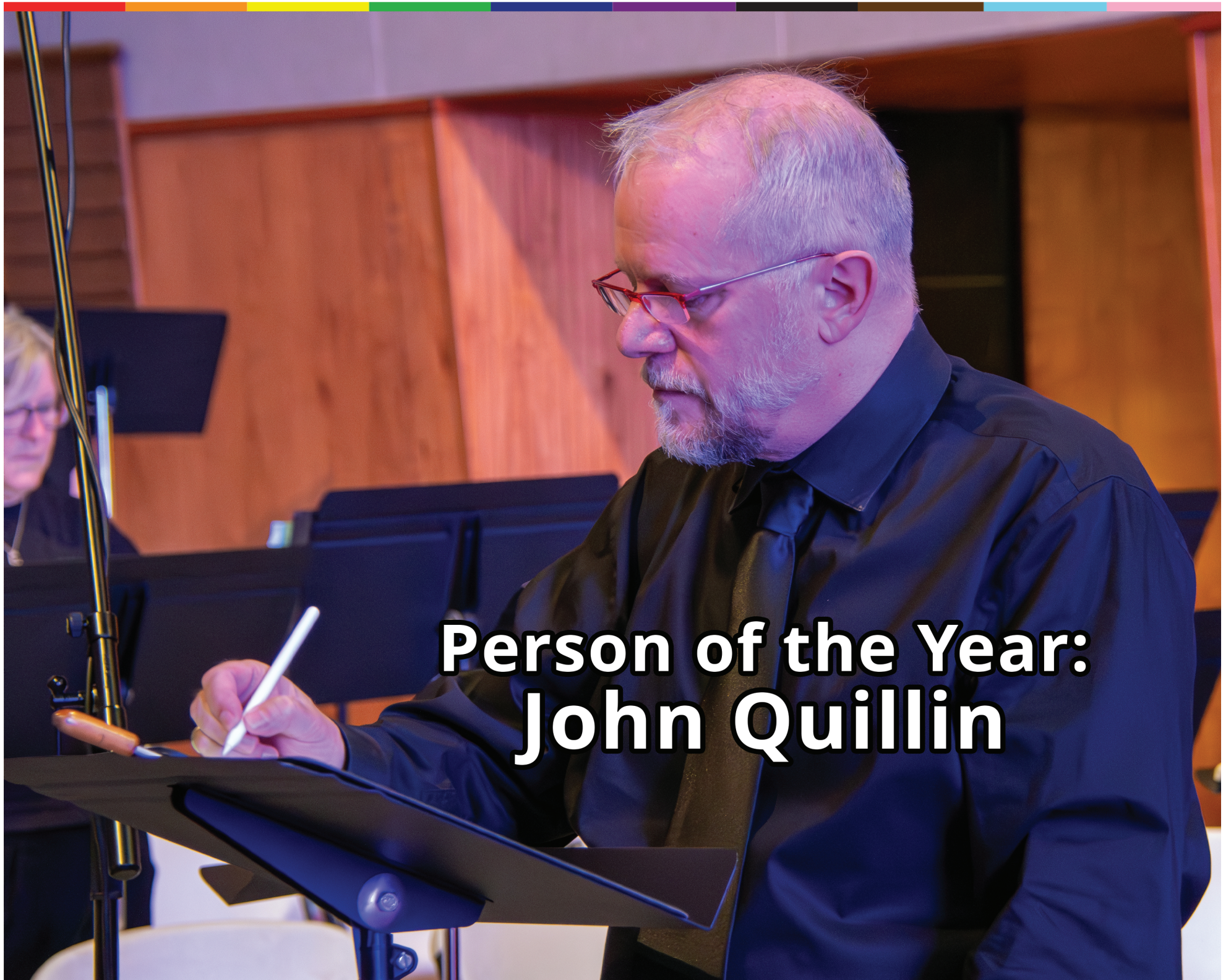


**Our democracy is at risk!
If we are complacent it will FALL**



Person of the Year: John Quillin



The Year in Review:
2024

-pg 8

Best of the Worst:
2024

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on the cover

Queen City Performing Arts
John Quillin hard at work

front page

Graphic Design by Brandon Scott
Photographer: John Quillin

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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Holiday Treats: 'Last Christmas' Cocktail honors George Michael

The British musician and heartthrob captured the attention of lusty gay males and heterosexual females in the UK and the United States when he first appeared on the scene in the group Wham! A successful solo career followed before his untimely death at 53 in 2016. Here's a holiday spirit to pay homage for his accomplishments.

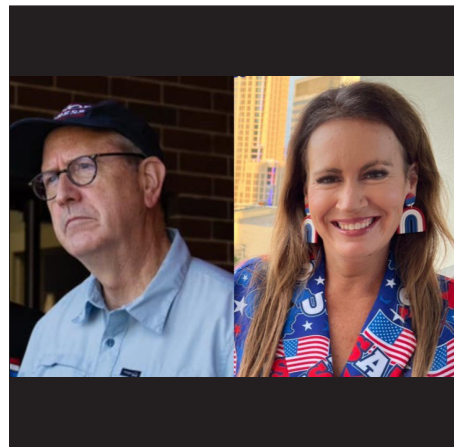


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Worst Person of the Year: It's a tie!

From flipping your political party to rearranging your moral compass, or creating an amendment that blocked marriage equality to being the author of a bill that laid the groundwork for trans and drag phobia throughout the country, this year saw nasty Dan Bishop and negative Tricia Cotham back in the spotlight.

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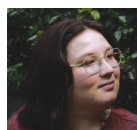
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For Trump, Project 2025 was always the plan

Despite disavowing the 920-page manifesto, the president-elect has named many involved to his administration



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

It goes without saying the outcome of the 2024 general election was less than ideal for the future of America.

Despite a historic nearly 100-day-long campaign, Kamala Harris failed to secure a victory, and on Jan. 20, 2025, the United States will return to where it was nearly eight years ago when Donald Trump is sworn in as the 47th president.

Throughout his campaign, Trump was haunted by the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 — a plan crafted by Trump allies and former Trump appointees, laying out every federal government agency and how the next conservative president could do away with Biden administration directives and organize around right wing ideals.

Some of these ideas go way beyond conservatives' traditional approach of limiting the federal government by cutting federal taxes and slashing federal spending. Instead, the mandate suggests gutting the "administrative state" from within by purging federal employees and initiatives believed to stand in the way of a conservative president's agenda. From there, the president could replace those pushed out with more "like-minded" officials to help fulfill the mission behind Project 2025.

And that's already happening, even before Trump puts his right hand on the Bible to be sworn into office in January. Despite disavowing the makeshift manifesto, saying he "had nothing to do with Project 2025," Trump's transition team has named multiple people directly tied to the initiative into positions where they could implement those policies proposed in the 920-page document.

It's clear Trump's plan for America isn't just a concept: It was always to implement Project 2025 into every aspect of American governance.

What Is Project 2025?

There are four elements, or "pillars," that make up Project 2025: policy, personnel, training and playbook. The initiative lays out its plan for policy in a nearly 1,000 page makeshift manifesto called *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*.

The project's funding arm, the Heritage Foundation, is working to create a database of tens of thousands of folks willing to serve in the next conservative administration. Interested parties fill out a questionnaire, which will be analyzed and reviewed before being added to the Presidential Personnel Database.

The third pillar, training, establishes something called the Presidential Administration Academy. The Heritage Foundation describes the academy as a "one-of-a-kind educational and skill-building program designed to prepare and equip future political appointees now to be ready on day one of the next

conservative Administration."

The last pillar is one of the most crucial for Project 2025: the playbook. Within the *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*, conservatives lay out a plan for the first 180 days for the next conservative president. The plan proposed: cracking down intensely on immigration, vanquishing LGBTQ+ and abortion rights, diminishing environmental protections, overhauling financial policy and taking aggressive action against China.

Project 2025's Vision for LGBTQ+ Americans (or Lack Thereof)

Critics of Project 2025 have called out the Heritage Foundation and other organizations involved in the project for the "dehumanizing" language directed toward LGBTQ+ people within the 920 page roadmap.

Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation, set the tone regarding the attitude toward LGBTQ+ Americans in his introduction of the mandate.

"Children suffer the toxic normalization of transgenderism with drag queens and pornography invading their school libraries ... Pornography, manifested today in the omnipresent propagation of transgender ideology and sexualization of children ... is not a political Gordian knot inextricably binding up disparate claims about free speech, property rights, sexual liberation and child welfare. It has no claim to first amendment protection."

Roberts goes on to suggest various punishments for what he calls "Purveyors of pornography," writing: "are child predators and misogynistic exploiters of women. Their product is as addictive as any illicit drug and as psychologically destructive as any crime.



Pornography should be outlawed. The people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned. Educators and public librarians who purvey it should be classed as registered sex offenders. And telecommunications and technology firms that facilitate its spread should be shuttered."

Progressive political scientist and activist Rachel Bitecofer sounded the alarm on Project 2025, saying it "purges the civil service of all (perceived) political 'enemies' [and] advises to ignore checks and balances of the constitution."

"Clearly, they're embracing ideology, not what the American public wants or needs," Buchert said. "This is being driven by a far-right desire to turn America back to the 1920s, or even further back.

"It's not just about LGBTQ+ people.



Cashing in: Trump as pictured on his 'gold mugshot coin' available for fans everywhere to purchase and the manifesto designed to reshape our country. How did we get here? CREDIT: Graphic made by QNotes staff

It's about women's rights — It's about the right to obtain education that reflects your existence as an African-American person in this country. There are so many strands where you can see it clearly being pushed by a small fraction of the country doggedly pursuing their ideology."

Who Trump Has Hired From Project 2025

Trump has named many individuals affiliated with the Heritage Foundation to serve in his administration, some of which were there the first time around.

Russell Vought: Trump nominated Vought to head the Office of Management and Budget, which Vought served in during the president-elect's first term. Vought authored Project 2025's chapter on the Executive Office of the President of the United States and (allegedly) spearheaded the project's plan for Trump's first 180 days. Secret camera footage showed Vought expressing Trump had "blessed" the project and

"border czar" will return to the Trump administration. Homan is listed as a contributor to Project 2025 and a visiting fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Border Security and Immigration Center and is responsible for many articles written on the topic for the Heritage Foundation.

Monica Crowley: Crowley was assistant secretary of the Treasury during Trump's first term. She contributed to Project 2025's section on the Treasury Department, but this time Trump has tagged her in as assistant secretary of state. Her role will include serving as the representative for events like the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028.

Paul Atkins: Trump's pick to lead the Securities and Exchange Commission was named as a contributor to Project 2025's section on Federal Regulatory Agencies. This section called for broad changes at the SEC that gets rid of regulations believed to be "impediments" to companies' success, as well as opposing social justice, sustainability, diversity and other similar initiatives in companies and corporations.

Peter Navarro: Trump's former trade advisor, who has had his own myriad of legal battles as of late, was named as senior counselor for trade and manufacturing. Navarro authored a Project 2025 chapter on "the case for fair trade," supporting more restrictions on trade such as the tariffs Trump campaigned on.

John Ratcliffe: Ratcliffe previously served as Trump's director of national intelligence, and he's credited as a contributor to Project 2025. In fact, the agenda's chapter on the intelligence community referenced an interview with Ratcliffe about working in the first administration.

Senior Editor's note: This is quite possibly what half of the country purportedly set in motion when they chose to cast their votes for Trump. However, it's important to remember those pushing this hard line agenda are representative of what has been reported as approximately just one third of GOP voters, while many were seemingly oblivious to the potential fallout of Project 2025. Regardless, Trump is about to assume office. The potential for what this country may look like after the first "180 days" is particularly unsettling. ::



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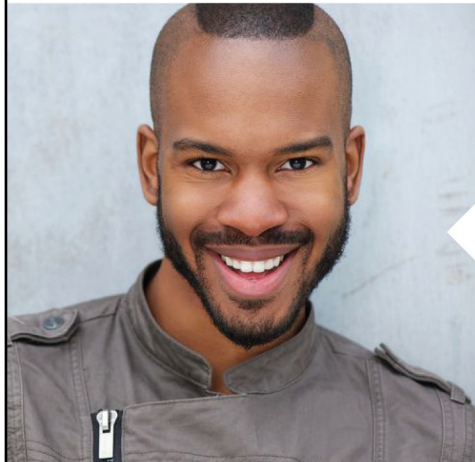
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Anti-gay and racist slurs tagged on West CLT home

Discovered on her house during the first week of Dec, Deborah McCullough, a local Charlotte homeowner, says she discovered swastikas, anti-gay and racist slurs had been spray painted on the side of her home and on top of her HVAC unit, located on the west side of the Queen City. The resident has expressed that she is Jewish and does have a family member who is part of the LGBTQ community.

While there is no clear indication as to who could have posted the graffiti, the woman has some theories. "Honestly, I think it was just hateful kids, but I'm not totally sure," McCullough's daughter offered.

The family told WCNC Charlotte that they contacted Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police about the incident and that the FBI was also investigating. Unfortunately, the woman was unaware her internet was down at the time of the incident, so there isn't any camera footage or shots of the

perpetrators available from her home security system.

"It's crazy because you just don't think that people do these kinds of things anymore," she said. "You hear about things but something changes when it becomes personal and it's in your living space. All of a sudden you don't feel safe where you live. I've always felt safe here."

Unfortunately, McCullough's insurance will not cover her home's siding, despite the cause of the damage by vandalism. The family is getting repair estimates from siding companies and has also started a GoFundMe.

The GoFundMe Reads:

"My home was spray-painted with signs of vicious bigotry. I have CPI, but the Internet was down for eight hours. This was the only time I really needed my security system to work.

I have worked hard to provide my



West Charlotte resident Deborah McCullough talks with a WCNC reporter after her house was vandalized with swastikas, anti-LGBTQ+ and racist slurs. CREDIT: Modified screen capture

daughter with a safe and secure home. We no longer feel safe and secure. I am a single mother. I have always taken care of absolutely everything on my own. I just got a new job two months ago. Unfortunately, I have been behind and working to catch things up. Then this happened!

Homeowners Insurance will only cover a small part of it, meaning they will only cover part of the house, and that means my house will be two different colors of

siding. This is an expense I can't afford, especially just before the holidays. This year, the holidays were going to be skimpy as it is; this just took it to a completely different level financially and emotionally."

For those willing to help out the McCullough family, you can access the GoFundMe page at <https://gofund.me/6fd3e28b>.

—Jonathan Golian

Darlington SC Mayor fires back at anti-gay comment with same anti-gay slur

On the evening of Tuesday, Dec. 5, during a city council meeting, Darlington Mayor Curtis Boyd fired back at a local resident (who has only been identified by his first name Calvin) with a strange invitation and an anti-gay slur to follow it up with.

Following an accusation made by Calvin, who announced that Boyd should not be mayor because he allegedly does not live within the city limits, Boyd addressed Calvin directly.

"You're welcome to leave with me tonight, and if you want, you can sleep in my bed butt naked with me," Boyd said. "You're welcome to sleep in the bed with me."

Where the unusual conjecture seemed to end, Calvin replied, "I'm not gay. I'm not a f*ggot, I'm not a homosexual," to which Boyd answered, "I'm not a f*ggot, either,

but you're more than welcome to come see where I stay."

Speaking with WBTW News13 over the phone, Boyd initially insisted he was telling the man identified as Calvin he was not a "bundle of sticks" when asked about using the slur.

"The F word ... that you are referring to means a bundle of sticks," Boyd said. "And he said he was not that, I said I'm not that either. Whatever it is, I looked it up and it means a bundle of sticks. If you look at the dictionary."

As for Boyd's ridiculous and offensive choice of reflecting Calvin's words, according to *Dictionary.com*, Boyd's definition comes from a word that is spelled differently and is an antiquated term with roots in old English, rarely used in American text or conversation.

Councilwoman Elaine Reed, also in attendance the night of the altercation, said Boyd should have given all the facts in compliance and not made any other comment, further stating that they take residents' concerns seriously.

"He just should have simply given the facts ... that he is in compliance with all of the residency situation," Reed expressed. "There shouldn't have been any other comment."

Speaking with the news department of a Myrtle Beach television station (WMBF), Boyd offered a guarded apology for his words and said he felt attacked in the situation, which led to his reply during the city council meeting.

"I could have probably said something nicer, or different, or in a nicer way. I could have just let him sit down from the beginning," Boyd said during the conversation with WMBF, which he also recorded and posted on his Facebook page.

He offered the following statement when questioned about what he would say to people who were offended by his use of the word. "Oh, I apologize to anybody at any time if I offended them. If I offend someone, I'm more than glad to tell you I'm sorry. But never do I try to do anything ... to be offensive to anybody.



Darlington, SC Mayor Curtis Boyd apologizes for using an anti-gay slur, tells audience 'Jesus loves you.' CREDIT: Facebook

"Do I offend people? All the time, I'm sure I do. I wish I could make everybody happy, but I don't ... if ever I did say anything in my whole life to offend anyone, I don't like anybody to be upset with me, so, I wasn't being offensive to anyone, I just repeated back what he said."

When asked if he had anything else to add, he replied, "That's it. Just wanna' tell you Jesus loves you." ::

—Jonathan Golian and QNotes Staff

Montana Court Blocks Ban on Trans Youth Healthcare

On Thursday, Dec. 12, the Montana Supreme Court upheld a lower court's temporary injunction against SB 99, a 2023 Montana law that categorically bans life-saving gender-affirming care for transgender youth. The bill is seen as unconstitutional under the Montana state constitution's privacy clause, which prohibits government intrusion on private medical decisions. This ruling allows Montana communities and families to continue accessing medical treatments for transgender minors with gender dysphoria.

Two justices filed a concurrence arguing that the Court should also clarify that discrimination on the basis of transgender

status is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Montana's Equal Protection Clause. The case against the Montana law now goes to trial before District Court Judge Jason Marks in Missoula.

"Fortunately, the Montana Supreme Court understands the danger of the state interfering with critical healthcare," said Lambda Legal Counsel Kell Olson. "Because Montana's constitutional protections are even stronger than their federal counterparts, transgender youth in Montana can sleep easier tonight knowing that they can continue to thrive for now, without this looming threat hanging over their heads."

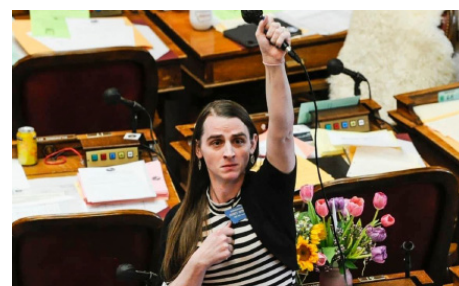
Plaintiffs in the case included Molly

and Paul Cross and their 17-year-old transgender son Phoebe, Jane and John Doe joining on behalf of their 16-year-old transgender daughter, and two providers of gender-affirming care who bring claims on their own behalf and on behalf of their Montana patients.

"I will never understand why my representatives are working to strip me of my rights and the rights of other transgender kids," expressed Phoebe Cross, also the lead plaintiff in the court case. "Just living as a trans teenager is difficult enough, the last thing me and my peers need is to have our rights taken away."

Legislative debate over Montana's bill drew national attention in the spring of 2023 after Republicans punished Democratic Rep. Zooney Zephyr, the first transgender woman elected to the state's Legislature, for admonishing lawmakers who supported the bill.

The Montana Supreme Court "has



Trans Democratic Rep. Zooney Zephyr: 'Gender-affirming care saves lives, and like all health care decisions, it should be left between doctors and patient.' CREDIT: Facebook

reaffirmed what we have known all along. Gender-affirming care saves lives, and like all health care decisions, it should be left between doctors and patients," Zephyr said Wednesday. ::

—Jonathan Golian

John Quillin is named QNotes' 2024 Person Of The Year

Through the decades, the Charlotte transplant has given much to the LGBTQ+ Community, and still does through direction of the Queen City Performing Arts' choirs



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

To top off every year before going into the next, **QNotes** takes a thorough examination of the people in the Charlotte LGBTQ+ community. When going through a selection of names, our staff deliberates over who has made the most impact in the Queen City in the last 12 months, whether that be through allyship, contributions, work at the ground-level, or any mixture of these qualifications. For our 2024 Person of the Year, it isn't just the year-in-passing that he'd made an impact. Even though he's occasionally hidden in plain sight, the contributions he has made in the city speak for themselves.

A resident of Charlotte since 1981, **John Quillin** has seen many changes in the city since that time. His efforts towards improving the quality of the lives of others is evident even then. Long before national hotlines and organizations like the Trevor Project, there was the Lesbian & Gay Switchboard. Headquartered in a shared office near Park Road Baptist Church, the group Quillin was a part of staffed telephone switchboards, taking calls from individuals in our community in need.

"This was before the internet," Quillin explained. "And so people would call and ask things like 'we need to know where the bars are, who's a banker we can use, what about a realtor, how about doctors, or I think I'm gonna' kill myself, can we talk about that?' Yeah, I mean, we did that seven nights a week for years."

Once the Roman-Catholic group called Acceptance, a pro-LGBTQ+ group that diverged from another Catholic chapter called Dignity, joined forces with Quillin and company, the Mental Alignment Community Service Project (MCSP) was formed. That further bolstered their numbers and the mission of support the original small organization was founded on.

From '83 to '89, Quillin watched as what became community institution flourished. At that pivotal point came the

start of the organization he is likely most known for these days: One Voice Chorus.

According to Quillin, another important figure in the Queen City's LGBTQ+ community, Dan Kirsch, visited Charlotte for one of his first times on Halloween of 1989. Kirsch lived in Philadelphia at the time, where he had performed in the city's gay men's chorus. He told Quillin that was something he wanted to do in Charlotte. Jan McCoy, the other part of the would-be trio, already lived in the area. As fate would have it, Quillin brought the two parties together to form the new choral group in the Queen City.

"We signed Jan up as the director," Quillin recalled. "And I was the assistant director. We started rehearsals at my place of work, which was the United Way. We had an auditorium with a piano, so we had space, parking, and that piano with a pianist. We started rehearsals in January of 1990.

"Jan left in '92 after spending about two and a half years. At that point, I suggested to the board that we do a dual thing, where we would have two directors. So, I was able to get Catherine Mayhand to agree to do that with me. From there, we did that together for seven years as the artistic directors, and then when she left, I just did it solo, and stayed for a total of 15 years."

While in the trenches of developing the chorus organization, Quillin had his hands in other things too. As quoted to him in his exit interview, the now-conductor had spent "six years, ten months, and twenty-one days" at the old Phillip Morris cigarette company in Concord. While the company was good, the job as a systems analyst wasn't, and the next venture happened at Philharmonic Orchestra, or better known today as the Charlotte Symphony.

Then, an opportunity opened up at United Way, allowing Quillin to do something he really loved, working from his starting position in the Allocations department, where he eventually rose to the director, all before moving across the aisle to being director of information technology upon the installation of a new CEO.

An interesting surprise uncovered during our interview was his other prior work, after United Way: Quillin even played a part at WFAE, Charlotte's local radio affiliate for National Public Radio (NPR). As the director of membership and major giving from 1998 to around 2001, there was a time listeners would hear his voice over the airwaves, pitching to potential patrons in the way we tend to hear funding drives now each quarter.

Lastly, Quillin joined his husband Rick Haffner at his company, taking on the role of CFO for Fluid Language Solutions. After 12 years, the couple sold the enterprise in 2012, where, in Quillin's own words, "I became a full time musician again, which I hadn't done since college."

In addition to One Voice, starting in 2006, Quillin has taken the time to produce a few different choruses largely



Credit: John Quillin

populated by LGBTQ+ voices from Charlotte and the surrounding areas. The initial start of the Gay Men's Chorus of Charlotte was in '06, a vision potentially closer to Kirsch's concept dating back to 1989. From there, under the parent group Queen City Performing Arts (QCPA), during the organization's 19th season, the Women's Chorus of Charlotte was established in 2022. At the helm of both, not surprisingly, is Quillin.

For someone who has been on the scene with so much, the honorary Charlottean is only getting started, and is ready for more. This year saw the addition of the Act Out Theater Company, an LGBTQ+ theater company that aims to bring LGBTQ+ narratives to the stage, added under the QCPA umbrella. This year, the Men's and Women's Chorus were able to perform Alzheimer's Stories (written by Robert Cohen, a gay composer from Pennsylvania), a performance piece exploring the recollections of chorus members and friends with relatives who've had the disease. QCPA also brought small ensembles into the fray, in the form of Seventh Son, from the Men's Chorus, and Vox Dominae, from the Women's Chorus.

The year 2025 will start off with first rehearsals on Jan. 13, from which a few performances are already planned. March 29 will mark the return of "Sing for the Cure," which, after a decade's absence, will feature performers in a push to raise funds for breast cancer survivors and support services for those undergoing treatment. Fall 2025 will

also feature a new collaboration with Charlotte Gaymers Network, with QCPA leading their voices to video game tracks from multiple eras, all at the newly renovated Carolina Theatre.

When asked what it has been like to be on the journey of bringing so much to Charlotte's LGBTQ+ community, and to the city in general, Quillin had one word: "fulfilling."

"I realize there are probably a couple of thousand people that have been through while I was either directing One Voice, or the Men's chorus, or the Women's chorus, a couple of thousand people who have gone through as singers that I have had the good fortune to direct, and the time they spend in chorus is incredibly important.

"And it matters so much because music cuts through people's emotional barriers and gets right to the heart of the matter, and you can deliver a message in music that they'll hear, that they would never hear otherwise.

"I'm just really humbled by the journey that I have been able to be on because nobody comes to see me. You know, they come to hear the chorus sing. They don't come to see me direct. They come to hear, you know, the tenors and the Maritimes and the bassist sing. They don't care what I do. And so I'm just there, and they, the singers, are the ones who have the stories to tell, and I just want to open a path to make that possible." ::



Credit: Facebook

A look back at the year that was 2024

June proved to be the busiest month for NC's LGBTQ+ community



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

The year 2024 was eventful, to say the least. Here's our sample of some of the outstanding headlines. For more details, visit our website to read full stories.

Covid Hospitalization in Charlotte at a Three-Year High



During the week of **Dec. 30, 2023**, there was an average of 124 daily COVID-19 hospitalizations in Mecklenburg County, next to a related average of 741 already hospitalized, according to data taken from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At the point this story was reported in mid-January, this was the highest daily average of intakes since Oct. 10, 2020, where the first week of 2023 saw the next highest number already being cared for in hospitals around the county.

LGBTQ+ Population in America Grows by Over Two Million



As reported in **January 2024**, according to a study conducted by the Williams Institute at the University of California (UCLA), the LGBTQ+ population in the United States experienced an unprecedented increase of over two million people, with no sign of that growth slowing. As of the study's release date, it was found that 13.9 million American adults (5.5 percent of the adult population) identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. The same study was conducted four years earlier in 2020, placing the population percentage at 4.3, and the population represented at 11.3 million. The study revealed that a majority of LGBTQ+ citizens live in the South, equating to almost 40 percent (five million) of the United States' queer population. Of the rest of the population per the statistics, over 24 percent

(3.4 million) of LGBTQ+ Americans live to the West, while 21.1 percent (2.9 million) live among the Midwest region, and 18.5 percent (2.6 million) live to the Northeast.

HB8 Forces Adult Entertainment Websites to Block Access or Require Picture IDs for State's Residents

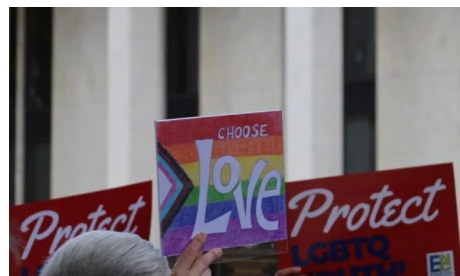


As reported in **January 2024**, the North Carolina Chamber passed new legislation requiring proof of age to access adult entertainment websites. Notable names in the industry like Pornhub and XHamster either blocked North Carolinians' access to their domains, or began to require photo IDs, as per the policy then in place. These sites, and many others, now require visitors to verify their ages, all in an attempt to prevent children and youth under 18 from accessing the content.

Originally, House Bill 8 was to be utilized to add computer science classes to North Carolina's high school graduation requirements, and internet porn was nowhere to be found in the initial draft. An organization known as "Vigilante Truth," which says its primary objective is to fight sex trafficking, confirmed their support for the bill because they believe porn encourages violence against women.

The section pertaining to pornography, the Pornography Age Verification Enforcement Act (PAVE), went into effect on Jan. 1, 2024. Critics of PAVE have called the addition's strict demand for personal identification a slippery slope, especially when it comes to an individual's right to privacy. In a video statement given at the time by spokesperson Sheree Deville, which can be found when attempting to enter Pornhub or other sites choosing to block access in North Carolina, she announced that, "Until a real solution is offered, [Pornhub and other networked sites] have made the difficult decision to completely disable access to our website in North Carolina."

The Advocate Calls NC #2 in List of Ten States With the Worst Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws



Added as part of a list put together by The Advocate, North Carolina had secured a place as one of the "10 States That Passed the Worst Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws in 2023." Coming in as the second worst state in the country for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation passed in 2023, North Carolina only fell behind Florida on the list.

"North Carolina, which had made progress on LGBTQ+ rights since its 2016 "bathroom bill" that led to widespread outrage, took a big step backward in 2023," the story on the Advocate website says. "In August, legislators overrode Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of three anti-LGBTQ+ bills."

Kim Petras Makes Musical History as First Trans Artist to Win a Grammy



In **February**, transgender German pop star Kim Petras made history appearing in the Jennifer Lopez Amazon original film "This Is Me Now: A Love Story." Around that same time, Petras was celebrating the first anniversary of her Grammy win as the first ever transgender female artist to capture the coveted award. In the best pop/duo category, she won for "Unholy," a collaboration with Sam Smith.

"'Unholy' was a song that was so about me and Sam," Petras told *Pink News*. "Our identities and stuff like that, and I think so many people just really tried to tear that down." After Petras and Smith's Grammy performance of "Unholy," the two were met with a wave of backlash from critics. Despite the unpleasant criticism, Petras and Smith were still graced with support from musical icons like Madonna.

Amber Glenn Becomes First Queer Woman to Win US Figure Skating Nationals



In a groundbreaking moment for the world of figure skating, Amber Glenn made history by becoming the first LGBTQ+ woman to claim victory in the U.S. Women's Figure Skating Championship. As reported in **QNotes** in **February**, the event showcased a performance that not only demonstrated Glenn's exceptional skill on the ice but also marked a significant step forward for inclusivity and representation in the sport.

"Being the first openly queer women's champion is incredible," Glenn said following her set. "When I came out originally, I was terrified and I was scared it would affect my scores or something, but I didn't care. It was worth it to see, over the last couple of years, the amount of young people that feel more comfortable in their environments at the rink."

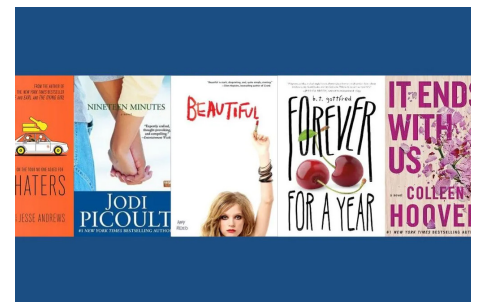
Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg Visits Charlotte, Announces Airport to Get \$27M for Improvement Projects



On **Feb. 16**, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg made an appearance at Charlotte Douglas International Airport to announce a grant the international hub would be getting. The event was the kick-off for a nationwide tour with the Biden Administration highlighting the almost \$1 billion in grants being given out, with the funds going to 114 airports across 44 states and three territories, including Charlotte Douglas.

"It includes a lot of what you might call 'front of house' improvements, things you see and feel when you get ready to fly," Buttigieg told reporters at the preview of the announcement. "No matter what brings you to this airport, so much depends on the airport being able to meet your needs."

South Carolina School Board Sends 'Banned Books' Back to Libraries



In a stand-off during **March** between the school board of Beaufort County and a slew of demanding parents, nearly 100 books were debated on, with the majority being returned to shelves. According to School

Board Vice Chair Dick Geier, self-declared “activists” began threatening librarians and board members, calling them molesters, pedophiles and groomers. “We’ve had a parent come in and tell a librarian that, ‘You are violating a state statute by providing pornography to a minor. I’m going to the sheriff. I’m going to have you arrested,’ and storm out,” Geier recalled. “Now that’s not happened once, that’s happened multiple times at multiple schools.”

Of the books targeted by conservative parents, the majority were young adult novels with minority, gay, lesbian or transgender characters and were predominantly in high schools. Four titles are a part of the school system’s curriculum, according to the school board.

Most of the books pushed to be eliminated from the school libraries were reportedly submitted from the website *booklooks.org*, which groups like the ultra-conservative political organization Moms for Liberty use to their own ends, condemning practically any piece of literature dealing with LGBTQ rights, race and ethnicity, critical race theory or discrimination.

Of the books put up for debate, five have been removed until further notice: Amy Reed’s “Beautiful,” B.T. Godfried’s “Forever for a Year,” Colleen Hoover’s “It Ends with Us,” Jodi Picoult’s “19 Minutes” and Jesse Andrews’ “The Haters.”

Huntersville Native Renee Rapp Wins GLAAD Media Award



Singing sensation and Huntersville native Renée Rapp was recognized for her musical talents at the 2024 GLAAD Media Awards last **March**, coming away from the night with the Outstanding Artist award. Rapp, who identifies as a lesbian, has elevated through a plethora of creative ventures, including her role as Regina George in the Broadway show ‘Mean Girls The Musical’ and for her role as Leighton Murray on Max’s “The Sex Lives of College Girls.”

“I feel very lucky to be recognized among these artists and creatives that I admire,” Rapp said during her remarks that evening. “I really love my identity, and I feel lucky that we have spaces and organizations like GLAAD that recognize us for our talent and for, of course, how hot we are — yes, the hottest people are gay, no one is surprised.”

Nearly 30 Percent of Gen Z Adults Identify as LGBTQ+



Along with the ever-increasing population of the LGBTQ+ community in the United States, a report published in **QNotes** during April and titled, “A political and cultural glimpse into America’s future.” Detailed in the piece published by PRRI, a nonprofit that conducts research on religion, values and public policy, nearly a third, or 28 percent, of Gen Z adults in the United States identify as LGBTQ+, a stark increase from older generations.

About 6,000 people were surveyed for the report, the control group ranging in age from ages 13 to 65 and older. PRRI overwhelmingly sampled Gen Z adults and teens for their findings.

The results of the report revealed that seven percent of Baby Boomers and 16 percent of millennials identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or “something else.” Among adults aged 18 to 25, (Gen Z) 72 percent said they identified as straight, five percent as gay or lesbian and eight percent as “something else.”

Is Drag Performer off the Hook for \$100k Haul From Campus Pride?



Since the beginning of 2024, when an anonymous envelope showed up at the front desk of White Rabbit Books (which shares a space with **QNotes**) filled to the brim with formerly confidential documents about Campus Pride (CP), **QNotes** continues to make it a priority to investigate the curious case of the organization’s former CEO, Shane Windmeyer, aka the drag queen Buff Faye. What once was regarded as practically a national institution with a 20-year history of support for LGBTQ+ youth by providing guidance for students seeking welcoming environments on campuses across the country, now sits collecting dust. It is hard not to pin the failure of the organization on Windmeyer, who confessed to CP’s board that he misappropriated sizable amounts of the organization’s funding for his own personal use. His confession led to a mutually agreed upon partial pay-back plan of \$100,000 to CP. Despite the community outrage that followed, Windmeyer’s drag persona Buff Faye has managed to find her way back into the drag scene in Charlotte and Rock Hill venues like Dilworth Neighborhood Grille and Kounter. No word on the future of Campus Pride.

United Methodist Church Lifts Ban on LGBTQ+ Clergy, Same-Sex Marriage



Continued on next page

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For the United Methodist Church (UMC), 2024 will be remembered as a particularly historic year. On **May 1**, the UMC lifted its previously held ban on LGBTQ+ clergy and same-sex marriage, reflecting broader societal shifts and internal debates in the church. The decision came after years of contentious debate, and the evolution of attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights in religious institutions

Libertarians Choose Gay Man for Presidential Candidate



When looking for a figure whose agenda lined up with the Libertarian Party platform, both Donald Trump and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. didn't seem to fit the right tone. Reported by **QNotes** in **June**, Chase Oliver, 38, a gay man out of Atlanta and a virtually unknown figure even to the press of the bustling southern city, filled that bill. Prior to the 2024 election, Oliver had been a Democratic party member and a supporter of Barack Obama during his original run, having only parted ways for the Libertarian Party in 2010. Though Oliver was an interesting newer figure for the 2024 race, especially with his status as an openly gay candidate backed by a recognized party, the Libertarian Party managed to grasp just one percent of the vote for the election year.

New Data Finds 1 in 5 LGBTQ+ People Choose not to Report Discrimination at Work



A new report that came out mid-**June** had found 44 percent of LGBTQ+ workers have had to quit their job because of discrimination and lack of acceptance. EduBirdie, an essay writing website, 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.

The results of the survey had 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 percent of LGBTQ+ workers have quit a job because of discrimination or a lack of acceptance and 45 percent have been passed up for promotions and one in five individuals choose not to report incidents that occur at work.

Governor Cooper Hosts Pride Month Reception Honoring LGBTQ+ Pioneers



For his final Pride Month as Governor of North Carolina, Roy Cooper hosted a reception at the Executive Mansion in **June** to honor LGBTQ+ pioneers who have been at the forefront of the fight for equal rights for decades. The governor was joined by legislators, representatives from LGBTQ+ advocacy groups and other LGBTQ+ activists.

"In North Carolina, our diversity is our strength," said Governor Cooper. "Our LGBTQ+ community makes our state stronger, and in this Pride month we lift up the early pioneers who have for decades led the charge for acceptance and equality. In the face of hateful rhetoric, legislation and even violence, we must all continue their efforts."

Joe Davis, Co-Founder of Hearts Beat as One, Dies Unexpectedly



In a shocking turn of events during **July**, one of Charlotte's well-known LGBTQ+ figures had their life cut short. Joe Davis, born Warren Joseph Davis III, passed away while vacationing in Provincetown, Massachusetts, at the age of 49, reportedly due to natural causes. While many remember him fondly as a kind soul and a community ally, his greatest legacy was the co-founding of the Hearts Beat as One Foundation, which is now known as Hearts United for Good (HUG).

The legacy that Davis helped start continues to this day with HUG. Many of the activities that HB1 kicked off, from

helping the homeless and those living in tents around Mecklenburg County, to helping animals in need in the community, continues to this day.

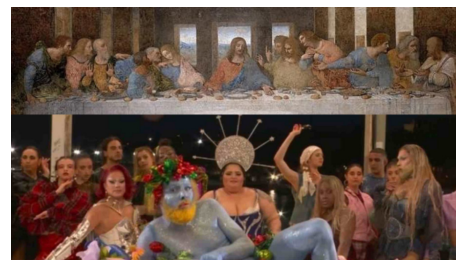
Who Is JD Vance?



If there ever was a question that needed an answer before inauguration day 2025, it is finding out who America will be dealing with at Donald Trump's side. From his initial position as a "never Trump" Republican to a full-on MAGA loyalist, we have seen quite a bit of JD Vance, the first millennial Vice President-elect of the United States.

Here's what we know: In his time as an Ohio Senator, Vance put forth legislation for criminalizing and banning gender-affirming care for transgender youth, as well as getting rid of affirmative action policies at the country's universities. He has also put forth support for a 15-week abortion ban with exceptions for rape, incest and threats to the mother's life. On the subject of children, Vance has voiced disapproval for anyone who doesn't have kids, implying those that do deserve more voting power. Beyond the seeming smokescreen of where the Ohio senator doesn't completely fit in with the MAGA base is his interfaith marriage with his Hindu-practicing long-time wife, Usha Vance. While there is still much we don't know, we can likely count on learning more when he takes the second-highest seat in America.

Paris Olympics Receive Right-Wing Backlash Over Drag-Infused Opening Ceremonies



At this summer's Olympic games in France, Christian conservatives showed proof that it is vital to get outside of one's own bubble. In their outrage over comparing Da Vinci's "Last Supper" to the games' opening, critics missed the crucial cultural differences between the classic work of art and the Greek roots of mythology recreated by members of the cast of RuPaul's Drag Race France.

"[Last Supper was] not my inspiration and that should be pretty obvious," said Thomas Jolly, the artistic director of the 2024 Olympics opening ceremony during a press conference reported in early

August. "There's Dionysus arriving on a table. Why is he there? First and foremost because he is the god of celebration in Greek mythology and the tableau is called 'Festivity.' He is also the god of wine, which is also one of the jewels of France, and the father of Séquana, the goddess of the river Seine ... The idea was to depict a big pagan celebration, linked to the gods of Olympus, and thus the Olympics."

Charlotte's Bar 316 Closes Doors



Concluding 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 316 ended its chapter in Charlotte's history, closing its doors in late **August**. While one might think any of the above reasons would be how the problematic venue met its end, the real reason is mundane: They didn't bother to pay their rent.

Eliazar Posada Named Executive Director of Equality NC



After serving in an interim role since the former director Kendra Johnson left Equality NC (ENC) in 2023, the organization officially announced in **August** that Eliazar Posada would take over as the permanent executive director. Posada has worked with Equality NC since May 2022 as its organizing director, and he still serves as a council member for the city of Carrboro. "As we embark on this new chapter in our 45th year of proudly serving North Carolina, we are confident that under Eliazar's leadership, Equality NC will continue to thrive and make significant strides in defending and advancing the rights of queer and trans people across our state," the organization announced in an official statement.

Revisiting the History of Scorpio

In October 2023 Scorpio closed its doors at the Freedom Drive location it had called home since 1974. In June of this year, the historic club announced



it would be reopening in the South End district, joining together with the RSVP club purchased by the owners of the Scorpio name. Meanwhile, Charlotte's Historic Preservation Society pondered designating the site for its significance in the city and the LGBTQ+ community. Property owners, however, who reportedly announced previously the land and building were to be purchased by Elevation Church, pulled a fast one and demolished the structure in **late August and early September**. According to all reports, business is brisk for the new location off South Boulevard at 225 Fairwood Avenue.

CMS Pushes to Add Gender Protection Policy



As of the full vote on Oct. 22, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board successfully updated its policies to include more definitive language protecting students from harassment based on gender identity and expression; and sexual orientation. The previous policy, updated last in 2016 stated the "Board of Education forbids harassment of any student by employees based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin or disability." CMS's policy committee voted unanimously to add the additional protection classifications, as well as highlighting "discrimination" alongside harassment in their continuing efforts to safeguard students and employees in its schools.

Help After Hurricane Helene Impacts Many in the LGBTQ+ Community



On the evening of Sept. 27, Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina as a tropical storm, dumping more than 15 inches of rain. Meteorologists described it as a catastrophic, once-in 1,000 year storm. Homes and businesses were destroyed and damaged beyond repair, some literally washed away. Approximately 50 lives were lost in Buncombe County (home to Asheville) and other surrounding counties and many individuals remain unaccounted for. In October and November, **QNotes** reported at length the following month of **October** about efforts from Charlotte and Asheville area residents who were impacted by the storm and others who continue to work towards rebuilding, including West Asheville's venue The Odd, which survived the storm, and was among the first LGBTQ+ businesses to offer help to the surrounding community. Charlotte residents Scott Lindsley and Joey Hewell helped out in the impacted regions by using their non-profit Good Company to gather supplies to haul westward and determine what other goods locals were in need of. In follow up stories, **QNotes** reported on the Charlotte LGBTQ+ Chamber's efforts, as well as other non-profits who continue to help with recovery.

Jennifer Ruppe Departs Guilford Green Foundation



As reported by **QNotes** in **November**, The Guilford Green Foundation and LGBTQ Center (GGF) bid farewell to Jennifer Ruppe, the former Executive Director of the organization. As for her future, Ruppe is going on to serve as the next president and CEO of North Carolina for Community and Justice (NCCJ). In the wake of her departure from GGF, Ruppe leaves behind an impressive list of accomplishments during the time she spent there. The organization saw a doubling of their annual revenue stream, allowing them the opportunity to utilize the funding increase to provide more for the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

New Group Trans United CLT Kicks Off With Name Change Clinic



While still a relatively new organization in Charlotte's LGBTQ+ community, Trans United CLT (TUCLT) hit the ground running after forming in mid-July with both inclusive events and well-needed initiatives. Profiled by **QNotes** in **December**, the group's website declares TUCLT is "Charlotte's only non-profit exclusively for the transgender community, run only by members of the transgender community." The organization hosted a Name Change Clinic on Oct. 27, in partnership with Tabbris, Charlotte Gaymers Network (CGN), the Pauli Murray LGBTQ BAR Association and Cadawaller Wickersham Taft LLP. Additional events and programming are slated for the future.

LGBTQ+ Crisis Hotlines Spike After Trump Captures White House



Following the results of the 2024 election, and **continuing today**, the Rainbow Youth Project, a national LGBTQ+ crisis help center, which typically receives slightly under 3,700 calls a month, surpasses that number by currently unknown numbers. At the center of the calls, prompting the understandable panic, are many of the policies revealed in the months before the election and those covered in Project 2025, written by the extremist right-wing organization Heritage Foundation. Many remain fearful its contents will be enacted with the start of the second Trump presidency.

Will Trump Bar Trans Military Members Again?



According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), reports emerged in November that Donald Trump plans to issue an Executive Order that would reinstate and expand upon his first administration's ban on transgender military service members. In a story carried by **QNotes** in **December**, the United States military continues to fall short of its recruitment targets, the discriminatory ban, as reported, could terminate the employment of an estimated 15,000 people, deeming them "unfit to serve"—despite the fact that they meet every qualification. The United States military is

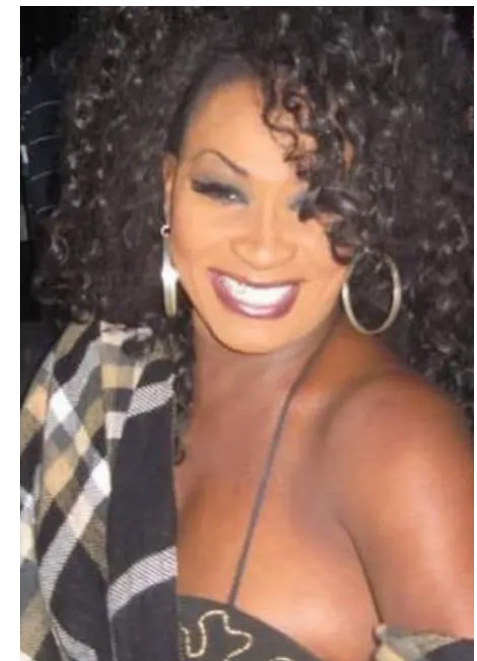
the largest employer of transgender people in the country.

Hearts United For Good Named QNotes 2024 Organization of the Year



For 2024's Organization of the year, **QNotes** announced its excitement by celebrating the work of Hearts United For Good (HUG) for its annual selection. HUG has had a very busy year of work in the Charlotte community along with areas beyond the city's borders. Two major programs HUG has managed this year are the Homeless Outreach and the Animal Welfare programs. The successes of the first allowed many of the homeless population in the Charlotte area to receive over 2,300 snack bags and over 1,000 canned or covered meals. For other daily needs, HUG gave out over 150 pairs of shoes or work boots, as well as more than 300 hygiene kits and sleeping materials, such as blankets and sleeping bags.

Kasey King, Beloved and Once Frequent Performer on the Charlotte Drag Scene, Dies at 68



Legacy drag artist Kasey King passed away in late November at the age of 68. A native of Landis, N.C., she grew up in China Grove before moving to Charlotte, where she made her home in the Dilworth neighborhood. The performer made a name for herself in the Charlotte drag and female impersonation scene throughout the later decades of the 20th century becoming a regular performer at such clubs as Oleens and Scorpio, while also making occasional guest appearances throughout the southeast in LGBTQ clubs of the day. Drag performer and friend Brittany Gwynne had these words to share: "She was one of the first ladies of color to grace the Scorpio stage, and she succeeded like no other." ::

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Worst Person of the Year for 2024

It's a Tie: Dan Bishop and Tricia Cotham year



by David Aaron Moore
 Qnotes Staff Writer

What's worse: someone you know doesn't like you, or someone who was your friend and then seemingly turned their back on you?

For years **Tricia Cotham** served as a legislator for the Democratic Party and was an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. She ran for the North Carolina State House as a Democrat, then flip-flopped and became a Republican, which provided the state GOP a super majority that has allowed them to consistently overrule Governor Cooper's veto power over a far right wing agenda.

When Cotham initially ran for the house seat, she penned herself as a champion of LGBTQ rights and promised to stand strongly against discriminatory legislation. After her infamous flip flop, she voted in favor of the Fairness in Women's Sports act, a discriminatory and unnecessary piece of legislation designed to prevent transgender individuals, specifically females, from participating in women's sporting activities.

Previously an ardent supporter of a woman's right to reproductive choice, she also pulled another back track and voted in favor of a ban on abortion after 12 weeks.

On her original campaign website, long since erased, she wrote the following words to describe herself:

"I have been a champion of LGBTQ+ Rights throughout my public service. I was the first house member to stand up in opposition to the radical and hateful HB2 legislation, even when many saw opposing it as a political liability. We have come a long way, but there is still work to do. Right now, LGBTQ+ youth are under attack by Republican state legislatures across the country. I will stand against discriminatory legislation and work to pass more protections at the state level."

That was nice. But this isn't: according to a report from the Raleigh-based *News and Observer*, Robert Reaves, the House minority leader, credits Cotham's party hopping with changing the face of North Carolina politics. He confirmed that seven of the overrides passed since Cotham joined the party did so without Democratic support of any kind. Among those were bills that put an end to a three-day grace period for mail-in ballots and the "Parents Bill of Rights," also known as the "Don't Say Gay Bill."

Cotham ran for office again this year in a different District and won, just barely. From where we stand, she is no longer a friend to our community. Despite her past actions and recent reelection, she does not deserve an ounce of our respect or support.

Then there's **Dan Bishop**.

Bishop was a member of the Mecklenburg County Commission from



Dan Bishop and Tricia Cotham have shown NC Republicans are amoral and without conscience.

CREDIT: Facebook

2004 to 2008. He stepped away from politics for six years before he was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives for a single term, from 2015 to 2017, followed by another two year stint as a North Carolina senator representing the 39th District.

Since that time he has served two terms as a member of the US House of Representatives from North Carolina representing first the 8th District and then the 9th District.

This author first encountered Bishop in the early 2000s while offering advice to the predominantly Democratic Mecklenburg County Commission on ways to pass policy for the LGBTQ community in Mecklenburg County. Bishop was not happy about the policy approved and made no secret of his contempt for the LGBTQ+ community. As his career expanded, so did his disdain.

It was during his time as a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives he authored the egregious Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act (HB2, also known as the bathroom bill) which is looked to by many as the beginning of what has evolved into a national backlash towards trans individuals and drag performers by conservatives.

Passed in March 2016 and signed into law by then Governor Pat McCrory, the bill amended state law to preempt any LGBTQ+ protection policies passed by local communities. It also forced schools and state and local government facilities to block transgender individuals from using bathrooms that corresponded with their identity. At the time it was described as the most anti-LGBTQ legislation in the United States, although it pales in comparison to the firestorm of anti-trans legislation set off in its wake.

There is more in Bishop's ugly history, including his role as an advocate for North Carolina's Amendment 1, which was passed in 2012 and made North Carolina the last state to ban same-

sex marriage, although it was declared unconstitutional on a federal level in the Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015.

But that's not all. According to an article carried by the *Charlotte Observer*, Bishop invested in a social media site known as Gab that welcomed white supremacists.

While Bishop claimed ignorance of that aspect of Gab, according to the *Charlotte Observer*, "evidence shows he knew what he was investing in."

This year, Bishop *retired* as the representative for District 8 to attempt a run for the state's attorney general office. He lost to Democratic candidate Jeff Jackson, but is still recognized as the representative for District 8.

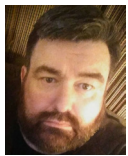
Bishop's history has led to high regard by Donald Trump, who, as of Tuesday, Dec. 10, officially announced Bishop would serve as Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget when Trump takes office. Said Trump: "I am pleased to nominate Congressman Dan Bishop from North Carolina as the Deputy Director of Budget at the office of Management and Budget. Dan has been a tireless fighter of our MAGA movement in the House of Representatives on the Judiciary and Homeland Security committees. He will implement my cost cutting and deregulatory agenda across all agencies and root out the weaponized deep state."

Bishop's alignment with Trump and his documented 20-year anti-LGBTQ stance paints a portrait of an intolerant politician incapable of working across party lines. He has never been our ally nor offered any known consideration for constituents that do not identify as he does: christian, conservative Caucasian, cisgender and heterosexual.

All of this history – from both Bishop and Cotham – are why they're sharing our recognition for *Worst Person of the Year*. ::

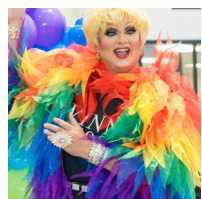
Best of the Worst 2024

Our top picks of unpleasant things and bad and unexpected behavior over the past year



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

The year started off with a particularly ugly bang as non-profit **Campus Pride** imploded and founder **Shane Windmeyer** admitted he misused funds. A lot of funds. He agreed to settle and pay back \$100,000, although he also confirmed the amount he had misused was substantially more. What's more, he used a lot of it on fabulous frocks and gorgeous gowns for his stage performing drag alter ego, Buff Faye! Initially shunned by the Charlotte LGBTQ+ community, he boastfully announced in ads and social media that "reports of his apparent demise were premature." And with that, he is apparently back in the drag performance game as a *brunch hostess*.



Monroe Protests Drag in March

Oh, Union County. Just stop it, would you? First the city and county came after the small town's LGBTQ Pride events. Once they

got wind of a scheduled performance by drag artist Delighted ToBehere in conjunction with the Charlotte Gay Men's Chorus, far right extremists showed up to protest the presentation, which was still successful nonetheless. Of course, conservative government elements in the area have attempted to institute public policy that would prevent any such related performances in the future. We'll see how that turns out.



Local Gay Man Disappears

The sad story of **Andy Tench**, 37, was first reported in **April**. According to police reports Tench hooked up with D'Shaun Robinson

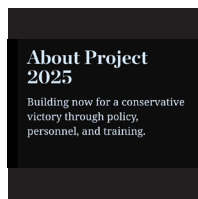
on the night of Tench's birthday at Bar 316. Sometime afterward, Tench was reported missing. His car was found abandoned in the morning hours of March 25 in Union County, which was not a place Tench was known to ever go. According to Robinson, the two had engaged in consensual sex and during that time Tench died of an overdose of drugs. In what Robinson described as a "knee-jerk reaction," he used Tench's car to dispose of his body in a dumpster behind a hotel and abandoned his car in Union County. Robinson was later arrested and charged with multiple felony counts including concealment of a death, identity theft, two charges of felony financial card theft, financial card fraud and larceny of a motor vehicle. To date, Tench's body has not been recovered.



Lonnie Billard vs. the Catholic Church

If ever a man went on an unexpected roller coaster ride, that would be Lonnie Billard. The former Catholic High School

teacher in Charlotte turned substitute teacher was fired from the school after it was discovered he had announced plans to marry his partner on social media. Even though Billard was recognized as a civilian employee and not a member of the Catholic church, his actions reportedly ran counter to the school's policy. Billard took exception with this and instigated a lawsuit. After more than a decade and multiple appeals, losses and wins, an appeals court decided on May 9, 2024, that the Catholic school had the right to fire Billard. The fight however, continues.



Project 2025

We took a long look at Project 2025 in **June** of 2024, and what we found didn't bode well for the LGBTQ+ community. The vociferously anti-everything not

conservative organization the Heritage Foundation created the draft for Donald Trump to use as a guide plan for massive change in American government in the first 180 days in office. Among those changes, a complete ending of access to abortion and contraception, eliminating federal protections for LGBTQ people and erasing LGBTQ inclusive language throughout federal agencies. Trump distanced himself from the guidebook during his campaign, however, once capturing the office again, he appointed a number of its creators to potentially serve in his cabinet. For now, the fate of Project 2025 remains unclear, but we're so used to Republicans lying, who knows?



Mark Robinson's World Gets Turned Upside Down in August

It's not like we didn't see it coming. Mark Robinson was a hot mess. Seemingly patterning himself after

his favorite politician Donald Trump, he opened his mouth and let forth a never-ending cacophony of epic and ridiculous proportions. The LGBTQ+ community was tantamount to excrement. "Homosexuality" and "transgenderism" are destroying society. If you need an abortion it's because you couldn't keep your skirt down. Some people need killing! But then came his comeuppance: CNN reported Robinson was claimed to have been a regular customer at adult pornographic book stores. Robinson wrote about his own sexual fantasies on a hookup site

on the internet. Robinson called himself a Black Nazi and said he wanted to own slaves. Eventually, even Trumpublicans grew weary of him and tossed him to the curb. He lost his race for the governorship in a landslide and has retreated to non-entity status. Clearly, he dug his own hole, and we have to admit, we're not sorry to see him go.



Lowe's Hardware Turns Its Back on the LGBTQ+ Community

In **September**, Lowe's removed DEI initiatives under pressure from the

far right wing. They also withdrew their support for the Charlotte Pride festival. This came after years of sponsorship for the annual festival. While Lowe's did not ask for sponsorship funding back for the last event, they reportedly indicated there would be no more forthcoming funding. The trend has set off a firestorm of corporation giants stepping back and refusing to take part in what they deem as the "American culture wars."

Hurricane Helene Smashes Into Western North Carolina Sept. 27



Hardest hit in a storm that was recognized as something that happens only once in over a thousand years, the small town of Asheville, exceptionally popular with artists, musicians and the LGBTQ+ community, was left devastated. An estimated 50 deaths occurred in the region and an unknown number of individuals remain unaccounted for. Help continues to pour into the area from federal, state and local sources.



Kamala Harris (some say assumedly) Lost the Presidential Race to Trump

After Joe Biden made the decision to step aside and allow Kamala Harris, his vice president, to take on the position of Democratic presidential candidate for 2024,

a new level of vigor grabbed hold of the democratic party. Despite their hard fought efforts and poll numbers that showed Harris and a potential lead, she reportedly lost in both the popular and electoral college vote on **Nov.5**. Despite evidence that nearly half of

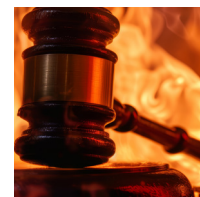
Americans seemingly wanted to repeat the nightmare of his previous term in office, many continue to question the legitimacy of his election.



Donald Trump (appears to have) Captured the Presidential Office again

An awful man who did a really bad job in the presidential office from 2016 to

2020 and lost in the following election, somehow managed to capture the office again in 2024. We don't know how or why.



Sore and Scheming Losers

Before the last bell rang in December, North Carolina Republicans, wincing from defeat in all the major key offices

of the state, made a quick behind the scenes move to strip the governorship of multiple powers, repeating the move with the office of attorney general. Both were won by Democrats, namely Josh Stein and Jeff Jackson who were stripped of important key powers. With the soon to be installed and newly elected chambers ending the Republican super-majority, we'll see how long it takes Democrats to figure out a work-around.



Tariffs and Mass Deportations Will Likely Tank Our Economy and Send Prices Soaring

In what seemingly started out as an erroneous slip of the tongue,

Donald Trump tossed out illegal border crossing accusations at Mexico and, suddenly, Canada! While any erroneous border crossings from Canada have been deemed of issue previously and our relationship has always been cordial and friendly, Trump announced he was going to punish both Canada and Mexico with high tariffs for importing goods and services because they could not, according to Trump, control their borders. Both Canadian and Mexican leaders have turned on Trump and are now threatening retaliatory tariffs, which will lead to prices far higher than what we are currently experiencing in food and other energy related products. This won't end well.



Trump Named 'Person of the Year' by Time Magazine

Just one word: Why? ::

George Michael's 'Last Christmas' Cocktail

Tasty Holiday Treats

by QNotes Staff

British musician George Michael (born Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou, June 25, 1963) captured the attention of lusty young gay males and heterosexual females in the UK and the United States when he first appeared on the scene in the group Wham! with bandmate Andrew Ridgeley. Not only did Michael have a voice, he had a look to go with the sound. When combined, it equaled massive pop music success.

After seven single releases that virtually did nothing in the United States, Wham! finally struck gold with the single "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go," which reached number one on the pop music charts. The duo continued their winning streak with such songs as "Careless Whisper," "Freedom," "Everything She Wants," "Last Christmas," "I'm Your Man" and "The Edge of Heaven."

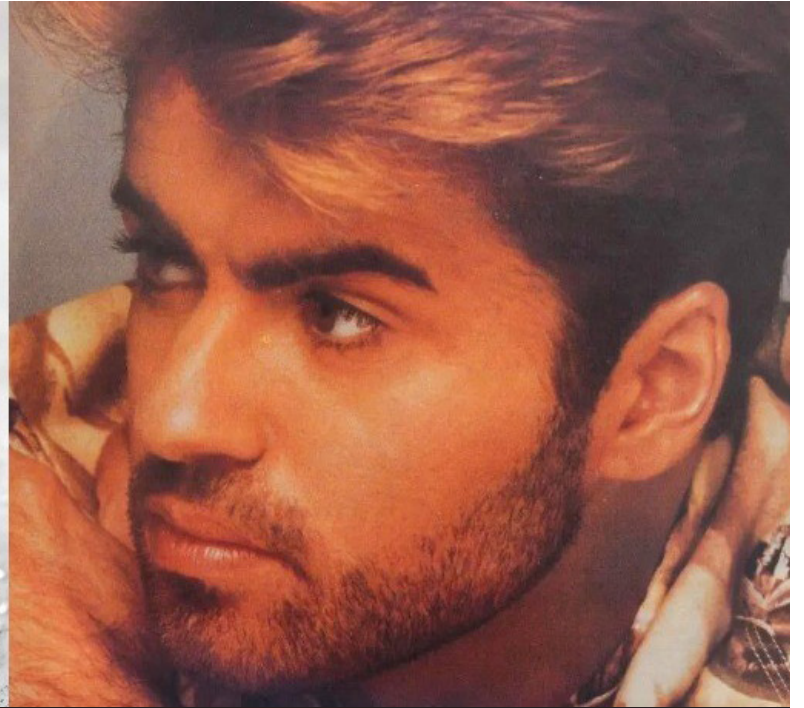
By 1986 Michael made the decision to strike out as a solo performer. His efforts as a singular force yielded such chart-topping hits as "Careless Whisper," "Faith," "Father Figure," "One More Try" and others, as well as a duet with Aretha Franklin, "I Knew You Were Waiting."

Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s Michael continued to perform and sell out venues around the globe.

He refrained from addressing his sexual orientation for many years, but finally did so in 1998 in an interview with Jim Moret on CNN just three days after being entrapped by an undercover police officer in a public restroom sex sting in Beverly Hills on April 7, 1998.

Michael was slapped with a fine that would equal about \$1,200 in today's market. He was also ordered to do 80 hours of community service for "engaging in a lewd act."

Here's our favorite part of Michael's career and his opportunity to take a



Cheers to the holidays with the George Michael 'Last Christmas' cocktail

jab at America's often prudish morality. He cashed in on the concept of making lemonade from lemons when he released the dance single "Outside," which depicted him as a hot cop in a public restroom that quickly changes to a gay dance club, complete with mirror disco balls and chrome toilets and urinals. Comedic, sexy and danceable all at once, it was an instant hit across Europe, although most stodgy Americans didn't seem to appreciate it very much, except for his queer fans. The song didn't place on any charts in the United States save for one: the US Billboard Hot Dance Club Play Charts, where it rocketed to number

three in January of 1999.

While he continued to perform and have musical success throughout Europe until a few years before his death on Christmas Day in 2016 at the age of 53, QNotes feels Michael's titular gay dance anthem "Outside" makes him more than worthy of this cocktail for the holidays created to honor the man his life and music.

The George Michael 'Last Christmas' Cocktail

Ingredients

Vodka
Cointreau
White cranberry juice

Lime juice
Cranberry jam
Sugared cranberries

Directions:

Place a spoonful of cranberry jam in bottom of glass
In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, combine to desired taste vodka, Cointreau, white cranberry juice and lime juice
Shake well
Gently pour over cranberry jam
Garnish with sugared cranberries
This recipe originally appeared on the blog sweetlifebake.com.

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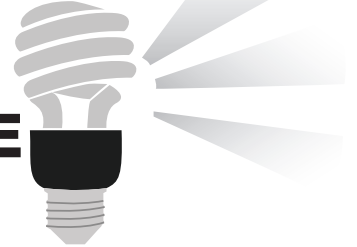
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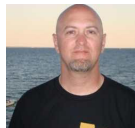
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Vinyl Destination

Q-Music



by **Gregg Shapiro**
Quotes Contributing Writer

From 1964 until Diana Ross' departure in 1969, The Supremes (as they were known in the beginning) released as few as two albums a year (or as many as five, as in 1965). In 1968, when the trio's moniker became **Diana Ross and the Supremes**, they released five LPs, including "Love Child" (Motown/Elemental Music), newly reissued in limited edition 140-gram virgin vinyl edition. The significance of the album, which goes beyond the name change, can't be underestimated, beginning with the cover image, which features members of the usually glammed-up act wearing cutoff jean shorts, a sweatshirt, a fringe jacket and a leather jacket. It also marks a change in the membership (bye Florence, hello Cindy) and a different team of songwriters (farewell Holland, Dozier, Holland). With this new set-up, a change in tone, such as the album's semi-controversial title tune, is not all that surprising. Three songs written by Ashford & Simpson, including "Some Things You Never Get Used To," were the roots of a long-creative relationship between Ross and the songwriting/performing couple. Additional highlights include "Does Your Mama Know about Me" (co-written by Tommy Chong!), "Honey Bee (Keep on Stinging Me)" and "How Long Has That Evening Train Been Gone."

It must be a testament to the commitment of the members of the B-52s that each of its remaining long-term members, **Kate Pierson**, Fred Schneider and Cindy Wilson, have only released two albums apiece under their own names over the course of the band's 45-year recording career. Pierson's latest album, "Radio & Rainbows" (Long Meadow Music/Crush Music/SongVest Records), arrives 9½ years after 2015's "Guitars and Microphones" (anyone else see a pattern here?). Dedicated to Pierson's wife, Monica Nation, the album takes Pierson in a variety of musical directions, including dance ("Take Me Back to the Party," co-written with Jimmy Harry,

who has worked with RuPaul, Pink, Kelly Clarkson and others, and the soaring "Wings"), the suitably spooky "Every Day Is Halloween" (co-written with and featuring Sia), the island breeze of "Pillow Queen", the funky "Dream On" and "Living In a Monet" (featuring queer musician Gail Ann Dorsey), and the colorful title cut.

After 25 years of releasing albums (nearly a dozen!) on the indie Blue Corn Music record label, the amazing queer singer/songwriter **Ruthie Foster** is now on the legendary Sun Records label with her newest release "Mileage" (Sun). Pressed on vivid baby blue vinyl, the 10-song album, consisting of nine Foster originals (co-written with the record's producer Tyler Bryant and Rebecca Lovell) contains Foster's blend of influences, such as gospel ("Good for My Soul" and "Six Mile Water"), searing blues-pop ("Done," featuring sister duo Larkin Poe, "Heartshine," and title cut), a radiant love song ("Rainbow"), and soulful stomp ("Slow Down"), all delivered in her powerful vocal style.

I feel as if I arrived late to the cult of experimental singer/songwriter **Jerry Paper**, only becoming acquainted with the nonbinary artist at the time of the release of their ninth album, 2022's "Free Time." Jerry Paper's new album, "Inbetweenzer" (Stone's Throw), on pretty, pink vinyl, while maintaining the artist's distinctive musical perspective, somehow feels more accessible than its predecessor. Even the chaotic no-wave sax solo on the otherwise shimmering "Moonstruck," isn't a deterrent to the pleasure of the song. Other standouts include "New Year's Day," the bubbly electro of "Scenic Route," the bizarre retro pop of "Everything Angel," the clubby instrumental "Trixter Sez" and the hip-shaking closer "Powder Pink Powder Green."

Queer Canadian musician **TR/ST** (aka Robert Alfons) has a way with propulsive electronic dance music on his new album "Performance" (Dais). If there were any justice, these songs would be in regular rotation in queer dance clubs across the globe. You can hear the influence of '80s new wave on TR/ST, but the music also feels both timeless and of the moment. Not an easy feat. With a new album by The Cure waiting in the wings, what better time for an '80s revival? We can



Diana Ross and the Supremes

trust TR/ST with getting this rolling via songs such as "All at Once," "Regret" and the title track.

Just when you think you've heard almost every iteration of the female singer/songwriter possible, an artist such as **Cassandra Jenkins** comes along. With her new album, "My Light, My Destroyer" (Dead Oceans), she takes her place alongside contemporaries such as Mitski, Angel Olsen and Phoebe Bridgers, to name a few, while also carving out her unique niche. Not many artists can incorporate field recordings into an album and never once disturb the fabric of the record. Additionally, the way that Jenkins transitions from stunning folk ("Devotion") to full-tilt rock ("Clams Casino") makes it look deceptively simple even though it isn't. Jenkins also elevates a western Chicago suburb into the natural light spectacle for which it's named in "Aurora, IL," while paying

unexpected homage to a pet store (Petco). Amazing! **[Cassandra Jenkins performs in Carrboro at Cat's Cradle Backstage on March 27.]**

Straight rapper **Logic** probably took his fans by surprise with the music video for his Grammy-nominated 2017 hit single "1-800-273-8255," which featured a storyline about the outing of a gay Black teenager and the homophobia he faced from classmates at school. Regardless, the video did a lot of good, as the number in the title was for a suicide hotline. As we all know, sometimes our allies come from the most unexpected places. Logic has released his 13th album, "Ultra 85" (Bobby Boy/BMG), a double LP set on blue and white splatter vinyl. When Logic does what he does best, spitting rapid-fire rhymes and raps, the album is ultra-enjoyable. However, there are too many distracting skits that interrupt the flow. ::

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