not always welcomed, especially in the south. I got

paid less [than white performers], had my name miss pronounced and was not always booked. I had to earn a level of respect by standing firm in who I am as a performer and a professional. I have always tried to present myself in the most professional manner because I wanted to be taken both seriously and professionally.

Today, I'm not dealing with the issues I dealt with when I started, but I think as a person of color (whether we are artists or not) we're always going to have to deal with some of that.

I often think about Dorothy Dandridge and Beyonce who still, with all their talent, had to deal with these issues of always having to prove themselves.

Whether we are lighter or darker [in complexion], colorism affects us as POCs in general. I have been a part of that – feeling as though my success in art is only because I am of a lighter complexion. And though that may be a part of that, I scowl when I hear this because it's insulting to be accused of being successful based upon my skin tone versus my talent and skill set.

LMK: Sounds like you have a full life. How do you deal with stress?

ND: I have a therapist and a partner who is extremely supportive of me. But coming to the realization of my worth has really helped me deal with stress. I think most of our stress comes from us allowing people's bad behavior to reflect upon us and in our lives.

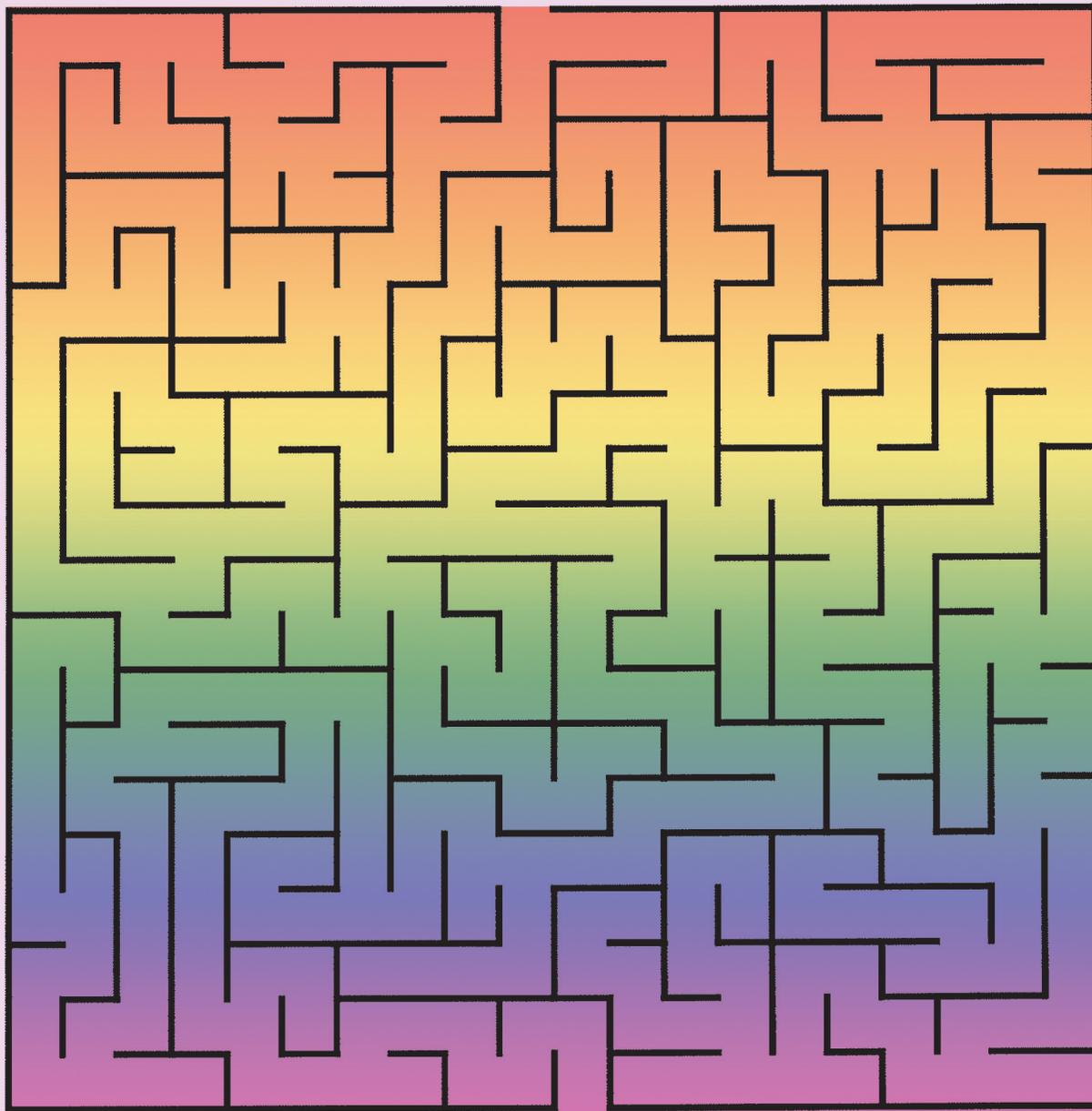
LMK: Do you have any self-care routine?

ND: Most definitely. Doing drag for almost 11 years (8-10 shows a week) added a lot of stress. I had to learn what self-care looks like. For me, it's having boundaries, keeping my personal and professional life separate, allowing myself to make mistakes and being emotionally present for my husband and household.

LMK: Before we go, would you leave us with a thought or word of advice for our LGBTQ youth?

ND: The fight will never be over. As long as we're a united front we will only get stronger in making sure that our voices are heard and our faces seen. ::

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