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*Mid-Century
Modern*

BOOKS

*Make Sure You
Die Screaming*

I DO

*Neutral Wedding
Language*

RIDES

*UAW Protector
of LGBTQ+ Rights*

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*Formerly Enslaved
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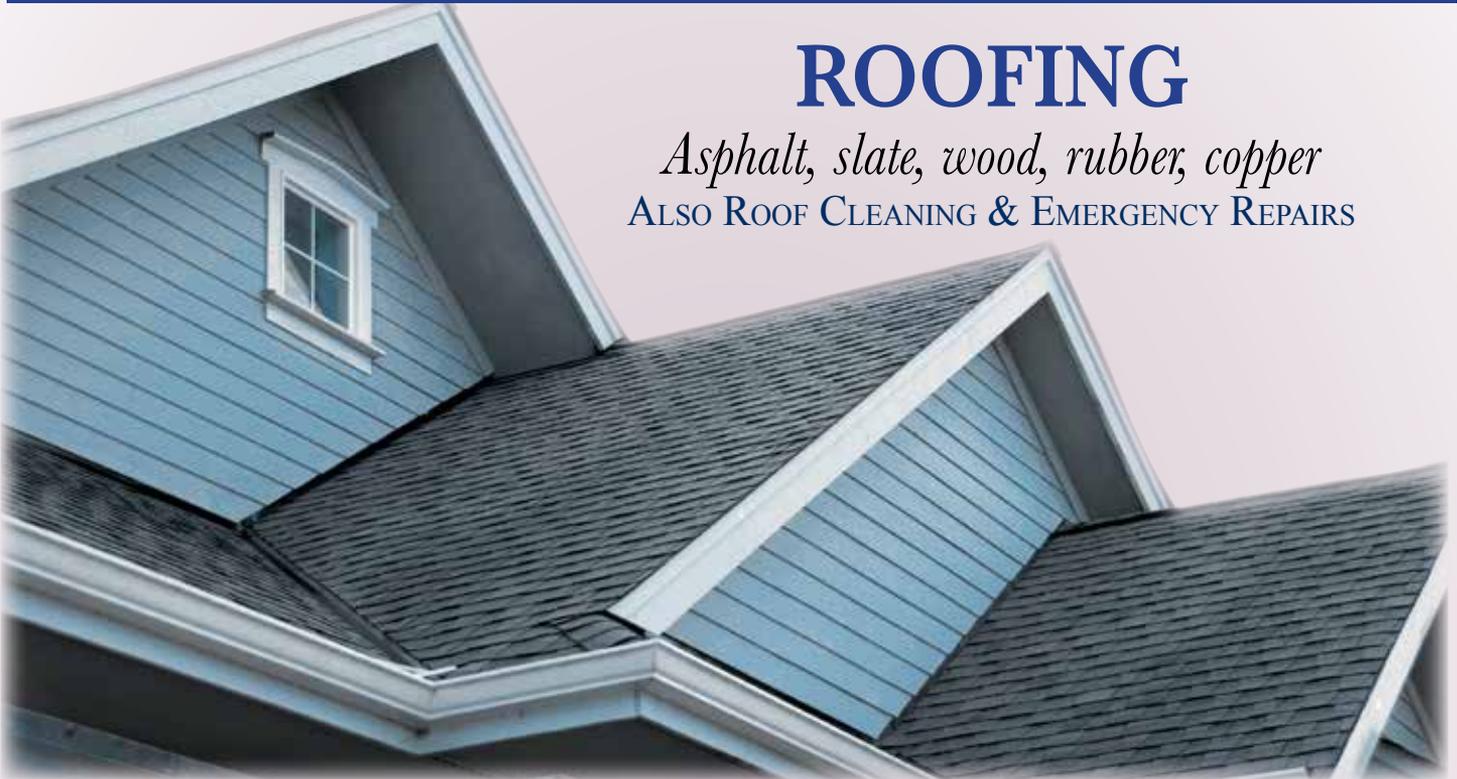
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CONTENTS



P. 22

BOSTON
PROVINCETOWN
NORTHAMPTON
PROVIDENCE
MASSACHUSETTS
CONNECTICUT
MAINE
VERMONT
NEW HAMPSHIRE
RHODE ISLAND

BOOK REVIEWS 12

MAKE SURE YOU DIE SCREAMING
WHEN THE HARVEST COMES
SHAME-SEX ATTRACTION
ONE DAY I'LL GROW UP AND
BE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

VIDEO VIEW 20

MID-CENTURY MODERN
VICIOUS
BY MARK ADAMS

OUR LGBTQ+ ANCESTORS 22

FORMERLY ENSLAVED WILLIAM DORSEY SWANN
BY JEFF PARSON

FIRST BOSTON PRIDES 26

VINTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1970-71
BY JEFF PARSON



37 **OUR CHEF TIFFANI FAISON**
OUT LESBIAN, BOSTON RESTAURATEUR
AND CELEBRITY CHEF | BY D. BULLEN

42 **JEWELRY**
AUTOMIC GOLD'S AL SANDIMIROVA
BY N. MCCARTY

46 **I DO**
GENDER NEUTRAL WEDDING LANGUAGE
BY CHLOE BELLE

53 **RIDES**
UAW PROTECTOR OF LGBTQ+ RIGHTS
BY JOHN AXLEROD

61 **MARKETPLACE SERVICE DIRECTORY**
COMMUNITY OWNED AND FRIENDLY SERVICES



P. 26



P. 46

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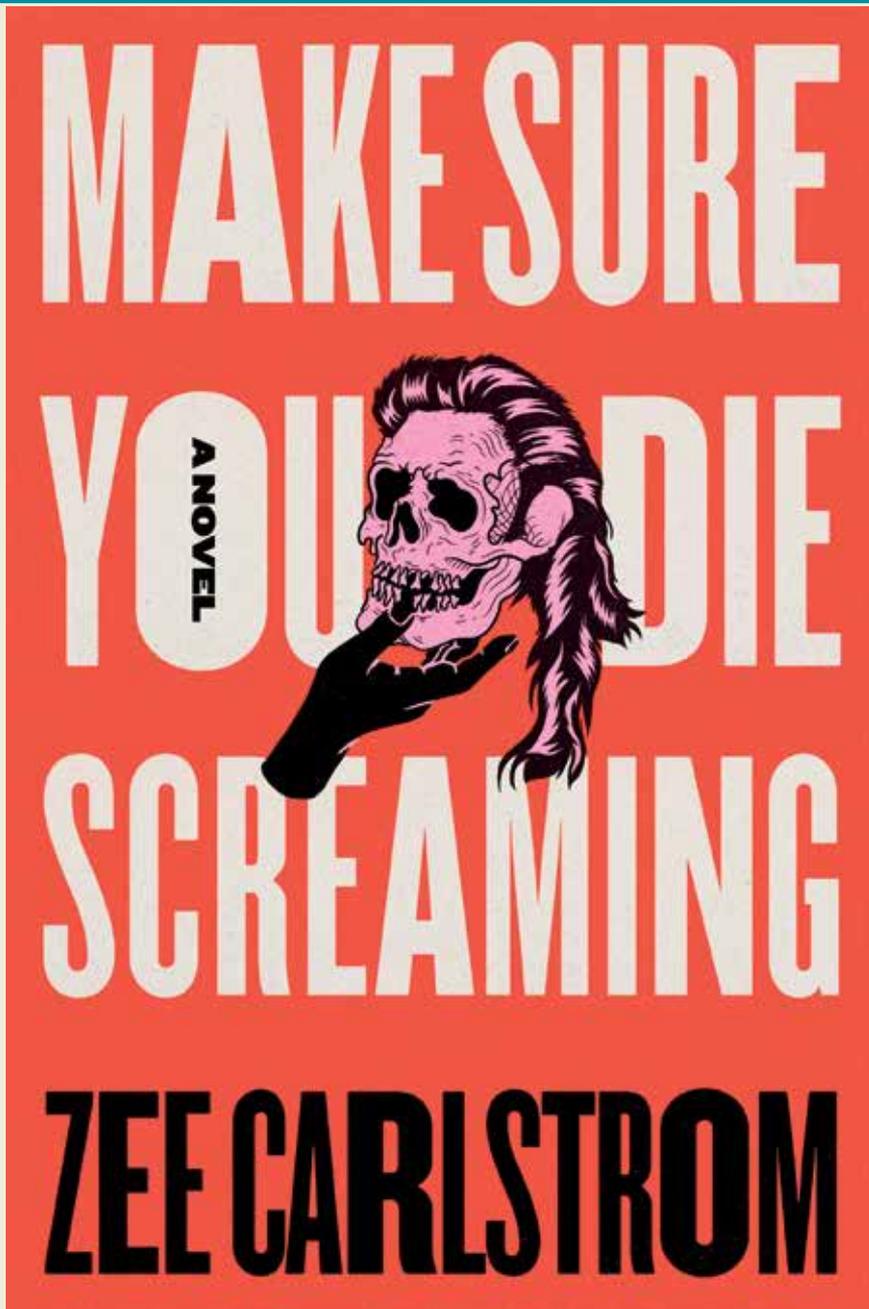
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Book Reviews by Terri Schlichenmeyer

“Make Sure You Die Screaming” by Zee Carlstrom
c.2025, Flatiron Books 224 pages

Sometimes, you just want to shut the door and forget what’s on the other side.

You could just wipe it from your memory, like it didn’t occur. Or create an alternate universe where bad things never happen to you and where, as in the new novel “Make Sure You Die Screaming” by Zee Carlstrom, you can pretend not to care.

Their mother called them “Holden,” but they’d stopped using that name and they hadn’t decided what to use now. What do you call an alcoholic, queer, pessimistic former ad executive who’s also “The World’s First Honest White Man,” although they no longer identify as a man? It’s a conundrum that they’ll have to figure out soon because a cop’s been following them almost since they left Chicago with Yivi, their psychic new best friend.

Until yesterday, they’d been sleeping on a futon in some lady’s basement, drinking whatever Yivi mixed, and trying not to think about Jenny. They killed Jenny, they’re sure of it. And that’s one reason why it’s prudent to freak out about the cop.

The other reason is that the car they're driving was stolen from their ex-boyfriend who probably doesn't know it's gone yet.

This road trip wasn't exactly well-planned. Their mother called, saying they were needed in Arkansas to find their father, who'd gone missing so, against their better judgment, they packed as much alcohol as Yivi could find and headed south. Their dad had always been unique, a cruel man, abusive, intractable; he suffered from PTSD, and probably another half-dozen acronyms, the doctors were never sure. They didn't want to find him, but their mother called...

It was probably for the best; Yivi claimed that a drug dealer was chasing her, and leaving Chicago seemed like a good thing. They wanted a drink more than anything. Except maybe not more than they wanted to escape thoughts of their old life, of Jenny and her death. And the more miles that passed, the closer they came to the end of the road. If you think there's a real possibility that "Make Sure You Die Screaming" might run off the rails a time or three, you're right. It's really out there, but not always in a bad way. Reading it, in fact, is like squatting down in a wet, stinky alley just after the trash collector has come: it's filthy, dank, and profanity-filled. Then again, it's also absurd and dark and philosophical, highly enjoyable but also satisfying and a little disturbing; Palahniuk-like but less metaphorical. That's a stew that works and author Zee Carlstrom stirs it well, with characters who are sardonic and witty while fighting the feeling that they're unredeemable losers – which they're not, and that becomes obvious. You'll see that all the way to one of the weirdest endings ever. Readers who can withstand this book's utter confusion by remembering that chaos is half the point will enjoy taking the road trip inside "Make Sure You Die Screaming." Just buckle up tight. Then shut the door, and read.

"When the Harvest Comes"
by **Denne Michele Norris**
c.2025, Random House, 304 pages

Happy is the bride the sun shines on.

Of all the cliches that exist about weddings, that's the one that seems to make you smile the most. Just invoking good weather and bright sunshine feels like a cosmic blessing on the newlyweds and their future. It's a happy omen for bride and groom or, as in the new book "When the Harvest Comes" by Denne Michele Norris, for groom and groom.

Davis Freeman never thought he could love or be loved like this. He was wildly, wholeheartedly, mind-and-soul smitten with Everett Caldwell, and life was everything that Davis ever wanted. He was a successful symphony musician in New York. They had an apartment they enjoyed and friends they cherished. Now it was their wedding day, a day Davis had planned with the man he adored, the details almost down to the stitches in their attire. He'd even purchased a gorgeous wedding gown that he'd never risk wearing.

He knew that Everett's family loved him a lot, but Davis didn't dare tickle the fates with a white dress on their big day.

Everett's dad, just like Davis's own father, had considerable reservations about his son marrying another man – although Everett's father seemed to have come to terms with his son's bisexuality. Davis's father, whom Davis called the Reverend, never would. Years ago, father and son had a falling-out that destroyed any chance of peace between Davis and his dad; in fact, the door slammed shut to any reconciliation. But Davis tried not to think about that. Not on his wedding day. Not,



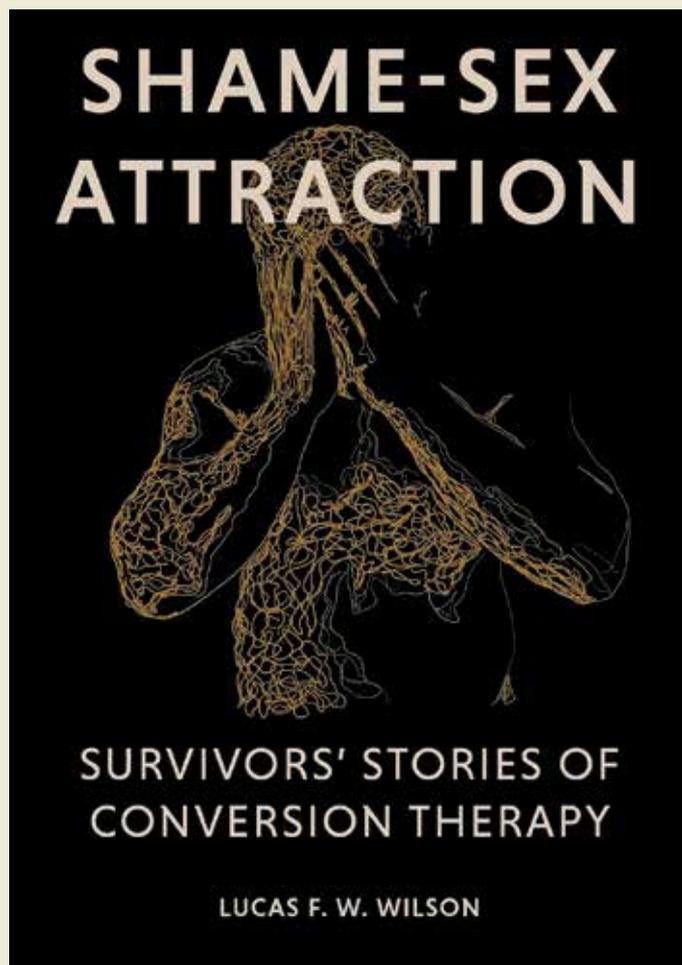
unbeknownst to him, as the Reverend was rushing toward the wedding venue, uninvited but not unrepentant. Not when there was an accident and the Reverend was killed, miles away and during the nuptials. Davis didn't know that, of course, as he was marrying the love of his life. Neither did Everett, who had familial problems of his own, including homophobic family members who tried (but failed) to pretend otherwise. Happy is the groom the sun shines on. But when the storm comes, it can be impossible to remain sunny. What can be said about "When the Harvest Comes"? It's a romance with a bit of ghost-pepper-like heat that's not there for the mere sake of titillation. It's filled with drama, intrigue, hate, characters you want to just slap, and some in bad need of a hug. In short, this book is quite stunning. Author Denne Michele Norris offers a love story that's everything you want in this genre, including partners you genuinely want to get to know, in situations that are real. This is done by putting readers inside the characters' minds, letting Davis and Everett themselves explain why they acted as they did, mistakes and all. Don't be surprised if you have to read the last few pages twice to best enjoy how things end. You won't be sorry.

If you want a complicated, boy-meets-boy, family-mess kind of book with occasional heat, "When the Harvest Comes" is your book. Truly, this novel shines.

"Shame-Sex Attraction: Survivors' Stories of Conversion Therapy"
by Lucas F. W. Wilson, foreword
by Garrard Conley

c.2025, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 190 pages

You're several weeks in, and it hasn't gotten any easier. You made your New Year's resolutions with forethought, purpose, and determination but after all this time, you still struggle, ough. You've backslid. You've cheated because change is hard. It's sometimes impossible. And in the new book, "Shame-Sex Attraction" by Lucas F.W. Wilson, it can be exceptionally traumatic. Progress does not come without problem. While it's true that the LGBTQ+ community has been adversely affected by the current administration, there are still things to be happy about, when it comes to civil rights and acceptance. Still, says Wilson, one "particularly slow-moving aspect... has been the fight against what is widely known as conversion therapy." Such practices, he says, "have numerous damaging, death-dealing, and no doubt disastrous consequences." The stories he's collected in this volume reflect that,



but they also mirror confidence and strength in the face of detrimental treatment. Writer Gregory Elsasser-Chavez was told to breathe in something repellent every time he thought about other men. He says, in the end, he decided not to "pray away the gay." Instead, he quips, he'd "sniff it away." D.Apple became her "own conversation therapist" by exhausting herself with service to others as therapy. Peter Nunn's father took him on a surprise trip, but the surprise was a conversion facility; Nunn's father said if it didn't work, he'd "get rid of" his fifteen-year-old son. Chaim Levin was forced to humiliate himself as part of his therapy. Lexie Bean struggled to make a therapist understand that they didn't want to be a man because they were "both." Jordan Sullivan writes of the years it takes "to re-integrate and become whole" after conversion therapy. Chris Csabs writes that he "tried everything to find the root of my problem" but "Nothing so far had worked." Says Syre Klenke of a group conversion session, "My heart shattered over and over as people tried to console and encourage each other.... I wonder if each of them is okay and still with us today."

Here's a bit of advice for reading "Shame-Sex Attraction": dip into the first chapter, maybe the second, then go back and

read the foreword and introduction and resume.

The reason: author Lucas F.W. Wilson's intro is deep and steep, full of footnotes and statistics, and if you're not prepared or you didn't come for the education, it might scare you away. No, the subtitle of this book is likely why you'd pick the book up so because that's what you just really wanted, indulge before backtracking. You won't be sorry; the first stories are bracing and they'll steel you for the rest, for the emotion and the tears, the horror and the unexpected humor. Be aware that there are triggers all over inside this book, especially if you've been subjected to anything like conversion therapy yourself. Remember, though, that the survivors are just that: survivors, and their strength is what makes this book worthwhile. Even so, though "Shame-Sex Attraction" is an essential read, that doesn't make it any easier.

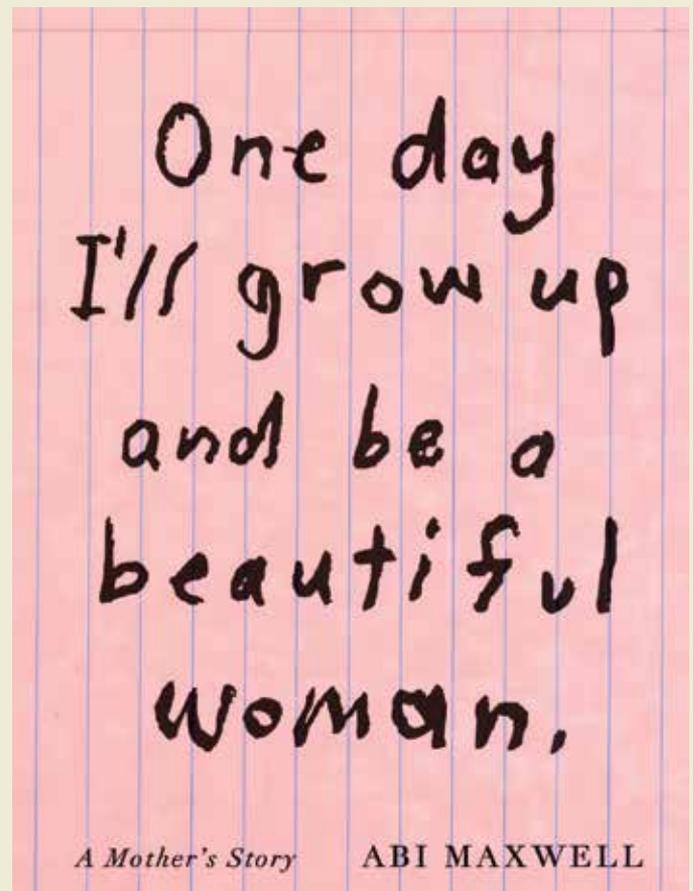
"One Day I'll Grow Up and Be a Beautiful Woman" by Abi Maxwell
c.2024, Knopf, 307 pages

"How many times have I told you that...?"

How many times have you heard that? Probably so often that, well, you stopped listening. From your mother, when you were very small. From your teachers in school. From your supervisor, significant other, or best friend. As in the new memoir "One Day I'll Grow Up and Be a Beautiful Woman" by Abi Maxwell, it came from a daughter.

When she was pregnant, Abi Maxwell took long walks in the New Hampshire woods near her home, rubbing her belly and talking to her unborn baby. She was sure she was going to have a girl but when the sonogram technician said otherwise, that was okay. Maxwell and her husband would have a son. But almost from birth, their child was angry, fierce, and unhappy. Just getting dressed each morning was a trial. Going outside was often impossible. Autism was a possible diagnosis but more importantly, Maxwell wasn't listening, and she admits it with some shame. Her child had been saying, in so many ways, that she was a girl. Once Maxwell realized it and acted accordingly, her daughter changed almost overnight, from an angry child to a calm one – though she still, understandably, had outbursts from the bullying behavior of her peers and some adults at school. Nearly every day, Greta (her new name) said she was teased, called by her former name, and told that she was a boy. Maxwell had fought for special education for Greta, once autism was confirmed. Now she fought for Greta's rights at school, and sometimes within her own family. The ACLU got involved.

State laws were broken. Maxwell reminded anyone who'd listen that the suicide rate for trans kids was frighteningly high. Few in her town seemed to care. Throughout her life, Maxwell had been in many other states and lived in other cities. New Hampshire used to feel as comforting as a warm blanket but suddenly, she knew they had to get away from it. Her "town that would not protect us." When you hold "One Day I'll Grow Up and Be a Beautiful Woman," you've got more than a memoir in your hands. You've also got a white-hot story that seethes with anger and rightful resentment, that wails for a hurt child, and rattles the bars of injustice. And yet, it coos over love of place, but in a confused manner, as if these things don't belong together. Author Abi Maxwell is honest with readers, taking full responsibility for not listening to what her preschooler was saying-not-saying, and she lets you see her emotions and her worst points. In the midst of her community-wide fight, she reveals how the discrimination Greta endured affected Maxwell's marriage and her health – all of which give a reader the sense that they're not being sold a tall tale. Read this book, and outrage becomes familiar enough that it's yours, too. Read "One Day I'll Grow Up and Be a Beautiful Woman," and share it. This is a book you'll tell others about. 🏳️‍🌈



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Chloe Belle interviews owner Kaelin Kirby

What's the history of LiRog Florists?

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What does LiRog Florists offer and can a person use your service from anywhere in New England?

People call upon LiRog for their wedding florals, casket sprays and funeral pieces when honoring and burying a loved one, celebrations such as baby showers and graduation parties and day to day "I'm sorry" and "I love you".

What are some of the unique offerings that set the LiRog Florists apart?

Here we are unique in that we make each arrangement unlike the other. We are known for putting together floral designs on the spot for all sorts of occasions. Our team shares one singular goal: to take care of your precious moments as if they were our own.

What are some of your favorite LGBTQ+ Floral events and why?

We love all our events especially considering no event is ever the same! My personal favorites are those that include and evolve around bright and vibrant florals.

Have you had many LGBTQ+ customers?

Located in the heart of Providence, everyone is welcome to share our love for flowers.

What advice would you give to an LGBTQ+ clients considering using your service?

All are welcome to pop in for a consultation or arrange a bouquet for themselves, friend, or family member. We pride ourselves in the relationships we build with our clientele.

What are some of the challenges you've faced?

Some speed bumps we have faced, like all small businesses, are navigating the times as they change. From updating our website and online platform design to revamping our social media, the world is constantly changing and evolving and thus so must we.

What makes you proud of your company?

I'm proud of my company for all we have conquered and continue to conquer each and every day. Life is short, thus all moments are precious moments.



Kaelin Kirby photo courtesy of Maisie Snyder Photography all rights reserved.



Photo courtesy of IMDb

Mid-Century Modern

Matt Bomer, Nathan Lane and Nathan Lee Graham in *Mid-Century Modern*

by Mark Adams

There comes a time when covering the Entertainment biz when you have to pause and say to yourself, “Self, what were they thinking?”

Case in point - the Hulu gay-centric sitcom “Mid-Century Modern.” The what? Mid-Century Modern, according to Google, “evokes something old yet current, rooted in nostalgia yet generally of-the-moment, behind a cultural curve yet never fully out of style.” My thoughts exactly. Wouldn’t I have enjoyed being in the writer’s room when they came up with this one? But I digress. The show with the silly title is about three older gay gentlemen who

decide to live together in Palm Springs (I guess Ft. Lauderdale was filled up), along with one’s irascible mother. The gentlemen are Matt Bomer, a popular TV hunk, in his first comedy role, Nathan Lane, who has been around since sliced bread, Nathan Lee Graham, who you might recognize from the gay movie “Theater Camp” a few years ago (I think I recommended it at the time...who remembers...) and who also appeared in the Broadway production of “Priscilla, Queen of the Desert,” and Linda Lavin, who needs no introduction, who sadly passed on before completing the series. Highly promoted as a “gay Golden Girls” (which is rather redundant, as nothing could be “gayer” than the Golden Girls...), instead of Rose,

Dorothy, Blanche, and Sophia, you get Arthur, Jerry, Bunny (with a “Y”), and Sybil. I was really looking forward to this one, as it was created by Max Mutchnick and David Kohan, who gave us “Will and Grace.”

Call it mildly disappointing, but I made it through all 10 episodes.. I’m sure there will be a second season. The series is available on Hulu, and it does pick up after the first few episodes. Filmed in front of a live audience, so that at least means no canned laughter; the cast appears to be having a good time, and you’ll probably laugh despite it all.

Speaking of laughs from some darling older queens who couldn’t use these days, check this out from a decade ago: “Vicious” is an outrageously funny sitcom by our neighbors across the pond. Similar to the one above, only better, “Vicious” is about a couple of older gentlemen who have lived together in

a London flat (apartment) for almost 50 years, and they are wicked! Except for Ash, their cute young neighbor. The leads are the great thespian Sir Ian McKellan and Derek Jacobi, who will be remembered for a brilliant performance in “I, Claudius,” many years ago. Also featured is British character actress Frances De La Tour, whom I’d never heard of before, and she is a hoot. They only did 2 seasons of this, 6 episodes each, and I can watch it again and again and still laugh myself silly (or, sillier).

You can find all of it on Tubi, a free service you can download on most media players. 🏳️‍🌈

Mark Adams has been a popular contributor to LGBTQ+ media for many years, writing extensively on film and video of interest to the community. You can email him at vidioview@gmail.com with any of your favorites for a future scribbling.



Sir Ian McKellan and Derek Jacobi in *Vicious*

Photo courtesy of IMDb

Our LGBTQ+ Ancestors

William Dorsey Swann (1858-1954)

by Jeff Parson

William Dorsey Swann was born as the property of a plantation woman named Ann Murray, but he became the world's first self-described "drag queen" and a pioneer of ballroom culture. Denied the luxury of publicly congregating in bars, Swann and his companions created the House of Swann as a place to socialize without facing public hostility. Events were secretive, and invitations were often made quietly, but the parties were noticed by the police and the press, who publicized all the details. In 1887, police raided a New Year's drag ball at Swann's "elegantly furnished" home at 1504 L Street in Northwest D.C., half a mile from the White House. The Washington Critic re-



Photo Source blackpast.org

No known photos of Swann survive. This 1903 postcard is a typical image of a drag actor performing the cake walk during that time period.

KEPT A "HELL OF INIQUITY."

Judge Kimball Sends Dorsey Swan Down for Ten Months.

William Dorsey Swan, the colored man at whose house, No. 1504 L street northwest, a "drag" was raided about two weeks ago, and who was convicted in the Police Court last week of a charge of keeping a disorderly house, was sentenced to ten months in jail by Judge Miller today. This is the case in which a number of men, white and colored, were found in this place, which Judge Miller characterized as a "hell of iniquity." There were several colored men and one white man reported to be of the character of Swan, and during the trial of the case in court there appeared young men of respectable parentage who told of how they had visited this place, danced and indulged in strong drink of all kinds, from beer to champagne.

A large stock of liquors found on the premises was in court as evidence, but Dorsey said that he didn't have to buy the liquor.

In disposing of the case Judge Miller told of the fearful revelations made at the trial, the downfall and ruin of young men, and said he only wished he had power to impose a ten years' sentence.

"I would like to send you where you would never again see a man's face," said the judge, "and would then like to rid the city of all other disreputable persons of the same kind. Thieving and petty assaults amount to nothing as compared with the conduct of these people."

Mr. Mullowny, for the prosecution, asked for a year's sentence, but this the court did not impose, but gave him ten months.

Clipping from the *Evening Star* of William Dorsey Swann's arrest in January 1896

ported that "six colored men, dressed in elegant female attire, were arraigned in the dock at the Police Court this morning on a charge of being suspicious persons... They nearly all had on low neck and short sleeve silk dresses, several of them with trains," as well as "corsets, bustles, long hose and slippers, and everything that goes to make a female's dress complete." But the parties continued, and a year later, The Washington Post detailed the raid on Swann's 30th birthday gathering of 30 men in drag, arresting Swann in the first documented case of an arrest for female impersonation in the U.S. on April 12, 1888. "Negro Dive Raided," a headline blared, and "Thirteen Black Men Surprised at Supper and Arrested." According to the papers, most of the men were dressed in elegant gowns, while at least two were completely naked. The article noted that "a big negro named Dorsey" was "arrayed in a gorgeous dress of cream-colored satin." Swann tried to stop the police, telling the officer

in charge, “You are no gentleman.” In the brawl that followed, Swann’s gorgeous dress was torn to shreds. When taken into custody, five of Swann’s guests gave “feminine” names to the officers. Two of the men arrested that day, Benjamin and Daniel Swann, were Swann’s brothers. Daniel did not only participate in the drag events but also sewed dresses for them. Swann was charged with “being a suspicious character,” 19th-century public code for prostitution, and running a “house of ill repute.” There was no evidence of this alleged crime.

On a separate occasion, on New Year’s Eve 1895, Swann and three other Black men were arrested as they were preparing to host a benefit for some of Swann’s white friends, all of whom came in as witnesses during the trial. The trial, which was presided over by Judge Kimball Miller, received a great deal of local attention, as many young men of “respectable parentage” appeared to give accounts of how they had visited Swann’s home and indulged in dancing and drinking alcohol.

Swann contested the charges, appealing to the sitting president, Grover Cleveland, making him the first recorded American to take political and legal steps to defend the LGBTQ+ community’s right to gather without threat of state or individual violence. However, presiding Judge Miller had not made a secret of his dislike for Swann and his friends, and he sentenced Swann to 10 months in prison for running a disorderly house.

In spite of, or because of the notoriety, the L Street drag balls set trends for subversive culture. Swann is credited with popularizing the old slave tradition of the Cake Walk, which would become a famous move when it was introduced in Paris, France, in 1902. The tradition of the cakewalk began in the enslaved quarters of Southern plantations. It was a grand promenade dance where couples would take turns performing. The couple with the best dancing skills would then “take the cake.” But the cakewalk was more than a recreational dance; it also gave a chance for repressed people to dress up in their finest clothes and ridicule and parody the mannerisms and dancing of the white Southern elite who tyrannized them.

According to Smithsonian Magazine, when Swann claimed the title “queen of drag,” he was also echoing the phrase “queen of freedom,” referring to the woman chosen by each neighborhood to personify freedom for Black people and represent their communities in Emancipation Day parades.

As we face the very real threat of administrations around the country criminalizing drag, it’s important that we look back, pay tribute, and channel the boldness of the queer men and women before us, who, under dire circumstances, created homes, safe

havens, and places of solace where queerness could not only be accepted but celebrated and flaunted.

Swann can be viewed as an LGBTQ+ rights pioneer because, over a century before the Stonewall riots, he was politically resisting the establishment’s desire to crush LGBTQ+ people’s rights of expression in society. His boldness in being himself and in being a spokesperson in an era where homosexuality and crossdressing were criminalized emboldened a community of others like him to step out of the shadows and be themselves as well.

Much of what we know today about William Dorsey Swann comes down from Washington newspapers, which published articles about the raids. A 2021 biography, *House of Swann*, by Channing Joseph, tells the forgotten history of the earliest efforts at queer resistance and liberation in America, which pointed the way from the dirt of slavery to the high glamour of Pose, and Emmy-winning cultural colossus, RuPaul’s Drag Race. 🏳️‍🌈



Parisian Poster for the popular *The Cakewalk* which was a dance and musical style that originated in the 19th century with Black American slaves as a subtle mockery of the mannered dances of white slaveholders. Many drag performers were featured in these shows.



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EARLY BOSTON PRIDES



View of the large crowd in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston, some of whom are holding up handmade signs and banners, participating in a march from Cambridge to Boston in 1970.

by Jeff Parson,

Photographs modified, enhanced and colorized

Courtesy of History Channel, HuffPost, The History Project

The fight for equality started in New England, parallel to the Stone Wall Riots. The early brave Boston activists were committed to showing  p.28



Above: Marchers at the corner of Boylston Street during Boston's first Pride March on June 26, 1971.



Left: Marchers near Tremont Street and the Boston Common during Boston's first Pride March on June 26, 1971.

LOVE IS ALL LOVE IS ALL YOU LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

One year ago this week members of New York's gay community threw off the yoke of oppression, stood up, and fought back. It was Christopher Street Liberation.

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The New Homosexual – Dialogue With A Straight World. A seminar on Saturday 27 June at 12 noon, St. John the Evangelical Church (Episcopal), 33 Bowdoin Street on Beacon Hill.

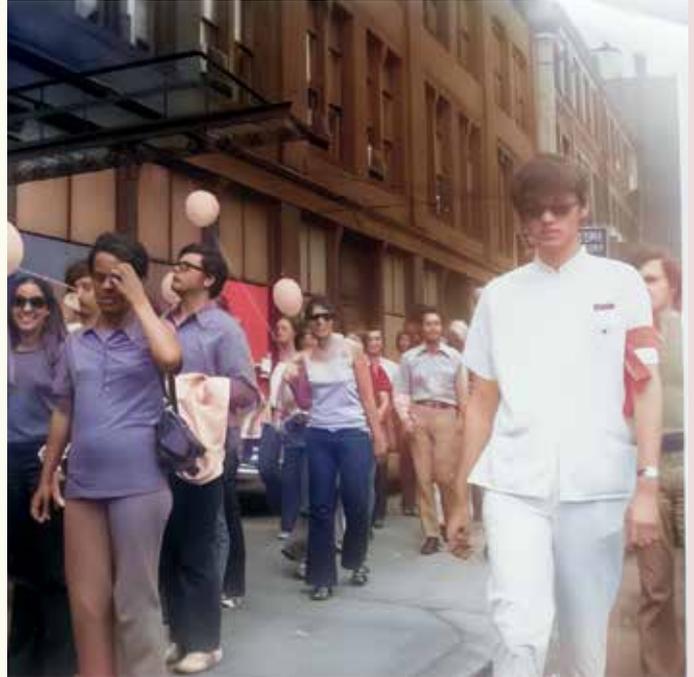
Why Can't We Have A Dance in Boston, or Does the Cradle of Liberty Rock Only One Way? A Panel Discussion sponsored by the Gay Liberation Front, Saturday 27 June, 2:00 pm at the Charles Street Meeting House (Unitarian Universalist) on Beacon Hill.

Same or Different – The Homosexual Life Style Examined. A seminar

Above: A flyer from Boston's first Pride activities, then called Christopher Street Liberation commemoration events in 1970.

Below: Marchers in the Boston Common during Boston's first Pride March on 1971.

Below: Marchers with balloons during Boston's first Pride March on June 26, 1971.





Attendees outside the Massachusetts State House hold a sign that reads "FEMALE LIBERATION" during Boston's first Pride March on June 26, 1971. Another sign reads "REPEAL ALL ANTI-GAY LAWS held by a group from the Socialist Workers Party."

up, advancing progress, and fighting for equality — just as the LGBTQ+ community has always done. In 1969, the Stone Wall Riots also inspired LGBTQ+ people across the country to a new era of activism. Greater Boston Pride began in June 1970, when a small group of about 50 gay and lesbian activists marched from the Cambridge Common to the Boston Common, where they held a rally commemorating the Stonewall riots. A year later on June 26, 1971, about 300 people attended the first official Boston Pride March. This was a distinctly political event that was preceded by a full week of workshops on various issues affecting the emerging gay community, such as coming out and gay spirituality. The march which stopped at four locations in the city: Jacque's (a drag bar), the Boston police headquarters, the Massachusetts State House, and St. Paul's Cathedral. At each location, marchers read off their demands and grievances: misogyny, police harassment, legal discrimination, and religious persecution, respectively. After the march, a rally was held with a "closet-smashing" demonstration. 🏳️‍🌈

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Our Celebrity Chef Tiffani Faison

by D. Bullen

You may know out lesbian Boston restaurateur and celebrity chef Tiffani Faison by the Sweet Cheeks Q biscuits, which Forbes named 'the best in the world.'

Perhaps you have stopped at standing-room-only Fool's Errand, inspired by European tapas bars, which serves 'adult snacks' such as smoked beef tongue finger sandwiches with raclette, corn and black pepper croquettes, and crispy potato mille-feuille, as well as a selection of seafood bites and desserts.

You may have popped in for lobster rolls, Po' Boys, and oysters at the Dive Bar at High Street Place or for a drink at Bubble Bath Boston, a Champagne and wine bar.

Perhaps you got a chance to visit her Southeast Asian-themed restaurant, Tiger Mama, which was open from 2015 to 2021, or Orfano, which served Italian-American cuisine and was open from 2019 to 2022.

Wherever you have crossed her path, you'd have found that each of her restaurants has touches that show acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community, like the campy disco elephant host stand at Tenderoni, accompanied by the glowing "cheesy" sign on the ceiling, glittery roller skates on shelves 



Tiffani Faison

by the bar, retro painted lines on the floor, and its monthly ticketed drag brunches.

In each of Faison's Big Heart Hospitality properties, exquisite cuisine is paired with an atmosphere of conviviality, festivity, and intimacy, inviting you to come as you are, love who you love, and enjoy a raucous celebration of food and atmosphere together.

Faison was born to American parents in Bremerhaven, Germany, where her father was stationed in the United States military. After her family returned to the States, they settled in Santa Rosa, California, where Faison got her start in the food business at fourteen in a 1950s diner. She says that she loved the chaos of keeping up with orders for milkshakes and ice cream sundaes and also loved seeing the looks of delight on people's faces when she delivered the sundaes to their tables.

Following her father from military base to military base, Faison was exposed to a wide range of

cultures' cuisines and culinary rituals, following her mother's rule: "You don't have to like it, but you do have to try it." Faison says that her mother was a good cook, but in her household, food was not an art form.

Faison has said in numerous interviews that when she moved from the front of the house to the kitchen, cooking professionally was not love at first sight. She had been bartending in Boston when 9/11 happened. She quit her job at the Ritz-Carlton, "where ladies and gentlemen served ladies and gentlemen," she says, and she took a position at Todd English's Bonfire restaurant, where she ventured into the kitchen—without any training or skills.

It is hard to imagine someone who has won the Tournament of Champions cooking competition with three different ways to prepare rabbits ever being asked, 'How do you not know how to chop an onion?' But she had not gone to culinary school, so the kitchen was trial by fire.

Faison says that she treated the pace, controlled cha-

Tiffani and friends at her monthly drag brunch at the Tenderoni. Photo courtesy of TiffaniFaison.com





Chef Tiffani Faison won Food Network's Tournament of Champions in 2022. Photo courtesy of Aram Boghosian

os, and expertise of culinary-school-trained chefs as a challenge, and she determined to either “get good or get out.” With hard work modeled on her mother’s work ethic and determination born of her time in college debate club, prepping for tournaments, she absorbed the knowledge and techniques that ultimately led her to compete on *Top Chef* in 2006, where she took second place. She then traveled widely, cooking in prestigious kitchens from Nantucket to New Orleans to Los Angeles and San Francisco, while logging additional appearances in *Top Chef All-Stars* and *Chef Duels*, in addition to serving as a judge on *Chopped*, *Guy’s Grocery Games*, or *Beat Bobby Flay*.

After working as chef de partie under Daniel Boulud, helping to open his signature Michelin Star restaurant in the Wynn Las Vegas, and working as well at Tao Asian Bistro at The Venetian, also in Las Vegas, Faison returned to Boston in 2010, where she became executive chef at Rocca Kitchen and Bar, a Southern Italian restaurant, then opened Sweet Cheeks Q

in 2011 and Tiger Mama in 2015. Boston Magazine named her “Best Chef: General Excellence” in 2016, and she was a finalist for the James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Northeast four times, in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022. After she won the Tournament of Champions, she was named Best Chef in the State of Massachusetts by Boston Magazine in 2022.

Running a business and particularly a restaurant was new to her, Faison says that no one particular person had shown her what to expect as an out restaurant owner. Although she says her friendship with Elizabeth Faulkner, the famous San Francisco pastry chef and owner of Citizen Cake, whose cakes were de rigueur for queer celebrations was an inspiration. She says that when she showed up for the first season of *Top Chef*, no one asked her about her sexual preference, but says that it was never a question not to be exactly who she was, and now that she was opening up her own establishments, she was determined to run the kind of restaurant she had always wanted to work in, where staff and



guests alike would be free to be themselves. Faison has won industry praise for collaborating with her staff to eliminate the systemic misogyny, sexism, and even brutality she had historically witnessed in restaurants and for standing on principle when necessary, even parting ways with staff or guests who could not get along. Her restaurants include a 5% kitchen fee on all bills as well as a firm zero-tolerance policy so that her employees never have to endure harassment of any kind.



Tiffani at her restaurant, Tenderoni's. Photo courtesy of Adam Detour

"I have worked tirelessly," she says, "to make sure that our work environment is free of harassment and discrimination. "If someone is engaging in that behavior, they're gone. I just don't put up with it. We've created an environment where people can be exactly who they are and valued for their identity."

Faison says that her employees are sometimes surprised to find that the work is hard and the expectations are high, but she has earned a loyal staff, with numerous long-standing members of her leadership team. For a time, Faison was married to Kelly Flynn, a trained chef with a management degree, who became her business partner, although the couple divorced in 2021.

Faison says that when she moved from the kitchen to the office, she was hungry for the business side of running restaurants and relished the education she received. She puzzled over accounts and worked with suppliers, figuring out how to help local farms showcase their premiere products while also managing costs.

Faison has also become active in the LGBTQ+ community. She shared a similar Instagram message for Lesbian Visibility Day in April 2020, writing, "I am so grateful for my queer family and our allies," and she posted a vintage school picture on Instagram on National Coming Out Day in October 2021, along with a moving caption: "As hard as it may seem, coming out is the first step to freedom, autonomy, love, and pride. The world needs you, and you matter," Faison wrote. In reflecting on her accomplishments today, she says that she is no longer interested in bringing attention to herself. She would rather focus on her guests, creating spaces where all kinds of people can feel comfortable and at home. She also fosters environments in which her staff can grow and develop, as she has watched a number of them move on to produce their own successful restaurants and cooking careers.



The popular Dive Bar with the best Clam Chowder in Boston

Faison's hard work has developed her culinary and business chops to the point where having a new idea involves opening a new business and inviting people into the world of her cooking and atmosphere, but she says that the next challenge she wants to tackle is to write a cookbook, to put what she's learned in print. In this, she says that she is following in the footsteps of New York food writer Laurie Woolever, who worked as Mario Batali's assistant and collaborated with Anthony Bourdain until he took his own life in 2018. Woolever told her own story in a new memoir called *Care and Feeding*, describing her experiences with famous bosses and her own growth as a professional.

Faison has also volunteered with an HIV/AIDS organization in Sonoma County after she came out. She now sits on the board of directors for The Boston Alliance of Lesbian Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer Youth (Bagly). This youth-led and adult-supported organization has been creating, sustaining, and advocating for programs, policies, and services for LGBTQ+ youth for the past 50 years, with a free sexual health clinic and youth leadership and advocacy program, among other programs.

Faison also sits on the Board of Directors for Women Chefs and Restaurateurs, which showcases and supports women in the hospitality industry. Due to her commitment to the state's restaurant business, she was appointed to The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Restaurant Promotion Commission, which develops recommendations and best practices for promoting the Commonwealth's restaurant industry. She also uses her platform to increase visibility for Fenway Health, which grew out of the free clinical movement of the 1970s, The Hope House, which provides individualized treatment to those living with a substance use disorder, The Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce, which cultivates inclusive relationships to drive economic impact, and PFLAG, which supports, educates, and advocates for



Tiffani's Bubble Bath is a Champagne and wine bar in Boston

LGBTQ+ people and their families.

So the next time you make a reservation, head to Sweet Cheeks Q or Fool's Errand, or stop by Bubble Bath, Tenderoni's, or Dive Bar at High Street Place and raise a glass to the chef, the staff, and the vibrant, delicious, raucous, and celebratory LGBTQ+ community. 🏳️‍🌈

AUTOMIC GOLD'S ALSANDIMIROVA

by Nicholas McCarty

LGBTQ+ refugee creates jewelry for the community

Genderqueer jewelry maker AL Sandimirova (who uses they/them pronouns) left AL's indigenous Chuvash community in Tatarstan Russia to come to the U.S. as an LGBTQ+ refugee in 2009, after having been institutionalized after AL's parents found lesbian fanfiction on their computer.

At first, AL stayed in New York, finding work in the Russian community, working at a gold refinery for \$4 an hour, tolerating the poor and degrading workplace conditions while learning English. A decade later, AL was recently featured on CNBC for bringing in \$4.8M in revenue in 2024 and for giving bonus checks to 15 employees after a blockbuster year for Automic Gold, AL's NY-based brand.

Automic Gold is a queer, trans-owned fine jewelry company that creates timeless, genderless pieces with only sustainable and durable materials, including recycled sol-



AL Sandimirova with 'Adorable' Luna

id 14k gold and platinum with reclaimed and ethically sourced diamonds and gemstones in sizes from 2-16. Jewelry ranges from chic stud earrings, versatile charms, and classic chains to signature pieces like threaders and the Tanlah collection, as well as nameplates and custom jewelry.

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Coming to the States and getting started

AL says that they “came to the U.S. without money, education, English, and family.” In 2011, in addition to being granted asylum and becoming a legal resident, AL started buying and repairing used gold and diamond jewelry and reselling it on eBay. AL completed certification in diamond grading through the GIA in 2013, graduated from the Jewelry Arts Institute for jewelry making in 2015, and completed jewelry-making and stone-setting courses from Studio Jewelers LTD in 2016.

AL says that in an inventory of 30,000 pieces they maintained on Ebay, most things “were too feminine or too masculine.” “At the time,” AL says, “I was very, very feminine. I wore more diamonds and studs. After a while, I realized what my identity was. I am non-binary, particularly non-binary, with a more masculine style. Working with fine jewelry and diamonds, everything is so feminine or overly masculine, which also doesn’t fit me. So I started to create pieces to just wear myself, and people started asking and buying.” One of the first distinctive pieces was the threader.

AL came out in 2017, the same year they started the brand and website. It includes “Au,” the chemical abbreviation for gold, to imply “autonomy,” independence, and freedom.

Capitalizing on Chuvash origins

One of AL’s creative sources is of indigenous Chuvash descent. “It was considered degrading to be Chuvash,” AL says, although the name ‘Chuvash’ means ‘friendly’ or ‘peaceful.’ AL’s research found that the Chuvash people once welcomed and revered gender variance. If a Chuvash child wanted to change their gender, their parents would ride with them on a horse under a rainbow. Once they crossed the rainbow, the child’s gender would switch over. People who blended masculine and feminine energies “were believed to be shamans, and the courage to do it was considered proof that God had blessed them with powers.” This heritage-inspired AL’s designs. “I created the Tanlah collection to honor my culture but also to create a design anyone can wear.” The symbol represents “duality, good and evil, life and death and helping one another...This is a symbol I like to wear daily to remind me that if anything bad happens, there is always good

around the corner.”

AL’s company Automic Gold is a rare jeweler who offers extended sizes, but AL asks, “Why doesn’t everyone do all sizes? I am a small size, but I prefer more masculine rings, which don’t really come in my size. That’s why I make my own. At the same time, other trans people will come to me and say, ‘I want something very feminine, but I’m a very large size,’ and I’m like, perfect. I will design it. I love it.”

Embracing Autism

AL has also claimed autistic culture following AL’s diagnosis. “I think I need to thank autism for being a big part of my success,” AL said. “I’m obsessed with jewelry and design in the best ways, and working on every small detail brings me joy. I cannot imagine seeing the world in any other way.” All Automic Gold designs accommodate sensory issues, and every piece is comfort-tested to provide the same sensory-safe experience to others. AL recently created the Infinity collection as a tribute to the Autistic community.

Taking off

AL says that the “goal was never to be an entrepreneur. Growing up in a communist country, I never really thought about business like that, but it’s such a big American dream I’m living now.” After building the brand, Automic Gold withdrew from Amazon, 



Spider with Pearl & Web Body Chain 925 sterling silver

Walmart, and eBay in 2020 to recoup the 30% commission charges and invest in operating expenses and employees' paychecks.

AL says that the summer of 2020 and the George Floyd protests gave the brand a higher visibility. Automic Gold had already established a reputation for prioritizing members of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, and plus-sized models. [It] skyrocketed my business because people say, 'Oh, you're

actually sustainable and fair, not just using [diversity] to sell," AL says. "I've been doing this for years." "I remember when I started my business, it was totally niche," AL says. "Now, my competitors, who before only had feminine white girls as inspiration, include more masculine folks or plus-sized people. It's nice to see." But running a business also became a mission of its own." "In the past," AL says, "whenever I would tell somebody that I was a



Solid Gold Celestial Jewelry Collection

small business owner, they would say, "Oh, you have an Etsy store, and you make jewelry in your apartment. How cute?"

"I was always like, No, I employ people. Fuck you." AL says that they have had funding offers, "but I refuse to take funding or loans because I want to build a business that will be good for the environment, for customers, and for employees. Giving back is part of the vision. The Automic Gold web-

site says that "At least 10% of our proceeds are donated directly to people in need via GoFundMe or GiveButter to support LGBTQ+ and Indigenous people and causes, and 100% of the proceeds from our Watermelon Charm go directly to Palestinian families in Gaza."

For more information on Automic Gold's collection see www.automicgold.com 



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GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

for your special day

Couple sitting in living room together after their wedding ceremony. Photo By Akesin | Dreamstime.com

By Chloe Belle

Weddings are so steeped in tradition that their customary vocabulary can creep in from a thousand directions to impose a retrograde hetero-normativity. Considering the ordinary terms, from fiancé and fiancée to bridesmaids and groomsmen, wedding planning can be a minefield of language threatening to push the proceedings back toward the closet.

Inclusive vocabulary is out there, though, to translate each of the traditional terms into language that will make your special day a unique occasion, where the choice of wording is as personal to your vision as a couple as the clothing, décor, and the blueprints for your wedding. In addition, gender-neutral language will show your guests that your commitment to each other is also a commitment to the community that attaches profound meaning to the choice of terms. It's also essential that swapped names approximate

the terms they're replacing so that the swap does not feel onerous. Fortunately, translating the two syllables of 'bridal party' to the two syllables of 'wedding party' or 'bridal bouquet' to 'wedding bouquet' is simple; at the same time, it's a great way to help family members join you in inclusive language that makes your day about you, and not about the history of property relations between families.

1. **Celebrant** (instead of bride or groom)

This is an inclusive term means anyone person engaged to be married, and shifts the basis of the relationship so that it gestures toward the rite where you are the central participants.

2. **Marrier** (instead of bride or groom)

This word has been in use since the 1500s to mean "the one who marries." Since meanings are fluid, you can also use "marrier" as a term to mean the officiant conducting the rites.



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3. Nearlywed or To-be-wed (as opposed to fiancé or fiancée)

“Nearlywed” gives you the forward-leaning excitement of being someone who’s about to participate in a momentous event without traipsing through the gendering traditions of Romance languages.

4. Wedding Suite (as opposed to bridal suite)

This switch is not hard for people to follow, as it indicates the rooms where celebrants prepare for the ceremony. Just make sure you have a transparent way to indicate Wedding Suite Ariel from Wedding Suite Zahara.

5. Wedding Gown (instead of bridal gown)

A wedding gown carries the same essential meaning as a bridal gown—a gown worn on the singular occasion of a wedding—without gendering the wearer.

6. Wedding Shower (in lieu of a bridal shower)

Like “wedding gown,” a wedding shower is an easy, no-nonsense swap that allows you to describe your prewedding festivities without importing our culture’s gender-ideology baggage. Couples have also adopted the term “couple’s shower,” particularly if they are having one joint prewedding event.



Couple dancing together at their wedding reception. Photo By Seventyfourimages | Dreamstime.com



Couple walking up the aisle at their ocean side wedding ceremony. Photo By Aleksei Gorodenkov | Dreamstime.com

7. Partner A and Partner B (instead of bride or groom)

When dealing with vendors who need to know each celebrant's name and details, swapping Partner A and Partner B for bride and groom keeps the information clear while dispensing with out-of-date terminology.

8. Couple (as opposed to 'the bride and groom')

"The couple" keeps things simple and straightforward, swapping out bride and groom, and at the same time, the term accentuates the unity that the wedding has accomplished.

9. Attendants (in lieu of bridesmaids or groomsmen)

These are the gender-liberated guests who attend, witness, and facilitate the wedding. Think of the way the ancient Greeks described their gods as having attendants, and you can see the importance of this role in accomplishing the matrimonial rites.

10. Person of Honor (instead of maid of honor or best man)

We haven't fought for marriage equality all these years to still be saddled with restrictive terms like maid of honor or best man if they aren't appropriate or reflective of the marrying couple's intentions. Swapping in person of honor opens the door to creativity, inclusivity, and respect for the individuals involved.

11. Bach Party or bachelorx party

This is the new name for any prewedding festivities, weekends, or vacations devoted to prepping the celebrant and their special attendants for the transformative rites.

12. Flower Child (instead of flower girl)

This one has been used for so long that it's barely a swap.



GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

13. Primary Bouquet

In weddings where multiple people carry or wear flowers, it's easy enough to indicate whose flowers are whose by using people's names, but when it comes to the one fateful bouquet whose tossing bestows the next matrimonial event on the catcher, 'bridal bouquet' is easily replaced with 'wedding bouquet,' indicating that whoever catches these over-the-head-heaved-flowers will stage the next event.

14. Head table (instead of King's table)

No need to invoke the monarchy or the patriarchy in your seating arrangements. Head, main, or central tables will get the message across without invoking any despots or their histories of inbreeding, conquest, or spousal executions.

15. Please welcome, for the first time, the happy newlyweds! instead of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so

None of this says that the language accompanying weddings must be replaced. If two women want to marry as bride and bride, and those are the terms they're comfortable with, fantastic! Plenty of LGBTQ weddings take "Mrs. & Mrs." or "Mr. & Mr." themes by design.

We're just providing this list of alternatives" so you can make the choice that reflects your own particular creative approach to calling people what they are: two very fortunate people who found their partners in each other, and now get to prove to all the world that love is love! 🏳️



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Early Protector of LGBTQ Rights

by John Axelrod

To tell the story of LGBTQ+ rights and unions in America, it sometimes helps to paint with a broad brush and tell the story of mass movements and changes in American labor, such as the influx of women into manufacturing jobs during World War II, the advent of financial independence, an all-women social scene, and the rise of lesbian communities. This increased visibility led to the first wave of feminism, which coincided with women campaigning to keep their jobs when the men came home from war.

The movement that led unions to protect LGBTQ+ workers built on the shoulders of women like Edith Van Horn, who was elected chief steward of Local 3, the largest local union in any factory in the country. She had moved from defense plants to the wire room in Dodge Main in Detroit and eventually became the first woman to serve on the UAW Local 3 Executive Board. Van Horn led work stoppages in these roles to oppose Chrysler putting women in lower-paying roles.

According to James McQuaid, an LGBTQ+ labor historian, van Horn was threatened by government McCarthyites who accused her of communist ties. Still, the women in her plant protected her, and she ultimately prevailed in getting Chrysler to reverse pay cuts.

AFTER THE WAR

LGBTQ+ labor historian James McQuaid says that following the war, women did not go back to the kitchen willingly, but activists such as Elizabeth Hawes, who served in an airplane assembly factory in New



York, wrote books about women in manufacturing, predicting a revolutionary world where men and women split domestic and economic labor, allowing women to enjoy careers outside the home.

These books inspired the next generation of feminists, who started progressing through the 1970s along with waves of liberalism that won rights for public employees, teachers, sanitation workers, and LGBTQ people.

Women in the UAW were joined by African-American workers who formed The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) in May 1968 in the Chrysler Corporation's Dodge Main assembly plant as a splinter group from the UAW, which sought to protect Black workers

from the plants and also to challenge the UAW.

AFTER STONEWALL

McQuaid says that after the watershed moment of the Stonewall riot in June 1969, unions started to take LGBTQ+ discrimination seriously as a threat to divide the ranks and weaken labor. LGBTQ+ workers started to gain more visibility in the workplace as part of a national movement for the acknowledgment of rights and respect.

GARY KAPANOWSKI

LGBTQ+ labor historian McQuaid describes worker solidarity as a powerful force that was unexpectedly tolerant of differences in sexuality when workers' common economic interests were in danger. He tells the story of Gary Kapanows-

Photo Courtesy of Webster University



Edith Van Horn, UAW Executive Board



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ki, who worked for Briggs Beauty Ware, which had started as a major automotive player till Briggs was bought out by Chrysler, except for the Beauty Ware stamping plant in Sterling Heights. At this plant, Kapanowski was a member of UAW Local 212. Kapanowski was gay but not out, studying early childhood education and working his way through school.

When shutdown rumors started to swirl around the plant, and rumors that Briggs might be moving to Tennessee, Kapanowski ran to be on the contract negotiation committee in 1973. He campaigned to include contract language requiring Briggs not to leave, but he lost the election after Briggs had promised never to move. As soon as the election was over, Briggs almost immediately announced they were relocating to Knoxville, TN. They

offered to let workers relocate, but they would take a 60% wage cut, and there would not be a union.

Kapanowski ran for a shop committee chairman to make Briggs amend contract language to get workers a fair share of pensions. His candidacy upset incumbent local leadership, who were cozy with the company, and he was harassed and stalked at work. One of his romantic interests was outed and driven out of the state. His opponents tried to frame him for possession of narcotics and distribution of porn, but he lawyered up and got the charges dropped. Still, the day before the election, he came to work to find orange and black flyers outing him—not only to his co-workers but to his family, for his father and uncle both worked at the same plant.

McQuaid says that Kapanowski considered quitting

but went to work and found that he had won by a 2:1 margin over the next candidate.

When Kapanowski threatened a strike over forced overtime, the UAW came in and placed the shop under receivership to show that they could control the local chapter. However, the workers walked out, refusing to enter the building until Kapanowski's stewardship was reinstated.

In the end, Briggs agreed to add \$1M to the pension fund and make concessions on shift length. Gary went on to form and become the President of AFSCME Local 1723.

FIRST CONTRACTS

In 1974, the American Federation of Teachers became the first union to pass a resolution opposing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Also, in 1974, a partnership between San Francisco's gay community and the Team-

sters to boycott non-union Coors Brewing Company grew into a national boycott that forced Coors to discontinue its discrimination policy against union supporters and LGBTQ+ community members.

Then, in 1978, Harvey Milk established a coalition with the Teamsters, building the coalition larger to fight the Briggs ballot initiative in California (not related to Briggs Beauty Ware), which would have criminalized homosexuality.

In 1979, the AFL-CIO recognized the rights of gay people at work, amending their Constitution to accommodate sexual orientation, and called for federal legislation banning workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. LGBTQ+ caucuses were founded in many unions as thousands of gay members organized to protect their rights.



Gary honored at a Pride At Work Event

When the AFL-CIO failed to endorse marriage equality in the early 1990s, LGBTQ union activists founded Pride at Work in 1994 to represent and advocate for LGBTQ+ union members. Ultimately, their influence campaign turned the AFL-CIO into supporters of marriage equality. In the 1980s, LGBTQ+ labor activism had largely been redirected to HIV/AIDS. However, the 80s also saw the UAW organize the Village Voice workers, where they negotiated the first contract that ensured domestic partnership benefits, so if your partner was (legally, at the time) fired for being HIV+, you could still get them healthcare. For many LGBTQ+ people, a union card is the best protection against workplace discrimination. This is largely because of the efforts of activists dating back to the 30s and 40s, who built the ties of worker solidarity that allowed their communities and workplaces to recognize that work is work and that LGBTQ+ workers have contributions to make alongside their peers. 🏳️‍🌈

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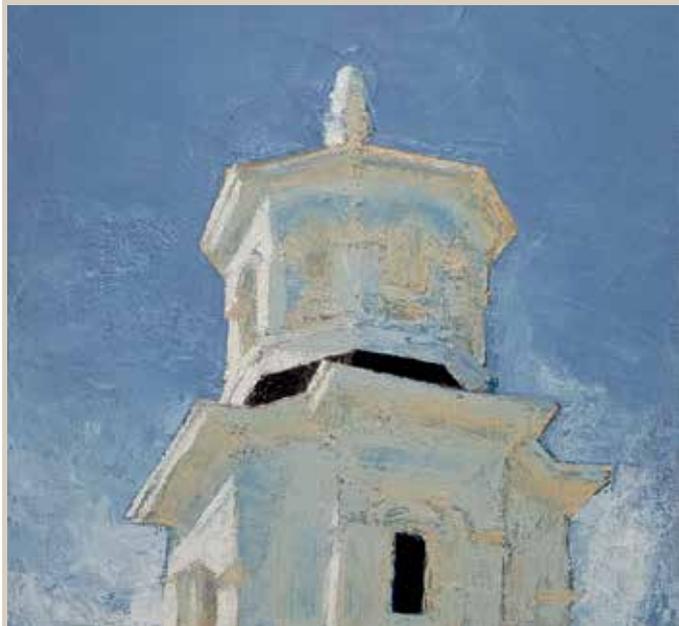
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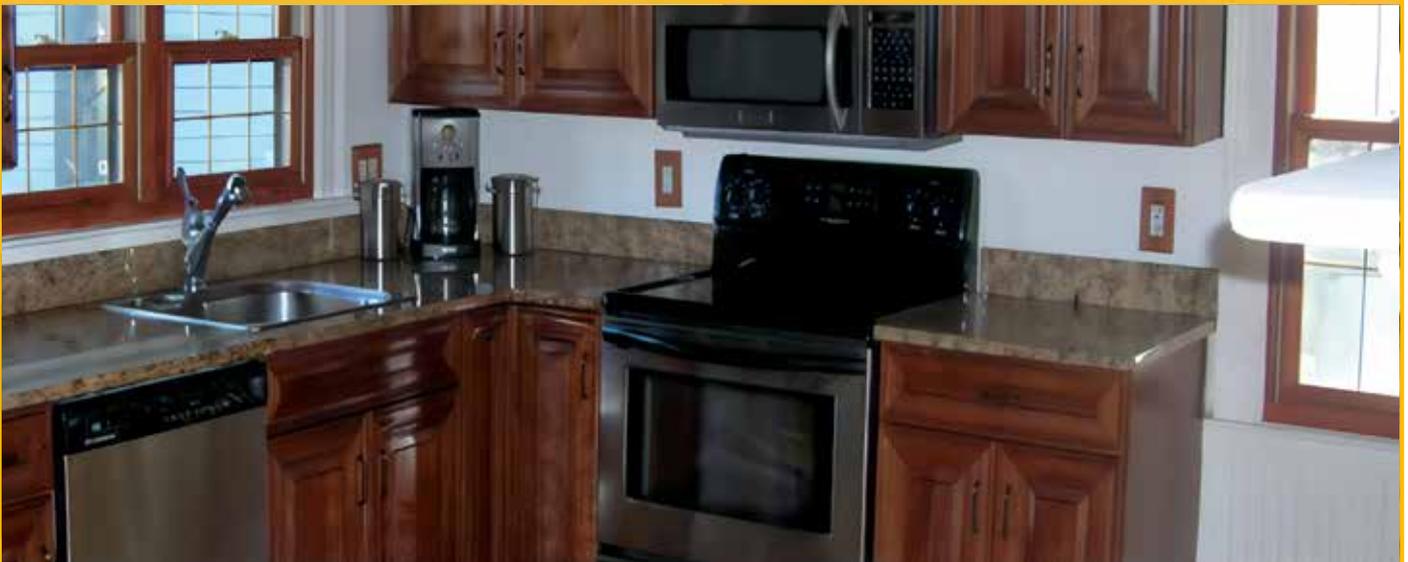


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