

# WINDY CITY TIMES

VOL 36, NO. 4

SEPT. 2, 2021

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Illustration of Ellis Haizlip, surrounded by members of the J.C. White Singers by Reid Rosati, based on a photo by Alex Harsley. For more of Reid's work, find @r\_\_rosati on Instagram.

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HIV AT 40

# GLOBAL ACTIVIST PHILL WILSON

## talks Chicago, the '80s and vaccines

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Phill Wilson is one of the best-known HIV/AIDS activists/educators around the globe.

The Chicago native was the co-founder of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum and the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention. He has been involved in the founding of a number of other AIDS service organizations and community-based organizations, including the Chris Brownlie Hospice, the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the National Minority AIDS Council, the Los Angeles County Gay Men of Color Consortium, and the CAEAR Coalition. Most famously, Wilson is the founder and former President and CEO of the Black AIDS Institute—a think tank whose mission is to stop the AIDS pandemic in African American communities.

With this year marking the 40th anniversary of the official discovery of HIV, Wilson talked with *Windy City Times*.

**Windy City Times:** You've been around the world so often that I don't think many know of your Chicago roots.

Phill Wilson: Yeah; I'm originally from Chicago, and was recently there on family matters.

I was born in Cook County Hospital and grew up in Altgeld Gardens until I was 10 or 11. Then my family moved to south suburbs and I went to high school in Harvey, Illinois. I went to Thornton Township High School and then to Illinois Wesleyan University. Even now, I own a house in Bronzeville—so I've never given up my Chicago roots.

Also, an ex of mine, Mark Schools, was an editor for *Windy City Times* many years ago. He's currently the editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed.

**WCT:** Could you take our readers back to the day when you discovered your status?

PW: Sure. I think some people refer to the [long-term] survivors as "AIDS pioneers."

With my personal relationship with HIV, there are two stories. One happened in 1981. I came out in 1980, and my first sexual encounter turned into a relationship that lasted 10 years—until my partner died of HIV in November 1989.

In the late summer of 1981, he was told by his doctor that he had swollen lymph nodes, and he provided an update on a disease that was primarily impacting gay men in New York and California that somehow involved swollen lymph nodes. I discovered that I also had swollen lymph nodes at the time. As it turns out, I was probably experiencing acute infection; my partner was probably in a state of chronic infection. They took biopsies of the nodes, and the [results] came back abnormal—but, at the time, we had no idea what that meant.

Shortly thereafter, we moved to Los Angeles in the winter/spring of 1982, when a serious conversation of this new epidemic was just starting. We were pretty confident at that point that we were infected—and that was the catalyst of my involvement. In 1985, my partner got sick with AIDS; he was diagnosed by having a low T-cell count.

In 1986, they developed the test, and that's the second story for me. I tested positive at that time.

**WCT:** At that point, in the '80s, HIV/AIDS was seen by many as a death sentence. What was going through your mind after being diagnosed?

PW: Well, at that time, there were HIV, ARC [AIDS-related complex] and AIDS. The conventional wisdom was that ARC wasn't necessarily a death sentence, but that AIDS was. So I just wanted to put things into context.

But having said that, I certainly did feel like it was a death sentence. I was living with someone who had AIDS, and I saw what was happening to him. I anticipated that I would get AIDS, and my doctors told me that I probably had six months to live and that I should get my affairs in order. But—unfortunately or fortunately, depending on your perspective—we were on the front lines at that time, so we really didn't have time to think about it. Some people have a hard time understanding that, but when you're on the front lines, you're fighting; it's like a war when the guy next to you is killed, but you don't have time to react because the enemy is still coming at you. From getting that information, I literally had minutes



Phill Wilson. Photo by Erica Demarest

before getting home and taking my partner to the hospital; then I had to get home and prepare for a memorial service the next day.

**WCT:** I remember speaking with the writer Edmund White and he said that, at one point, he was going to hundreds of funerals. I can't even fathom what that would've been like.

PW: Right. There were years in my life, actually, there were [periods] that went by when someone I knew found out they were positive or had AIDS, had been admitted to a hospital or had died. Those often happened on a weekly basis—but sometimes on a daily basis.

**WCT:** I came across a quote attributed to you: "I needed to focus on the living..."

PW: "...because the dying was going to take care of itself."

**WCT:** So is that what kickstarted your activism, in part—that realization?

PW: Hmmm ... no. I was involved as an activist before that. For me, it wasn't a question: My community was under attack, my lover was under attack and my family was under attack. It is an organic reaction. It wasn't particularly heroic; it was just organic.

**WCT:** Black people continue to be affected disproportionately by HIV/AIDS. What can the community do to reverse that?

PW: One is to take ownership of the disease. It's not only our disease, but it is our disease. Also, make sure we have the information—get the facts and understand what's going on. Then, people need to take action and take control.

So those are three things people need to do. I think, in some ways, we are doing it and that's how we're going to get out of it. No one can save us but us. Also, the days of waiting for a savior to come and rescue us have to be over.

**WCT:** So being proactive instead of reactive is key.

PW: Yes—but it goes even deeper than being proactive. I think understanding that the virus [couldn't] give a hoot [is important]. This virus isn't who we are, although it's a part of who we are.

**WCT:** What similarities do you see between

the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the COVID one?

PW: Everything. It is easier to talk about how they're not similar. COVID-19 has a much, much greater footprint than HIV. Obviously, they're both viruses—the coronavirus is airborne, while HIV is not. So the science at the epidemiological level is different; but, on the psychosocial and economic levels, they're the same. There were miscommunication and misdirection regarding both, and they're were levels of stigma and political manipulation. And the solutions involved advances in science and community mobilization.

**WCT:** Are you surprised that there's no HIV/AIDS vaccine, especially with those having been developed for COVID-19?

PW: I'm not surprised, although I'm disappointed—and I'm not surprised that vaccines were found much, much faster for COVID-19. People were able to develop the COVID vaccines because of the groundwork and sciences that had been created because of HIV. Were there no HIV, there'd be no coronavirus vaccine. So that's number one.

Number two: As they say, if men got pregnant, abortion would be a right. With wealthy white people being at risk for COVID-19, it didn't surprise me that there was this sense of urgency. It was different from HIV, where the characterization of those who suffered was "the other."

**WCT:** With everything that's happened the past 18 months—from COVID to the country's "racial awakening"—what did you learn about yourself?

PW: Hmmm.... I thought there were a lot of things in my life, and it's difficult to parse out what was driven by other things and what was driven by COVID as well as HIV/AIDS. But while I don't know if I can precisely parse out what was driven by which—I lost my mother, I retired—what I can say, relative to where I am today, is that I have come to understand the importance of personal joy at this point of my life. There's also a critical necessity to explore and discover what makes me joyful, and to make a commitment to be in pursuit of that.



# ‘Mr. SOUL!’

*Looking at the groundbreaking ‘60s show—and Black, gay host*

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Al Green, Stevie Wonder, Patti LaBelle, Gladys Knight, Nikki Giovanni, James Baldwin, Cicely Tyson, Harry Belafonte, Muhammad Ali, The Last Poets, Earth, Wind & Fire, Sidney Poitier, Mavis Staples and even a teenaged Arsenio Hall were just a few of the artists who appeared on the seminal 1968-73 Black variety show SOUL! The show was groundbreaking not only for its focus on Black features but also for its host: Ellis Haizlip, who was political, outspoken—and openly gay.

His niece, Melissa Haizlip, is the force (producer/director/writer) behind the documentary Mr. SOUL!, which debuted on HBO Max on Aug. 22. She talked with Windy City Times about the show and her uncle.

**Windy City Times: I was stunned, in a good way, on several levels by this documentary about a show that I didn’t know existed. Is Mr. SOUL! a tribute to your uncle, an educational tool or something else?**

Melissa Haizlip: It’s all of the above.

There are so many hidden figures in our history, in our culture—not necessarily hidden to us, but by the sands of time or other agendas. The most important thing is to find those hidden figures and illuminate their lives and importance; otherwise, you’re dealing with this whole concept of erasure. We’re actually celebrating and illuminating the contributions of African Americans to the culture, to the history of this nation.

And you’re talking about Ellis Haizlip—who was a very proud, out gay man who’s somewhat of a queer icon in modern-day parlance. That wasn’t even a possibility, pre-Stonewall. I thought it was really important to illuminate his story—the triumphs and tribulations. He had to have a double consciousness in order to survive and be welcomed into the world of media. This story illustrates the nuances of this culture; it’s not a monolith, and we’ve always had queer icons, whether they were known or unknown.

We’ve always had Black excellence. The movie is a cultural corrective, if you will—a resetting of the narrative. We should recognize that we’re standing on the shoulders of giants.

It’s also an educational tool. We did have an educational distributor, and we wanted to bridge the gap for our young African-American youth, and to be inclusive of all those who really don’t know about this era. We also wanted to be incredibly uplifting and entertaining in curating

Black joy.

It’s a huge conversation right now, as we’re experiencing a cultural PTSD regarding the events of last year. I think of [the film] as a Balm of Gilead, and as a wonderful educational tool, as you say. I think SOUL! is a tide that lifts all boats.

**WCT: How true do you think the following statement is? “SOUL! was revolutionary, in part, because it featured revolutionaries.”**

MH: Yes. I do agree with that. The statement is very accurate because that was only part of the reason it was revolutionary.

There are many different kinds of revolutionaries, as we know. There are outspoken revolutionaries and activists who become [them], but there are also quiet revolutionaries and people who change thought. I think Ellis was in the business of changing minds. He didn’t have a tremendous amount of power, but he did decide that by illuminating the multifaceted corners of the Black experience, that would be a subtle way of changing the perception of African-American culture.

With all the civil-rights struggles that were happening at that time, people weren’t experiencing Black folks—they weren’t checking for us, as we say. So this idea that you could experience Black culture for yourselves—along with women and queer folks behind the scenes—was revolutionary.

Ellis Haizlip didn’t really take sides about what was good or bad, or the sacred or profane. I think he knew there was room for all of that; that, in itself, was revolutionary. He had the Black Panthers on there, and I’m sure they were on the [FBI] watchlist. And there was also art as activism. Giving visibility to the invisible is revolutionary. And there was a limited platform



Ellis Haizlip surrounded by members of the J.C. White Singers. Photo by Alex Harsley, courtesy of Shoes in the Bed Productions



From top: Patti LaBelle on the television show SOUL! Photo by Chester Higgins/MR. SOUL; SOUL! host Ellis Haizlip (left) sits with playwright and author Amiri Baraka. Photo courtesy of Shoes in the Bed Productions

to change minds with; at that time, you had ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS.

**WCT: And there was a limited platform. Did SOUL! air on public access in New York City?**

MH: Well, it started on a public television station—not really public access.

Remember: Before the Public Broadcasting Act [of 1967], there were independent, educational stations around the nation—but they hadn’t been joined together in a system. That system became PBS. And that’s what was really unique about the timing of SOUL! It happened just when a national audience was forming. The show went to being on the flagship PBS station in New York City, WNET.

For the first season, the show was local, in the New York/New Jersey area. However, after, it was broadcast to major cities where PBS was available.

With SOUL!, Ellis decided to take things one step further and make it “Black power television.” But he included artists, activists, poets and musicians, and made it a cultural space. But the Nixon administration didn’t like it because it wasn’t conservative. You had this unapologetically Black agenda being funded by the government—and they weren’t having it.

It’s hard to imagine in this day and age, with all the streaming and [technological] options, so we had to set this up in the film so people could understand and appreciate SOUL!

**WCT: This documentary has so many factual nuggets that I’m sure I’ll have to watch it five more times to absorb it. [Haizlip laughs.] And it was interesting to see singer Billy Preston—someone who struggled with his own sexuality.**

MH: Many people have said to me, “Melissa, I



had to stop the film because I couldn't believe what I was seeing."

With Billy, it was a struggle because he was so spiritual; the gospel was his foundation, as it was for Ellis. He said, "Gospel music is the floor for Black pride." But there is this duality that queer Black men have to straddle between loving their community and not being accepted by their community/family. And we tried to show this struggle.

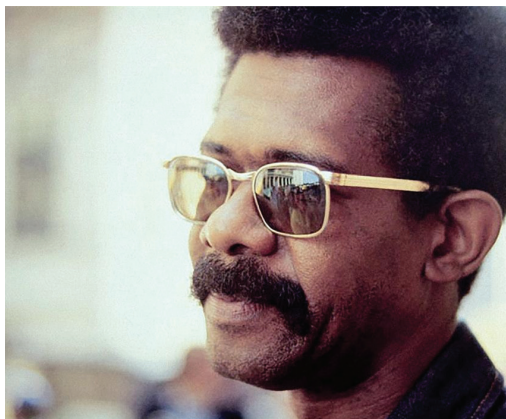
The beauty of the creativity of someone like Billy Preston or the furtherance by Ellis Haizlip—while still being constricted—is some of the melancholy you might feel while watching the film. Those might be the underpinnings of our culture, in general, but we still carry on, create and love. We have to be honest about those incongruencies. This is a universal story.

I think the key is showing things that are intimate with love and not with judgment. That's a very delicate hand we had to play. There's obviously no tragedy in being queer; Ellis was a strong Black man, but he had his struggles.

**WCT: What was the most surprising thing you uncovered?**

MH: There were a lot of surprising things, as this documentary took 10 years to make. I went down a lot of rabbit holes. [Laughs]

But for me, the most surprising things were the profundity of people's memories of SOUL! and the transformative nature of those experiences—they were immediate. I was worried about how to make these 50-year-old stories dynamic and present instead of just a trip down memory lane; I knew there was more depth than that. What



**Above: SOUL! host/producer/creator Ellis Haizlip.** Photo courtesy of Ivan Curry; **Right: Melissa Haizlip.** PR photo



impressed me was hearing these people in their 70s, 80s and even 90s—and that their experiences were right at the surface. It was as if these experiences had just happened; you don't see that every day. One person we interviewed—Felipe Luciano—just went all IN, cursing and swearing; we were just blown away, and the whole crew had tears streaming down their faces. I just wasn't prepared for that.

**WCT: I figured this took some time, as I saw an interview with Ashford & Simpson. [Singer Nick Ashford died in 2011.]**

MH: Yeah—we didn't know he was ill. He was coughing and sweating profusely during our 10-minute interview with him. We thought he had a cold, but he passed away a few months later of cancer. But they wanted to do the interview because they loved Ellis and they feel he made them who they were.

**WCT: If SOUL! ran today, what guests do you think would be on it?**

MH: Oh, my gosh. I've thought about that as well as reboot of SOUL! I'm actually working on a concept with the wonderful Stan Lathan, who

was part of the original crew and who is in the film. [Note: Lathan is also the father of actress Sanaa Lathan, among others.]

I think Ellis would have outspoken artists and activists. Colin Kaepernick would be sitting up there as well as 1619 Project's Nikole Hannah-Jones. Black Lives Matter would absolutely be up there. We're seeing the same types of ideologies that people saw during the Black Power movement.

**WCT: Your uncle certainly didn't shy from controversial people and subjects. What do you think he would have made of Rachel Dolezal [the former college instructor and activist known for claiming to be a Black woman]?**

MH: Whoa! [Laughs] I can't use the words he would've used. He had a sharp tongue, but he was also kind. He had love for all the inconsistencies of this culture.

**WCT: This year marks the 30th anniversary of Ellis Haizlip's passing. If he were alive, what's one question you definitely would have to ask him?**

MH: Oh, my goodness. I would ask him the most important question: Do you feel you did enough?

I always sensed a certain melancholy around him—that he hadn't done enough. He wanted more for our people. I think he'd be so excited by the cultural strides we've made, but he'd still be so critical of not being where we need to be. That's why we ended the film the way we did; it's just a beginning. There has always been Black excellence, and there always will be.

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# Walk it OUT

## *Trans woman and cancer survivor makes her debut at SEA BLUE Prostate Cancer Walk & Run*

BY MELISSA WASSERMAN

Among all the men, Iris Farley—a prostate cancer survivor and trans woman—will be running in Us TOO's SEA Blue Prostate Cancer Walk & Run on Sept. 26 in Lincoln Park.

Farley, a Chicago resident, is the senior director of HR at Komatsu America Industries, LLC. Outside of work she is married with a son, part of the pin-up community, enjoys yoga, reading, film and running. Farley said she ran during her high school years, and after some time off, started back up in 2017.

Her transition began Jan. 1, 2020, but Farley had been working with a therapist for over two years. But running in the February 2020 Disney Princess Half Marathon provided one of the most memorable moments during that transition process.

The day of the race, Farley stopped for pictures with Disney characters. She recalled a group of four women in front of her in line talking. One of the women was trans, sporting full hair and makeup and a Snow White gown. Overhearing her talking about her transition, Farley, a self-proclaimed aspiring Disney princess, said she was mesmerized and things started to crystalize for her. By March 2020, Farley was sitting down, talking to her wife about what she was feeling.

"It's a thing I was fearful of because I knew that making that acknowledgment to myself had the potential [for] some pretty major upheaval in my life," Farley said, emphasizing her marriage and job concerned her the most. "So I avoided it for a long time."

Farley started her transition actively in June 2020, coming out slowly to people. By January 2021, she was living fully as Iris.

In April 2015, before her transition, Farley went experienced a different challenge—being diagnosed with prostate cancer. Her doctor ran a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test in 2010 and, over the next couple of years, her levels rose. Continuing those checks with a urologist, even-

tually she had an inconclusive biopsy in 2012 and continued to get tested.

"Get the damn test," Farley exclaimed. "Take care of yourself. They say that a large percentage of men die with prostate cancer in their bodies. It's super slow growing and you can find out it's there. So, when I found out I had it I was like 'I'm not messing around with this thing and I'm getting it out.'"

"In many, many men, the survivor rates, if they catch it early, are incredible," said North-Shore University Health System Director of Sexual Health Jeffrey Albaugh, PhD, APRN, CUCNS. "The five-year survivor rate is 99%, which is amazing, but only if you catch it early. So, the problem is, if you have symptoms that means you probably have metastases and you're in a late prostate cancer situation, which is much, much more difficult to treat and now we have to deal with all of that. So it's so important for men to get screened..."

He went on to explain when screening is dependent on individual factors. Care is more individualized now in terms of screening and treatment because genomic information can reveal important things about how often a person should be screened. Other risk factors are also considered when talking about screening and treatment.

Albaugh has worked in the prostate-cancer field for more than 25 years and has been involved with Us TOO for 17 years, even serving on the board for three years. He is a board-certified advanced practice urology clinical nurse specialist and certified sexuality counselor with a PhD in sexual-health research and prostate-cancer research. Additionally, he runs the Sexual Health Clinic at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.

"Now we're trying to turn the tide back, so men understand [that] women would never fathom not getting their mammogram and they have the same screening levels with it," Albaugh added, comparing the screening rates.

Us TOO International is a 501(c)(3) charita-



Iris Farley. Photo by Nicole Farley

ble/not-for-profit organization geared toward empowering men diagnosed with prostate cancer and their loved ones, by providing educational resources and support services to fight against prostate cancer. Its home office is located in Des Plaines.

Providing tools like support groups, online support services, newsletters, educational materials and events, Us TOO has the vision of a patient-centered prostate cancer model that boosts emotional and physical well-being, while its mission is to "help transform resignation into determination and fear into hope."

Us TOO's annual SEA Blue Prostate Cancer Walk & Run celebrates the lives of those who have fought prostate cancer, the lives that have been lost to the disease and those who will combat it in the future. The "SEA" in the event's name stands for support, education, advocacy and awareness.

Terri Likowski, Us TOO's program director/support group services has seen the SEA Blue event grow over its 17 years and has been a part of its development.

"The bond of the people that are out there the day of the event is so special," Likowski said. "Even for families who are coming into the event new, men who might've just been newly diagnosed, a lot of times we'll get teams that are men who are newly diagnosed and their family comes in to support them for that and it's just a great time for everyone to be together, knowing that

they're not going through this on their own; that we have this huge network of support for them available."

If someone were to inquire about Us TOO's support groups, they would be in contact with Likowski. She said among the many groups, the organization offers "A Prostate Cancer Forum for Gay Men and Their Partners (Everyone from the LGBTQIA+ Community is Welcome)," which is an inclusive, call-in support group.

"We all now have to be very open about what the conversations are," said Likowski. "We've got such a variety of support groups these days and I'm really proud of the fact that we have this group that's open for the LGBTQIA community, but we also have groups that are specific to female caregivers who are in their mid-50s, but have a partner with advanced stage prostate cancer. So the world is becoming much more specific in what their needs are."

Likowski went on to say that Us TOO and its support groups recognize that everyone's needs are different depending on the scenario, but it's also important to be careful not to be too definitive and specific because it's about being able to help everyone with prostate cancer.

Farley explained that, for the last few years, she has been trying to figure out how to personally contribute to awareness and research as a survivor.

"This year it's different because what I'm finding, and I certainly can't speak for the whole



trans community, but I know a lot of people who are transwomen for whom any sort of association with their male biology is painful and difficult," she said. "So I think about all of the effort that goes into creating awareness and trying to convince cisgender men to go out and get tested. I think 'wow you're facing that hurdle plus the potential hurdle of somebody who doesn't want to acknowledge that this thing is still in them and has forgotten about it completely.' It seems like it's a possibility, especially I know it's a thing where doctors have to remind people [that you] still have to get tested even though you're going and getting mammograms now. Don't forget about that prostate because it's still there and can still be an issue."

Hoping to have an opportunity to start a conversation, Farley thinks about awareness, communication and education for everyone with a prostate. She added that trans women with pros-

tates "should be receiving that information and I don't think we always do."

"I recognize how fortunate I am and that says to me I have to take this and do something with it," said Farley of her experience. "This is one aspect of advocacy that I can see right away and it's just an intersection of things I care about. This feels like it makes a lot of sense. Not sure I'll get into other things over time because I want to be a voice in the community, but this feels like a start for me of something bigger that I can start to have a positive impact on the community in some unexpected ways. I don't think anyone sees prostate-cancer awareness as necessarily a big space for the trans community to engage in, but, hell, why not?! Especially if no one else is doing it then let's get the word out."

Farley lightheartedly said she is looking forward to "throwing people for a loop" at SEA Blue this year, sharing that in the past some people

were confused when she picked up and wore her "warrior" event T-shirt because of age. This will be Farley's first time running at SEA Blue as Iris and she plans to wear a trans flag-colored running dress. She has participated in three other SEA Blue events prior to her transition.

"Here's the hard part: I've moved on, I don't want to think about my prostate anymore, but I still have to think about prostate health because it's super-important," explained Albaugh of one of the challenges within the trans community surrounding prostate cancer and getting screened. "That's a difficult thing. It's monumentally important for that community."

For more information on Us T00, visit [ustoo.org/Home](http://ustoo.org/Home).

To learn more about SEA Blue, visit [ustoo.rallybound.org/sea-blue-2021/](http://ustoo.rallybound.org/sea-blue-2021/).



2017 SEA Blue event.  
Photo by Nicole Farley

# STACKS of LAUGHTER

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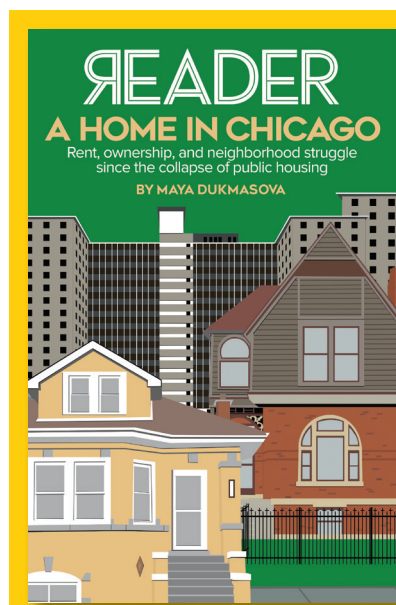
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Frank Ferrante in Teatro ZinZanni.  
Photo courtesy of Broadway in Chicago



## FALL THEATER PREVIEW

# ALL TOGETHER IN ONE ROOM: Indoor theater returns

BY MARY SHEN BARNIDGE

Two years ago, September would have been greeted by a cluster of opening nights—sometimes as many as three overlapping the same evening—to signal the entrance of the bright-lights-and-glamour CHICAGO THEATER SEASON. This year is 2021, however, and just as its Fourth of July marked the beginning, not the middle, of summer (Memorial Day? Who remembers? Did we have one?), the buzz-and-bustle we remember won't hit its stride until the post-Halloween holidays.

Don't settle back on the couch just yet, though! Labor Day 2021 still welcomes opportunities to shake the dust off your fancy duds and re-acclimate to the dazzle of indoor shows delivering the kind of experience you can't get staring at a screen.

Check with individual theaters for safety policies, bring a mask—oh, and be kind to your fellow audience members (especially the tourists). It's been a long haul for everybody.

### OPENING and REOPENING:

—**Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play:** Theater Wit, Sept. 8-Oct. 3: The photos may hint at a raucous romp for fans of *The Simpsons*, but Anne Washburn's multi-layered narrative dwells in an apocalypse bereft of grid media or print libraries, with only ancient oral tradition providing a source for its myths. Details: TheaterWit.org

—**Twilight: Los Angeles 1992:** Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre at Noyes Cultural Art Center in Evanston, Sept. 11-Sept. 26: His name was Rodney King, his brutal beating was the first ever to be broadcast on national television, and Anna Deavere Smith's solo show, starring Jazzma Pryor, recounts its aftermath in the words of those who witnessed it. Details: FJtheatre.com

—**Thirteen Days:** City Lit Theatre at Edgewater Presbyterian Church, Sept. 10-Oct. 24: On October 16, 1962, the United States held its breath while men in Washington—played by an all-female cast in this production—decided whether what historians now call the Cuban Missile Crisis would usher in Armageddon. Details: CityLit.org

—**Golden Girls: The Lost Episodes, Volume 5—SEX:** Hell in a Handbag Productions, Sept. 19-Oct. 23: David Cerda's irrepressible drag-dowagers explore the "naughty" side of geriatric erotica amid the site-specific surroundings of the Chicago Leather Museum and Archives. Details: Handbagproductions.org

—**Last Night In Karaoke Town:** Factory Theater, Sept. 24-Nov. 6: The oldest karaoke bar in Cleveland has one night to stop the invasion of gentrification, and Factory Theater was only a few weeks into its run when Covid shut their play down—if you want everything to end happily, prepare to sing "Don't Stop Believing" as loud as you can. Details: TheFactoryTheater.com

### CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC

—**Kinky Boots:** Paramount Theatre in Aurora, running through Oct. 17: Aurora's oasis-for-the-arts landed the rights to one of the first regional productions of Harvey Fierstein and Cindi Lauper's tale of two country cobblers whose footgear (in the words of its rousing chorus) changed the world by changing minds. Details: ParamountAurora.com

—**The Things I Could Never Tell Steven:** PrideArts Broadway, running through Sept. 19: Steven's gone missing, leaving his mother, father, wife and ex-boyfriend to wonder about the motives behind his flight in this musical symposium by Australian composer Jye Bryant making its North American premiere. Details: PrideArts.org

—**The Infinite Energy of Ada Lovelace/Petticoats and Sliderules:** Third Eye Theatre Ensemble at Edge Theatre, Sept. 17-Oct. 3. The company that brought us the love story of early-American settlers Patience and Sarah now presents a double-bill of operas celebrating two barrier-breaking women of science. Details: ThirdEyeTe.com

—**Songs For A New World:** Theo Ubique at the Howard Street Theater (technically in Evanston, but cross the street and you're in Chicago), Sept. 27-Oct. 24: Courage, hope and I-can-do-this determination are built into the very premise of Jason Robert Brown's anthology of anthems for pilgrims embarking on uncertain futures. Details: Theo-U.com

—**American Mariachi:** Goodman Theatre, Sept. 30-Oct. 24: The Mexican mariachi is said to have power capable of pulling the aged and infirm back from the fog of dementia—but only if five young women with no previous instrumental training defy centuries-old cultural tradition to make the hitherto male-exclusive musical form



From left: Ed Jones, Grant Drager, David Cerda and Ryan Oates in Hell in a Handbag Productions' *The Golden Girls—The Lost Episodes*. Photos by Rick Aguilar Studios



their own. Arriba! Details: GoodmanTheatre.org

—**Songs For Nobodies:** Northlight Theatre at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, Oct. 1-Oct. 31: Judy Garland, Edith Piaf, Maria Callas, Patsy Kline and Billie Holiday stood tall in the spotlight, but they didn't stand alone. Bethany Thomas portrays the stars AND their support staff in Joanna Murray-Smith's solo revue. Details: Northlight.org

## JUST FOR STREAMERS

—**Sense and Sensibility:** Lifeline Theatre, Sept. 3-Oct. 31: Last spring's serialized Sherlock Holmes-in-skirts audiodrama proved so successful that the Lifeline scribes have crafted another miniseries, this one serving up the adventures of Jane Austen's penniless young singles in tea-time-sized episodes that you can enjoy at home. Details: LifelineTheatre.com

—**The Music Cure:** Misalliance Repertory Theatre, running through Oct. 31. After officially disbanding, the ShawChicago alumni rallied with this audioplay adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's satirical sketch involving politicians, financial scandals, quack doctors, nervous patients and a pianist with supernatural powers. Details: MisallianceRepertory.org

—**Three Short Plays by Tracy Letts:** Steppenwolf Theatre, Sept. 29-Oct. 3: The bill features three mini-plays by Pulitzer-prizewinning playwright Tracy Letts, anchored by a 10-minute debate in a diner between a pair of codgerly puppets voiced by William Peterson and Mike Nussbaum. Details: Steppenwolf.org

## FAMILIAR FRIENDS and DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

—**Late Nite Catechism:** Greenhouse Theatre

Center, Sept. 10-Jan. 2022: It's been 28 years since it first opened, but our intrepid teaching sister (currently played by Jenna Steege) is still acquainting her flock—although strays are welcome, too—with the often ironic mysteries of the Catholic faith. Details: Nuns4Fun.com

—**Theatre ZinZanni:** Cambria Hotel, open run. When architects discovered a former Masonic Temple/Lecture Hall hidden in the upper floors of the 1926-vintage Oriental Theatre, it seemed only natural for a vaudeville/cabaret show encompassing acrobats, vocalists, old-school comedy and drinks to take up residence. Details: ZinZanni.com/chicago

—**Blue Man Group:** Briar Street Theatre, open run: In the quarter-century since the silent blue-faced stunt-aliens moved into Chicago's Lakeview district, generations of curious seekers have ventured into this leafy lane off Halsted Street in search of all-ages spectacle inspired by modern enigmas. Details: Ticketmaster.com

—**The Magic Parlour:** Palmer House Hilton, open run: Sequestered in a chamber deep in the gilded-age Palmer House, magic can sometimes grow scary, but Dennis Watkins always assures his audiences of their safety, even when the illusions involve nails, knives or Sharpies. Details: TheMagicParlourChicago.com

—**Out of the House Party:** Second City e.t.c. at Pipers Alley, running through Jan. 2: The training exercises that spawned an empire are back with new material gleaned from recent events. Also at Pipers Alley: She The People at the UP Comedy Club, running through Dec. 31. Details: SecondCity.com

*Coming later in the fall are three Shakespeares, a Broadway-bound work-in-progress and another dining-at-the-play extravaganza from theater aficionado and master chef Rick Bayless. Get vaccinated if you don't want to miss them.*



Jazzma Pryor stars in Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight*: Los Angeles 1992. Photo courtesy of John Olson

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There are a million things to love about traveling the United States—from our sprawling national parks and historic coastal cities to tucked-away small towns and southern hospitality—but every once in a while we need to experience our people in our places.

As it turns out, there's queer fun to be found everywhere—in areas that you would never suspect, in fact—throughout the entire country. When planning your next “family”-friendly getaway, consider these welcoming attractions, establishments, events and gatherings in all 50 states and the nation's capital that exist by and for the LGBTQ+ community.

#### Alabama

Praise Him on high (before hitting a boozy brunch; wine is Jesus-approved, remember) at **Cornerstone Metropolitan Community Church** in Mobile, a predominately LGBTQ+ congregation led by lesbian pastor Rev. Sara Sills. Sunday service begins at 10:45 a.m. Arrive early for easy parking, visit the institution's welcome center and take a guided tour of the campus.

#### Alaska

Newly renovated **Mad Myrna's**, located in downtown Anchorage, hosts a wide range of LGBTQ+ events, including movie nights, drag and strip shows, karaoke and Pride pageants. This nightlife mainstay, along with queer dive bar The Raven just down the street, has provided last-frontier fabulousness for over two decades.

#### Arizona

A pair of well-worn cowboy boots and a bottle of sunscreen are all you'll need for a rugged, clothing-optional weekend at the all-male **Copper Cactus Ranch**, quietly nestled deep in the foothills of the Superstition Mountains in Queen Valley. Weekends feature bonfires, musical jam sessions, drum circles and body painting, among other activities that encourage boys to be boys.

#### Arkansas

Pet-friendly **Pond Mountain Lodge** is the longest continuously operating gay-owned resort in Eureka Springs where you can enjoy the great outdoors while hiking, fishing, swimming, picnicking and more. It's also become a queer wedding destination in the south since the landmark SCOTUS marriage-equality decision was handed down.

#### California

You may recognize lesbian-owned **Hicksville Trailer Palace** as the setting for Lana Del Rey's “White Dress” music video, but this dog-friendly, 21-and-older desert oasis in Joshua Tree hosts travelers in 11 individually designed vintage mini-mobile homes situated on seven acres flush with fun and games, including a ball pit, arcade, cornhole, putt-putt, a BB gun and archery range, shuffleboard, ping-pong and darts.

#### Colorado

Memorialize your road trip with fresh ink—maybe your route map or a memorable symbol—at LGBTQ+-owned **Pens & Needles Custom Tattoo Company**, voted Best Tattoo Shop in Colorado Springs.

#### Connecticut

Once you've quelled your hunger pangs with the **Traveler Restaurant's** classic dining options, like linguini and meatballs, pizza, fried seafood platters and BLTs, browse the stacks—of books, that is—to find your favorite LGBTQ+ authors or stories. This quaint country eatery in Union allows each person to take home up to three titles—for free—from the selection of thousands that line its walls.

#### Delaware

Frolic in the sand and surf on decidedly gay **Poodle Beach**—you'll find it at the far southern end of the Rehoboth Boardwalk near Queen Street (a bit on the nose, but what can ya do?)—before

# The U.S. of Gay

*51 ab-fab road-trip destinations and pit stops—one in each state and the District of Columbia—that are must sees and dos for out-and-proud wanderlusters*

BY MIKEY ROX

cleaning up and heading out for a night of queer revelry in this lively shore town with a rich LGBTQ+ history.

#### District of Columbia

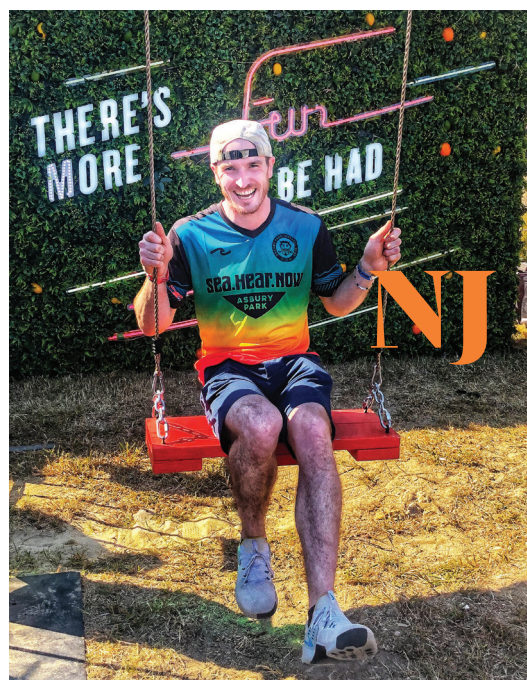
Queer or not, every American should pay a visit to **the Supreme Court**, judiciously located at 1 First Street in Washington, D.C., the battleground for many milestone equal-rights cases, including the game-changing Obergefell v. Hodges, which, in 2015, granted marriage rights to same-sex couples across the United States.

#### Florida

Dedicated solely to LGBTQ+ history, civil rights, art and culture, the **Stonewall National Museum and Archives** in Fort Lauderdale (with a branch in neighboring Wilton Manors) features three gallery spaces with changing monthly and bimonthly exhibits and includes a permanent timeline of American queer history.

#### Georgia

Strip down and relax in the steam room, sauna and pools of **FLEXSpas Atlanta**, a clothing-optional, membership-only men's bathhouse in Mid-







town that hosts weekly events like Bear & Daddy Night on Tuesdays, \$5 lockers on Wednesdays and a complimentary BBQ on Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m.

#### Hawaii

Join the **LGBTQ+ Honolulu FrontRunners/Walkers** every Saturday at 8:30 a.m. in Kapi'olani Park for a tourists-are-welcome sweat sesh around stunning Waikiki (\$10 for singles/\$15 for couples) before brunching with the group at a downtown restaurant, pit stains and all.

#### Idaho

You'll need to lace up your hiking boots to reach the two-miles-in-and-back **Goldbug Hotsprings**, the trailhead of which starts on BLM land just south of the Elk Bend community, but it'll be well worth your while when you slip out of your shorts and soak nude in natural pools of varying degrees, surrounded by picturesque scenery.

#### Illinois

Pay homage to the queer pioneers who blazed their own trails toward LGBTQ+ equality on a self-guided tour of the **Legacy Walk** in Chicago's Northalsted/Boystown neighborhood, the placards of which on the area's 40 rainbow-colored pylons honor our community's heroes, including Oscar Wilde, Frida Kahlo, Harvey Milk, Antonia Pantoja and Alvin Ailey.

#### Indiana

Put your name on the list at popular Bloomington distillery/bar/kitchen **Cardinal Spirits**, where you'll nosh on inspired (but affordable) dishes like lamb barbacoa tacos and gochujang tomato and cantaloupe gazpacho, sip on canned bourbon cream sodas and take home a bottle of its Indiana corn Pride vodka, 10 percent proceeds of which support local LGBTQ+ orgs.

#### Iowa

Stop for a photo op at the "**American Gothic**" cottage in Eldon, famously depicted in gay artist Grant Wood's oft-parodied same-name 1930 painting, which has since become an iconic example of 20th-century American art.

#### Kansas

With its rainbow-flag-painted façade, **Equality House**, a project of Planting Peace in Topeka, gained international notoriety (surely you saw the news stories; they were everywhere) when it revealed itself as a beacon of hope and equality against evil forces, specifically the anti-everything Westboro Baptist Church, which is right across the street.

#### Kentucky

Bourbon—but make it gay. That's your task as you bounce from one celebrated distillery to the next (most of which are within walking distance of each other along the Ohio River) in downtown Louisville. Stumble back and sleep it off at tobacco warehouse-turned-boutique hotel **Vu Guesthouse**.

#### Louisiana

Beat the oppressive New Orleans heat with a summertime treat at queer-women-owned **Chance in Hell SnoBalls**, a traveling winter-in-a-cup pop-up shop in the Bywater that serves frosty flavors like grape Nehi, pineapple-cilantro-chili, refreshing cucumber-cardamom-basil and ginger matcha.

#### Maine

When in Maine you order the lobster roll—given—but when dining at Ogunquit's gay-owned **The Front Porch** you have your pick of elevated seafood. Start with blue cheese mussels or the oyster trio before settling into entrees like lobster risotto or haddock tacos. When you're stuffed to the gills (fish pun intended), head upstairs to the restaurant's bar where you can sing along nightly to show tunes and standards around a grand piano (the pianists take requests), lit from above by fixtures fashioned from old hats.

#### Maryland

One of the last bastions of LGBTQ+ Baltimore nightlife (Charm City has lost most of its queer bars and hangouts in the past few years), the **Eagle**, which celebrates 30 years on the scene in 2021, has triumphed over financial ups and downs to keep its doors open to the leather and kink communities and those who love them. Pro-tip: Head to the Toolbox for all the what-happens-there-stays-there excitement you're seeking.

#### Massachusetts

Following the route of Boston's first Gay Pride March in 1971, the **Equality Trail walking tour** includes 13 sites around Beantown, including 81-year-old Bay Village gay bar Jacques, the police headquarters on Berkeley Street, the State House on Beacon Hill and St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont Street, where, 50 years ago, peaceful protesters issued a list of civil-rights demands at each location.

#### Michigan

Test your pop-culture prowess at **Five15**, a retail shop with a stage (and bar) in downtown Royal Oak, on its drag queen trivia nights, the latest of which featured "Schitt's Creek"-centric questions. If memory games aren't your milieu, opt for less-skilled activities, like weekend drag bingos and the some-Sundays Drag Brunch Cook-out.

#### Minnesota

Friends of Dorothy can follow a yellow brick road (of sorts) to the **Judy Garland Museum**, established in the actress's birth town of Grand Rapids, where you'll learn about the troubled star's illustrious life and career, or, on a lucky day, attend a Garland-focused event, book signing, or festival.

#### Mississippi

Set sail for **Ship Island**, off the Gulf Islands National Seashore in Biloxi, in your private vessel, or hop aboard the public ferry in Gulfport from March to October. If you arrive in your own boat,

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Continued from page 13

anchor near Fort Massachusetts, swim ashore and make the trek on foot to the easternmost end of the isle for legal sunning and funning in the buff.

### Missouri

Foodies will get a crash course in late-18th-/early-19th-century U.S. cuisine from LGBTQ and James Beard semifinalist chef Rob Connoley, who presents a reservations-required, seven-course, Ozark-inspired tasting menu Thursdays to Sundays at **Bulrush** in St. Louis. Each meal includes staff explanations of the dishes, a history and QR code-accessible videos on the top-rated restaurant's research projects.

### Montana

Research will show that there's not much in the way of LGBTQ+-specific recreation in traditionally conservative Montana, but if you're traveling through Big Sky Country, consider a stop into **Missoula's Gay Men's Meeting at The Center**, held every Wednesday from 7 to 9 p.m.

### Nebraska

Belly up to the bar at **Omaha Mining Company**—an on-the-fringe gay watering hole that has, according to one Yelp reviewer, “existed since the 1960s between the Douglas County jail and urban blight” (though tighter parking has made the area much safer these days)—and order an ice-cold lager or similar no-nonsense libation before heading downstairs to the Mineshaft for pool tables and art. Every fourth Saturday of the month the Big O! Bears group hosts a growling good time.

### Nevada

After you've made your requisite donation to Las Vegas' glitzy casinos, ease the pain with a trip to the **Fruit Loop**, a cluster of gay bars and clubs along East Naples Drive, near the University of Nevada. **Badlands Saloon** and **Charlie's**, both country-western bars (this is the desert, after all), along with the **Las Vegas Eagle** and **Free-Zone** offer plenty of merriment without losing your ass—unless that's what you're into.

### New Hampshire

Dabble in the dark arts with a visit to the “**magick retirement cottage**” of bisexual British occultist and “Wickedest Man in the World” **Aleister Crowley**, whose four-month stay at this house in Hebron, owned by self-professed medium Evangeline Adams, resulted in myriad “secret and arcane” activities. If you're superstitious of the supernatural, there's a church conveniently located next door to cleanse your sassy soul.

### New Jersey

**Asbury Park**, a 1.6-square-mile city located on the northern Jersey Shore, has a long and sordid history—from disproportionately impoverished minority communities and race riots to political corruption and a severely underserved school system—but it has since overcome many of those obstacles to emerge as one of the most densely populated LGBTQ+ communities in the Mid-Atlantic. There's tons for you and your fey friends to do here, too. Shop for kitsch at **Severedwing**, belt

your signature tune on karaoke nights at **Georgie's**, enjoy a chef-prepared meal at **Hotel Tides**, dance poolside at **Paradise** and carryout an artisanal pizza from **Medusa Stone Fired Kitchen**, all of which are gay-owned and -operated (and just a sampling of the abundant LGBTQ+ businesses around town).

### New Mexico

Rest your weary head at the eponymous, **well-appointed house of** wealthy bisexual arts patron **Mabel Dodge Luhan**, now a National Historic Landmark and B&B in Taos, which has welcomed such visionaries as Georgia O'Keefe, D.H. Lawrence, Ansel Adams and Martha Graham.

### New York

Directly across the street from Manhattan's Stonewall Inn—the site of the June 28, 1969, Stonewall riots—is the **Stonewall National Monument**, designated as such by the National Park Service on June 24, 2016, which encompasses Christopher Park and the block of Christopher Street bordering the park in the West Village. Pop into the gift shop for a souvenir before entering the inn for cocktails and local oral history.

### North Carolina

Pick up a few cans of spray paint and head to the ever-changing **Free Expression Tunnel**, connecting the north and central campuses of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where you can add your own progressive designs and messages that students and tourists alike can enjoy for years to come (or at least until another artist paints over them).

### North Dakota

If you're seeking more stimulating conversation on your gaycay than your travel partner is capable of providing (dull queers do exist, y'all), join the **Queerly Reading book and discussion club**, which meets every second Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. in the Bismarck Barnes & Noble Café. Join its Facebook group for title selections and to contribute ideas.

### Ohio

Cleveland-based DJ Alan Freed is widely credited for coining the term “rock and roll” in the early 1950s—or, at the very least, popularizing it—so it's only fitting that the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame** was born here, too. Inductees include many of your LGBTQ+ music idols, from Janis Joplin and Joan Jett to Freddie Mercury and Elton John.

### Oklahoma

Many queer folk got their first sensation of same-sex attraction by playing with shapely superheroes when they were kids (what future gay boy didn't pine for a peek under the Caped Crusader's codpiece?) and you can relive that age of innocence at the **Toy and Action Figure Museum**, filled to the brim with over 13,000 distinct characters and many mint-condition collectibles, located in Pauls Valley.

### Oregon

Portland-based **Wild Diversity** offers a full

slate of outdoors activities (that require advance reservations)—which include bird watching around Whitaker Pond, a two-day Willamette River paddling adventure, writers' retreats and a deaf community campout, among many others—specifically geared toward (but not limited to) BIPOC and QTBIPOC.

### Pennsylvania

Pay your respects by setting a can of Campbell's Soup beside the **final resting place of gay pop-art icon Andy Warhol**, whose gravesite at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in the town of Castle Shannon is broadcast 24/7 on his museum's website as part of a project called “Figment.”

### Rhode Island

After a day of exploration in queer-friendly Providence—**The Stable**, **Mirabar** and **The Dark Lady** are known for their neighborly customer service—spend a night or two at the **Old Town Inn** in New Shoreham or Newport's **Francis Malbone House**, both gay-owned and secluded on nearby islands.

### South Carolina

In a walking city like Charleston you can spend an entire day sightseeing and one of the can't-miss photo ops is **Rainbow Row**, comprised of 13 brightly colored townhomes along East Bay Street on the Charleston Harbor. After you've fulfilled your daily step requirement, take a load off and relax with a crafty selection of Moscow mules at historic queer haunt **Dudley's on Ann**.

### South Dakota

**Club David** is as good as it gets for queer congregating in a state not exactly known for its LGBTQ+ progressiveness. Still, you'll manage to catch a penny-pinching buzz with nightly drinks specials (many of which are half-price) and occasional events like drag bingo on the rooftop patio.

### Tennessee

Throw your hands up as you barrel through the Thunderhead rollercoaster, stroll through the Chasing Rainbows Museum and tap your feet to the Dreamland Drive-In musical show at **Dollywood**, the namesake theme park of everybody's favorite LGBTQ+-lovin' glam-ma Dolly Parton, in Pigeon Forge.

### Texas

Download the 1956 Western film *Giant* to your tablet, open a bottle of wine, snuggle up in bed and press play in a stately room at Marfa's **Hotel Paisano**, which hosted LGBTQ+ icons Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson and James Dean (in his final role) as they shot scenes for the flick in this charming Far West Texas town 66 years ago.

### Utah

Despite his Mormon upbringing, wanted **Wild West outlaw Butch Cassidy** might have been gay. Allegedly, his mother heard noises and wondered what he and his new cowboy friend Mike Cassidy, whose last name he eventually took, “were doing down by the corral.” (A mother always knows

what's up, doesn't she?) See where it all started with a visit to the thief-with-a-heart-of-gold's **humble boyhood abode** and poke around the family plot, located in Panguitch.

### Vermont

Fill a waffle cone with your favorite **Ben & Jerry's** flavor at its factory-based **Scoop Shop** in Waterbury before taking a saunter through the behind-the-building-and-up-the-hill Flavor Graveyard where discontinued pints, like Schweddy Balls and Vermonty Python, rest in peace. The confectionary connoisseurs are longtime supporters of the LGBTQ+ community, most recently celebrating International Transgender Day of Visibility.

### Virginia

Satisfy your sweet tooth at **Ruby Scoops**, a Black- and LGBTQ+-owned ice cream shop in Richmond's Brookland Park neighborhood, which serves up premium, small-batch, made-from-scratch ice creams, sorbets, sherbets and desserts in tantalizing taste combos like roasted pineapple/rosemary, strawberry/sweet red bean and guava daiquiri, plus a few tried-and-true standards, too.

### Washington

Come for a haircut, stay for the coffee at Seattle-based **Squirrel Chops**, a queer-owned hybrid salon and café where you can kill two birds with one stone when you get a perm and your daily pick-me-up.

### West Virginia

Photo-capture rainbows in the mist as sunrays reflect off the tannic acid-darkened water of the 57-foot cascading **Blackwater Falls** in the Allegheny Mountains of Tucker County, then pitch a tent at the state park's campground for a night of slap-and-tickle under the stars.

### Wisconsin

Pizza and wine is a treasured culinary combo—at least for booze and junk-food enthusiasts (i.e. non-psychopaths)—and you'll find options aplenty at wife-and-wife-owned **Trouble and Sons** in Whitefish Bay, where you also can order fresh salads to trick yourself into feeling healthy while getting fat and happy.

### Wyoming

You may have trouble finding the exact spot where **Matthew Shepard** was brutally beaten and left to die by two homophobes in 1998, as it remains unmarked to this day, but a **memorial bench on the University of Wyoming campus in Laramie** serves as a sufficient spot to remember our modern-day martyr.

*Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. He's currently traveling across the country in his van, seeking queer excitement everywhere he roams. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikey-roxtravels*

*All photos courtesy of the sources.*



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# Pride Journey: Colorado Springs

BY JOEY AMATO

Did you know that Colorado Springs is also known as Olympic City U.S.A.? Neither did I. Not only is the city home to the U.S. Olympic Training Center, but Colorado Springs recently celebrated the grand opening of the **U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum**, a stunning state-of-the-art building showcasing the history of the Olympic games as well as athletes that competed. The 60,000 square-foot facility focuses on the core values of the Olympic and Paralympic movements: friendship, respect and excellence, determination, equality, inspiration, and courage. The museum was voted “Best New Attraction” by USA Today and it’s easy to see why.

Visitors enter a grand lobby and take an elevator to the top level of the building where they can view a chronological history of the Olympic and Paralympic torches, medals, and other items. The museum is divided between the summer and winter games and the self-guided tour includes an emotional video highlighting the greatest U.S. Olympic triumphs as well as some struggles Team U.S.A. has faced along the way.

The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum is within walking distance from the new **Kinship Landing hotel**, so it is well worth the visit. After a morning at the museum, grab a quick bite at the hotel’s restaurant, Home Café + Bar. I ordered the North Park sandwich, consisting of roasted pork, caramelized onions, banana peppers and served with a black garlic aioli. It was a messy, but delicious way to begin my stay at Kinship Landing.

The hotel is meant to be a gathering place. Many spaces in the lobby are designed so guests can mingle and socialize with each other. The hotel gears towards a younger, more adventurous traveler who is looking to make friends and create wonderful memories along the way. This is no way means the hotel skimps on luxury. The bed was probably one of the most comfortable I’ve slept on.

A brief 15-minute ride from the property is the **Cheyenne Mountain Zoo**, which was recently voted one of the best zoos in the country. While the setting is truly breathtaking, the zoo itself was a bit challenging to navigate. There were a few times my guest and I had to back track and ask zoo staff for directions as some of the exhibits weren’t clearly marked. Some of my favorite areas of the zoo included the penguin habitat as well as the Australian exhibit. Visitors can also purchase unique experiences including the chance to feed elephants and giraffes.

For dinner, head over to **Paravicini’s Italian Bistro**, an old-school Italian restaurant located in Old Colorado City, or “OCC” as the locals call it. The restaurant was featured on an episode of Guy Fieri’s Diners, Drive-ins & Dives, and I can

now see why Fieri was so in love with this place. The chicken marsala and side of penne Bolognese were prepared to perfection. I wasn’t expecting a great Italian meal in Colorado, but I sure got one.

Colorado Springs is home to two LGBTQ bars, **Club Q** and **ICONS**. Although I didn’t have a chance to visit Club Q, I did swing by ICONS, which is located in the heart of downtown. The piano bar is probably one of the best LGBTQ bars I’ve been to in recent memory, not only for the theme, but also the friendliness of the staff and quality of the cocktails. The venue opened in 2020 and features a talented group of bartenders, who also perform throughout the evening, singing a variety of music from old standards to more recent hits from icons including Whitney Houston and Lady Gaga.

The next part of my trip focused on wellness and nature. I began the morning with an incredible yoga class from **Dragonfly Paddle Yoga** where we did yoga on a paddleboard in the middle of a lake. Get ready to engage your core muscles for this one, or you will be drenched before class is over. The class meets at the boat ramp of a man-made lake near downtown and paddles to an alcove surrounded by lush trees, with mountains soaring in the background. At first, I was hesitant to try to stand on the paddleboard, but as time went on, I gained confidence in my yoga skills (or lack thereof) and was able to stand and perform yoga poses on the paddleboard. Some were more challenging than others, but I did get a fabulous workout while enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

After grabbing a light snack and latte from Loyal Coffee located directly across from Kinship Landing, head to **the Cog Railway** and prepare to ascend to an elevation of over 14,000 feet to the top of **Pike’s Peak**. The entire journey takes a little over an hour but is well worth it. The view from Pike’s Peak is spectacular and was said to be the inspiration for the song “America the Beautiful.” The original railway opened in 1891 and was recently restored, making it the highest in the United States and longest cog railway in the world. Bring your camera for this journey!

End your vacation in Colorado Springs with a visit to the **Garden of the Gods Resort and Club**. Located just 15-minutes from downtown, the resort is positioned on the edge of Garden of the Gods Park and the view is nothing short of extraordinary. Guests can dine on the mesa while watching the sunset over the mountains or wake up early for some sunrise meditation.

As soon as I arrived at the hotel, I went for a walk around the property and was overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the resort and the park itself. My room featured two queen size beds and an enormous bathroom with walk-in shower and separate soaking tub. I really didn’t spend much time there as I was too busy enjoying the natural



Joey Amato at Pike’s Peak.  
Photos courtesy of Amato

wonders.

After a few days spent touring the city, I was most excited about my treatments at **STRATA Integrated Wellness and Spa**. I began my spa day with Functional Neurology, a complex science which uses signals from the body to reset the brain. The alternative treatment is used to properly align the body’s musculoskeletal structure and restore mobility. It’s like a combination of chiropractic and touch therapy. Speaking of touch therapy, I had the chance to experience a wonderful treatment in which the therapist used her hands to help treat aches and pains. I wasn’t sure what to expect, but the treatment was quite relaxing and something I would do again. I was able to feel the heat and energy from her hands as she ever so slightly touched problem areas.

My favorite treatment of the day however was the Royal Thai Poultice Massage, an 80-minute

experience which combines an organic herbal poultice with Thai stretching, and aromatherapy. How’s that for a day of pampering?

Begin the following morning with Breathwork and Mindfulness on the mesa led by the STRATA’s wellness coach Kelly Stoinski. It’s rare that I have a chance to slow down, especially in the morning, but this was a perfect way to end an incredible visit.

Colorado Springs is a great place for LGBTQ travelers seeking a combination of outdoor adventures as well as city life. While the city itself isn’t as large as its neighbor to the north, it is very walkable, easy to navigate and everything you need to experience is within a 15–20-minute drive from the airport.

To book your Colorado Springs gaycation, visit [Orbitz.com/Pride](http://Orbitz.com/Pride).

Enjoy the journey!



Amato (third from right) participating in Dragonfly Paddle Yoga.



# Get Out!

## LGBTQ travelers show how to travel safely this fall

BY ED SALVATO, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LGBT MEDIA ASSOCIATION

Just when we thought it was safe to hit the road, we were walloped by the Delta variant, the latest plot twist in the 18-month-and-counting pandemic story. The surprising data that fully vaccinated people could transmit the virus came shockingly from Provincetown with a 90% vaccination rate. Ptown quickly tightened restrictions requiring masking at all indoor locations and proof of vaccine at all entertainment venues — interventions that worked. As of press time, the positivity rate there is much lower than much of the rest of the U.S. and it remains one of our top recommendations this fall and beyond. Ptown demonstrated a successful response — stressing safety yet continuing to deliver a deeply satisfying experience.

Read on for our favorite queer-friendly destinations striving to create a safe space for you and strategies for navigating the increasingly complex world of pandemic travel. Safe, beautiful and fun LGBTQ-friendly destinations, experiences and accommodations beckon whether you seek to recharge your batteries, deplete them or a little of both.

### Queer and safe destinations

**Provincetown, Mass.** is our very own home beyond the rainbow as suggested by this year's Carnival theme. Book far ahead for popular weeks (July 4; Bear Week; and Carnival) but we recommend visiting outside of the most popular times for a less frantic more enjoyable stay. There are diverse LGBTQ-oriented events almost every weekend through New Year's Eve Information: Provincetown Business Guild (<https://ptown.org>) and Provincetown for Women ([www.provincetownforwomen.com](http://www.provincetownforwomen.com)).

**Fort Lauderdale and Miami** remain the beating heart of LGBTQ-friendly Florida despite the barbaric state-level response causing the Sunshine State to be among the worst-hit in the U.S. by the pandemic. Fort Lauderdale has been world-renowned for its authentic and inclusive vibe for all visitors since 1996. Over 1,000 local businesses have taken the Safe & Clean Pledge ([www.sunny.org/travel-resources/safe-clean-pledge/](http://www.sunny.org/travel-resources/safe-clean-pledge/)). Likewise, Miami has implemented the Greater Miami Travel Guidelines and Destination Pledge accessible from the destination's home-

page <https://www.miamiandbeaches.com/travelguidelines>, outlining how safety measures are being implemented throughout the community.

**Puerto Rico** is the undisputed LGBTQ capital of the Caribbean, enticing visitors with reliably warm, sunny weather and a sincere outreach to queer travelers. Despite unfortunate, highly publicized attacks on local transgender people, Puerto Rico boasts a visible and vibrant trans community, and nightlife options that specifically cater to queer and non-binary folks. This helps

create a safer and more comfortable environment than other warm-weather destinations in the Caribbean or Mexico, which lack venues for a trans community that mostly lives in hiding. Discover Puerto Rico at [www.discoverpuertorico.com/things-to-do/lgbtq-travel](http://www.discoverpuertorico.com/things-to-do/lgbtq-travel)

**Philadelphia, Pa.** makes for a fun urban weekend getaway. Once the kids are back in school and the lines at the Liberty Bell disappear, you'll find a warm, walkable and LGBTQ-welcoming city. Find LGBTQ restaurants, safe nightlife, engaging events and recommendations galore at Visit Philly ([www.visitphilly.com/lgbt/](http://www.visitphilly.com/lgbt/)). Pro tip: Try to schedule a half-day at the Barnes Foundation ([www.barnesfoundation.org](http://www.barnesfoundation.org)) art collection.

**Cedar Rapids, Iowa.** Wait, what? Yep, this charming Midwestern town is our top unexpected recommendation. You'll find historic cultural venues, a walkable entertainment district with plenty of top-notch live music and theatrical performances, a delectable culinary scene and a truly warm welcome. Find trip-planning recommendations at the destination's website, [www.tourismcedar Rapids.com/lgbtq/](http://www.tourismcedar Rapids.com/lgbtq/).

### Queer cruises and land vacations

Cruises are coming back, and it may be surprising to hear that they are probably the safest vacation you can take. According to Randle

Roper, CEO at **VACAYA**, an LGBTQ+ vacation company, "[w]ith cruise lines soon to mandate that all guests and crew members must be vaccinated, cruise ships will be among the very safest locations on the planet, with the entire population vaccinated. Making sensible choices like masking and social distancing while ashore, cruisers can avoid infection altogether." Resort vacations are also safe with similar universal vaccinations and plenty of room for guests to spread out. Remember with no children during LGBTQ weeks at mainstream resorts, they offer much more space per adult guest. VACAYA's big 2021 fall events include their all-inclusive Mexico Resort vacation (Oct. 30 - Nov. 6) and their New Orleans Cruise (Nov. 14-22). In 2022, there are only two trips that still have rooms available as of press time: their Caribbean Cruise (Jan. 10-17) and their all-inclusive Costa Rica Resort (Jun. 5-12). Information and booking at [www.myvacaya.com](http://www.myvacaya.com).

Not only will queer tour companies get you there and back safely, but "they also can ensure your money is being spent with other welcoming, progressive and even queer business and individuals around the world," according to Robert Sharp, founder of Out Adventures ([www.outadventures.com](http://www.outadventures.com)). "This is even more important," he continues, "when planning travel to countries

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Diving off the Seychelles is but one adventure awaiting from VACAYA Cruises. Photo courtesy of VACAYA





## Recovery from Opiate Addiction is Possible

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# ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL!?

The Chicago Reader presents  
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at the Kedzie Inn, 4100 N. Kedzie Ave.

A weekly pop up featuring some of our favorite chefs:

**August 23:** Vietnamese-Guatemalan street food with Giong Giong

**August 30:** Malaysian food from Kedai-Tapao

**September 13:** Mumbai! with Tasting India

**September 20:** Cambodian prix fixe from Mona Bella Catering

**September 27:** Midwestern Weird with Funeral Potatoes

**October 4:** Pizza and Doughnuts with John Carruthers (Crust Fund Pizza), World's Greatest Food Writer Dennis Lee, and Tubers Donuts

**October 11:** Ethan Lim of Hermosa

See [chicagoreader.com/food-drink/](http://chicagoreader.com/food-drink/) for weekly menus and ordering info

Continued from page 17

that are known to be less than queer welcoming." Visit their site to read about their New Year's Eve trips to Thailand and Cuba and in 2022, their Iceland Winter trip, and four back-to-back Croatia small group cruises, which are starting to sell out.

**R Family Vacations** is one of our top recommendations for planning an incredibly fun and satisfying tour or cruise (big ship and river cruises) in the company of other queer travelers and allies. You don't even have to have children to join their trips. In 2022, R Family offers land tours in Thailand and Ireland; an LGBTQ group on board a cruise in Alaska; and a magical all-queer full-ship-charter Uniworld river cruise in Northern Italy among other trips. More information available at [www.rfamilyvacations.com](http://www.rfamilyvacations.com).

**Expert LGBTQ travel advisors are standing by to help you. And they're free!**

Even in this uncertain time, you can enjoy enriching and joyful travel opportunities in LGBTQ-friendly environments in a way that maximizes safety and minimizes risk. You just have to plan a little more. We highly recommend using an LGBTQ expert travel advisor who keeps up to date on LGBTQ-friendly tour, cruise and safari providers, as well as destinations and hotels and who understand innately the needs and concerns of LGBTQ travelers. They dedicate themselves to both LGBTQ travel safety and keeping up with the latest, ever-shifting pandemic-era guidance, health protocols, openings, and closings. They know how to get the best value for your time and money, and, thanks to their global connections, they can often score VIP upgrades for you at hotels, on cruise lines, on tours, and more. They are

also your most important advocate when trips are cancelled or rescheduled. Best of all clients use travel advisors, like our top picks here, for no additional fees:

—**Kelli Carpenter**, who also co-owns R Family Vacations; [Kcarpenter@tzell.com](mailto:Kcarpenter@tzell.com)

—**Jonathan Alder**, Travelstore USA; [Jonathan.a@jonathanstravels.us](mailto:Jonathan.a@jonathanstravels.us)

—**Sandie Anders**; Bursch Travel; [Sandiea@burschtravel.com](mailto:Sandiea@burschtravel.com)

—**Giuseppe Giulio**; Gay Friendly Italy; [giuseppe@gay.it](mailto:giuseppe@gay.it)

**Choose LGBTQ-welcoming accommodations**

We've heard far too many stories of queer guests receiving a frosty welcome (or worse) when checking into a hotel or AirBnB. These are our top choices for LGBTQ-friendly resources for accommodations where you can truly relax and be your authentic selves:

—**MisterBnB** [www.misterbandb.com](http://www.misterbandb.com) includes one million LGBTQ-friendly listings in 200 countries and is primarily geared towards gay men.

—**FabStayz** <https://fabstayz.com> proudly offers accommodations inclusive of all the letters of our ever-growing acronym.

—**Orbitz Pride** [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com) lists LGBTQ-friendly accommodations

—**Booking.com** is rolling out an LGBTQ certification program—including live training and ancillary materials—for their hotel partners over the next year. Look for the "Proud Hospitality" label on listings.

*NYC-based Ed Salvato is a freelance travel writer, instructor at NYU and the University of Texas at Austin's NYC Center, and an LGBTQ tourism marketing specialist.*



**Revelers in Provincetown.**  
Photo by Ed Salvato



# Feds expand insurers' requirements for PrEP coverage

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Insurers and service-providers have until September to comply with a new federal guidance requiring insurance companies to cover the entire cost of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) interventions.

Many insurers have been covering the cost of PrEP medication, widely available as the pills Truvada or Descovy, for several years. Truvada became available in a generic formulation in 2020, and U.S. insurers have been prevented from charging co-pays for PrEP since the beginning of 2021.

But one aspect of PrEP has remained daunting for some community members unable to access comprehensive coverage through insurance or assistance programs: Paying for additional lab work or even follow-up medical visitations that a PrEP prescription requires. Those requirements could be "bracing" for some patients, according to activist Jim Pickett, who is at AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC).

"If you have insurance, that insurance must cover PrEP in full, and 'PrEP on full' means not just the prescription," said Pickett. "It means the office visits, the lab tests, any kind of counseling—all those things need to be covered completely. So that's a huge win."

PrEP was given a "Grade A" rating by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent panel that issues recommendations about clinical preventative services. Under Affordable Care Act guidelines, that rating means insurers have to pay for PrEP services in full. The federal government issued the guidance July 19, and Illinois issued a follow-up about the state's implementation of the rule July 29.

"People often seemed to have everything covered, and then might get a lab bill," Pickett said. "Every insurance plan has different ways that they provide services or refuse services. There's not a lot of plans that up front will say that they will [pay for] a set of labs for you every three months. So people might get a [first] set of labs and it's okay, and then six months in, they get hit with hundreds of dollars in a lab bill."

Care providers generally recommend blood-work, mainly to monitor kidney functions, every three months for persons using PrEP.

Pickett added, "There are a lot of programs in Chicago that try to find support [to avoid financial surprises] so people can still move forward and aren't left hanging, but any time any kind of friction like that comes up in the system, it's a huge deterrent. Getting an \$800 bill is obviously a real deterrent."

PrEP adoption has increased in recent years. PrEP has been a central focus in the state's Getting to Zero initiative, which aims to reduce new HIV transmissions to "virtual zero" by the year 2030. Pickett said that it is too early to determine whether PrEP use has been on an upward-

or downward-swing since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. While some PrEP users might not have seen the point of continuing to use their medication when they were relatively isolated and having less sex, some providers eased access since so much of the work can be done via tele-health visits and at-home testing.



Jim Pickett.  
LinkedIn photo

"We're still in the middle of it all," Pickett added. "We've had waves [of COVID transmissions], but obviously this ain't over. ... We'll have a better look at what goes on with COVID and PrEP as time goes on and we have more data. It's just the middle of 2021, and 2020 is when the whole shit-house came down. Oftentimes, we need a year out to see things better."

The PrEP landscape is likely to change even more in the months ahead. Researchers have been looking into administering the drug cabotegravir through injection as a PrEP intervention (as well as an injectable HIV treatment when combined with rilpivirine). Pickett has long spoken of a day when HIV-negative people might choose from a "menu" of PrEP options that best suited their particular situation: Persons who expect difficulty adhering to a strict pill regimen might choose a long-lasting injectable option that only needs to be administered every few months, for example. Less sexually active people already can use a "PrEP on demand" protocol to guard against transmission when they anticipate an encounter.

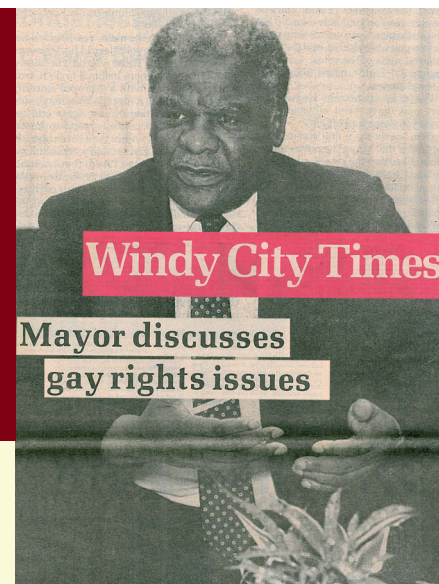
Pickett added, "What I'm really interested in are multi-purpose technologies. Imagine an injection or an implant that also protects against other STI's. Also, this is coming soon: a dual pill that has contraception and HIV-prevention. You take one pill and you don't have to worry about unwanted pregnancy and you don't have to worry about HIV."

He added though, that advocates and providers shouldn't get overly excited about "the new shiny thing," since getting these medications and technologies to the people who need them is where systems tend to fall apart.

"Our health care system is confusing and is filled with friction," Pickett said. "It's filled with challenges. We make people jump through hoops and backflips with their insurance, assistance programs and pharmacy benefits. ... You can have the best technology in the world, but if you make it hard to get, and make people deal with paper, bureaucracy and waiting, guess what? It's not going to happen. We need a system focused on individuals."

## Mayor Harold Washington: His LGBTQ+ Legacy

Wed., Oct. 13, 6-8 p.m.  
Center on Halsted  
3656 N. Halsted  
FREE



### Part of a series of events marking late CHICAGO MAYOR WASHINGTON'S 100<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY

Featuring LGBTQ+ advocates discussing Washington's role in the city's gay-rights ordinance, HIV/AIDS, appointing the first mayor's liaison to the gay and lesbian community, the first gay and lesbian advisory council, and more.

**MCs**  
Kim Hunt &  
Channyn Lynne Parker



**SPEAKERS**  
Sen. Mike Simmons  
& Tracy Baim



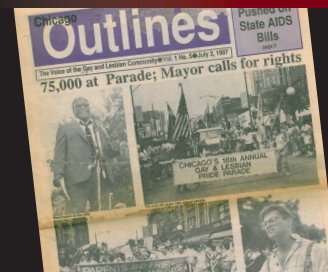
#### PANEL: Washington's Campaign and Outreach

Peggy Baker  
Ann Christophersen  
Moderator: Mona Noriega



#### PANEL: Advocacy for the Gay-Rights Bill During Washington's Tenure

Laurie Dittman  
Rick Garcia  
Art Johnston  
Moderator: Mary Morten



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