We do not hesitate to recognize today a necessary consequence of that legislative choice: An employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender defies the law.”

— Justice Neil Gorsuch

What the ‘Bostock’ ruling means long term
by Tammye Nash, Page 8
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ON THE COVER
Design by Kevin Thomas

Employment Discrimination Lawyer

Law Office of Rob Wiley, P.C.

INCOME TAX RETURNS

RON ALLEN CPA, PC

NOTICE OF DART PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearing on D2 Subway Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

IN-PERSON PUBLIC HEARING FOLLOWING COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND PRACTICES

DART, 1401 Pacific Avenue, Dallas, TX 75202; June 25, 2020, Noon to 1:00 p.m.

If you were not able to attend virtual Public Hearings on June 11, DART will conduct an in-person Public Hearing to receive comments on the D2 Subway SDEIS. DART encourages you to consult the latest Dallas County guidance at dallascounty.org/covid-19 in making your decision to attend this event. Attendees must enter DART Headquarters from Akard Street and will undergo temperature screening prior to entry. Face coverings or masks will be required while in the building and social distancing protocols will be in place.

An informational presentation is available at DART.org/D2 or through DART Service Area city public access TV channels. Contact DART Community Engagement at 214-749-2543 for information.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in cooperation with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART), has completed the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the D2 Subway Project, a proposed second light rail transit (LRT) line through downtown Dallas that would extend 2.4 miles from Victory Station to the Green Line along Good Latimer Expyway.

The SDEIS is available for review at DART.org/D2. The 45-day public comment period closes June 29, 2020. Contact DART Community Engagement, 214-749-2543, to make arrangements to view a hard copy of SDEIS.

Two alternatives - a Build and a No-Build - are being considered in the SDEIS, with the potential impacts and mitigation identified in a broad range of environmental categories. Potential impacts of the Build Alternative involve: the Magnolia Gasoline Station, 902 Ross Avenue; the St. James A.M.E. Temple, 624 North Good Latimer Expressway; Pegasus Plaza, 1900 Main Street; and Belo Garden, 1014 Main Street.

Written comments can be provided via email to D2@DART.org or in writing to: Ernie Martinez, DART Capital Planning, P.O. Box 600193, Dallas, TX 75266-7213.

There will be no presentation during the hearing. If you do not plan to comment, attendance is discouraged. A transcript of the hearing will be made available after the event at DART.org/D2.

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INCOME TAX RETURNS

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Eight minutes and 46 seconds. Approximately one-third of the average television show. It doesn't seem like much time at all — less than the common beginners meditation recommendation of 10 minutes.

It's not much time at all.

And yet, when faced with the demand to be patient and listen for eight minutes and 46 seconds — the amount of time a police officer kept his knee on George Floyd's neck — many Dallasites seem entirely incapable of doing so. Most protesters can't stay on one knee that long and have to switch at least once midway through. It's an uncomfortable position to hold on the hard concrete street.

It is an acknowledgement of pain.

What, then, explains the aggressive, reckless and borderline violent actions of many in Dallas, who — from the air conditioned comfort of their cars — decided that they couldn't wait an uncomfortable eight minutes and 46 seconds, and instead tried to plow through the protesters?

With only one exception, my team and I have reported every day and every night on the protests sparked by Floyd's death. Since the events on the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge on June 1, the demonstrations in Dallas have been overwhelmingly peaceful. Yet, as the police have taken a step back, reducing their presence, aggressive drivers have filled the void.

Since the first “take-to-the-streets” march from Dallas City Hall, there have been at least three incidents in which a driver's car has come into contact with a protester, and four incidents in which drivers have threatened to use a gun.

I was among the crowd on June 8, when a negligent driver nearly backed over me after threatening to pull his gun on the crowd. And I was there on June 16 when a man bumped into a protester then got out his car carrying his gun after a protester made contact with his car door, before speeding recklessly through the intersection.

From my perspective as a journalist, the protesters have done as much as possible to act safely when blocking traffic and to de-escalate situations when things become tense. But these incidents have not been without controversy or issue, as conflicts have emerged within the protest group regarding safety protocols.

But it is without a doubt that over the last 10 days, aggressive drivers have been the ones putting people in danger.

This is a disturbing pattern — one which must be adequately addressed by the media.
We are throwing a party!

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Although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced most in-person Pride events around the world this year to be postponed or cancelled, the global LGBTQ community has rebounded, put our collective ingenuity to work and found whole new ways to celebrate — online.

Virtual Pride events are flourishing, and here are just a few — including Dallas Voice’s very own Pride Party Online, hosted by Cassie Nova and featuring a slew of celebrity guests.

Here is a list of events we know of so far. Get all the details, then sign on and SHOW YOUR PRIDE.

Dallas Voice Pride Party on Facebook Live

Dallas Voice will hold its first Pride Party Online, hosted by Cassie Nova and streaming on Facebook Live on Sunday, June 28, the 51st anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.

Longtime LGBTQ fave Leslie Jordan is among the celebrities appearing in the Pride Party online. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Jordan has gained a huge and diverse online audience with his daily dose of Leslie just being Leslie.

Jordan was already well known and loved for his award-winning performance as Beverly Leslie on Will & Grace and as BrotherBoy on stage and film in Del Shores’ Sordid Lives. He’s appeared in Dallas a number of times to raise money for Legacy Counseling Center.

Pepper Mashay will sing something from her long string of No. 1 dance hits that includes “Something to Feel,” “Happiness,” “Step Into My Life,” “Sextacy” and “Send Me an Angel.” Singer and songwriter Kym Sims appears as well.

Grammy-nominated comedian Lisa Lampanelli will join the celebration with a Pride Month shout-out, too, as will other still-to-be-announced celebrities.

Some favorites among North Texas entertainers, including many Rose Room cast members, will also appear. That long list includes Alyssa Edwards, Jenna Skyy, Layla Larue, Krystal Summers, Kelexis Davenport, Sasha Andrews, Chanel LaMasters, Walter Lee, Kylee O’Hara Fatale, Bleach, Frida Monet, Raquel Blake and Fantasha.

The Turtle Creek Chorale put together an ensemble video for the broadcast. Because of social distancing, they could not sing together, so instead, they sang individually, and Artistic Director Sean Baugh then wove those individual voices together to create a chorus singing apart but together.

The Pride Party will include video of past Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parades from archival DVTB broadcasts interspersed with the performances, and to round out the mix, DJ DrewG will be part of the lineup.


The performance takes place on Sunday afternoon, June 28 at 2 p.m.-3:30 p.m. on Facebook Live or at DallasVoice.com. Visit the Dallas Voice Facebook page for more information.

Dallas Wings and Del Shores team up for GDMAF

The Dallas Wings will participate in Rise Together, a one-night-only, virtual fundraising event hosted by Del Shores and benefiting the Greg Dollgener Memorial AIDS Fund. GDMAF is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Rise Together will look at the organization’s history and its impact the organization on those living with HIV and AIDS in the DFW area.

Viewers will be able to engage by chat with Del Shores, win prizes, bid on items...
in the online silent auction, enjoy performances by various celebrity and local MetroBall artists, hear a special PRIDE message from the WNBA’s Dallas Wings and learn first hand from organizations and individuals whose lives have been changed by the volunteers and the generous community supporters of GDMAF.

Special guest host Del Shores is the writer/director/producer of the films Sordid Lives, Blues for Willadean, Southern Baptist Sissies and A Very Sordid Wedding. He wrote and executive produced the MGM feature Daddy’s Dyin’ ... Who’s Got The Will? Of the seven plays he’s written, four have been adapted for screen. The play adaptation of his film A Very Sordid Wedding premieres in Dallas in August at Uptown Players. His latest standup show Del Shores TheItemTypeStirrer is currently on tour.

The Dallas Wings organization is proud to support GDMAF and its efforts to help those living in North Texas with HIV and AIDS, a team representative said. The Wings organization is “proud to work in conjunction with a local non-profit but also to support a local business such as Pride Basics, which is known for supporting and giving back to the LGBTQ Community,” the representative said. “With the effort to work together during the global pandemic while still celebrating Pride Month, we will once again ‘Rise Together’ to and help raise funds for GDMAF.

Sponsors are The Dallas Wings, Pride Basics, The UPS Store at Oak Lawn, Bar Tech Services, DivasAndDjs.com, Del Shores and Landmark Media. To sponsor or make a donation, contact David Hearn at david@gdmaf.org or go online to gdmaf.org/RISE.

You can also go online now to GDMAF.org/RISE to pre-order a special Pride Box with a customizable RISE TOGETHER event t-shirt and a special assortment of GDMAF and Pride swag. Order by June 23 to receive the box in time for the event. The boxes will still be available during and after the online event and 100 percent of the proceeds goes directly to GDMAF.

Rise Together takes place at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 30 at GDMAF.org/RISE.

Together We Stand

June 26 from 4-7 p.m. in Reverchon Park

The LGBTQ community supports Black Lives Matter and Trans Lives Matter. Show your support with signs at this peaceful protest.

LGBTQ S.A.V.E.S. Pride Event

June 25 at 6:30 p.m. Facebook.com/lgbtqsaves

A virtual party with drag performances and messages of support from the Dallas Wings and members of the community.

Resource Center

• Glowing with Pride Gaybingo 2.0 June 20 at 7 p.m. Tickets and info at GlowingWithPrideGaybingo.eventbrite.com
• Get Centered Evening Tour June 23 from 5-6:30 p.m. Register at June2020GetCenteredpm.eventbrite.com
• Transgender 101 June 25 from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. Virtual training
• Toast to Life July 25 from 7-8 p.m. Music, auction and fun at this virtual event hosted by Steve Kemble with entertainment by the Roof Raisers and DJ Blake Ward.

USA Film Festival celebrates Pride

Friday, June 26, 7 p.m. Angelika Film Center & Café–Dallas, 5321 Mockingbird Lane

Celebrate Gay Pride Month and join us for a program of new short films by U.S. and foreign filmmakers from the LGBTQ community. Tickets are free, but you must call for reservations (no walk-ups for this event). For more info about this screening and to get instructions on how to request tickets, visit: http://www.usafilmfestival.com/images/USAFF50.Flyer.new.pdf

Pride Houston

Pride Houston’s virtual events include:
• June 20: Reel Pride
A day full of queer cinema. $10 for all films. Short films, documentaries, foreign language films.
• June 23: Pride Stars
Finale of Houston talent competition at 7 p.m. Tickets are $1 general admission or $5, which includes access to help choose who will represent Houston in the world finale competition.
• June 25: Rights Are Human conference
A day-long Zoom conference featuring interactive workshops addressing LGBTQ intersections with aging, education, immigration and gender.
• June 27: Global World Pride Celebrate Pride with the whole world. The 24-hour live stream event will include musical performances, speeches and key messages from human rights activists.

For more information visit PrideHouston.org.

Victory Fund National Pride Inside

June 26 at 6-7 p.m.

VictoryFund.org/prideinside

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, former presidential candidate and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Minneapolis City Councilwoman Andrea Jenkins will be among the speakers at the Victory Fund’s first virtual Pride event. More speakers to be announced.

Academy of Country Music GLAAD benefit concert

June 30, 7 p.m.

AcademyofCountryMusic.org/gladd

Ty Herndon and his Foundation for Love and Acceptance present a concert benefiting GLAAD, co-hosted by Kristen Chenoweth and Cady Alan with appearances and performances by Matt Bomer, Tanya Tucker, Rita Wilson, Lauren Alaina, Lewis Brice, Terri Clark, Billy Gilman, Dennis Quaid and Katie Shorr.

Family Equality — Out in Texas

Family Equality.org/out-in-texas-marriage-equality

A six-chapter video series on marriage equality about two couples from Texas including one from Dallas. The series explores how marriage equality has changed the lives of many Texas couples and families.
The ‘Bostock’ ruling: What is its real impact?

TAMMYE NASH | Managing Editor
nash@dallasvoice.com

In an unexpected and strongly-worded opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court on Monday, June 15, ruled that Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act does, indeed, prohibit discrimination in employment against LGBTQ people, handing the community a victory we have spent decades fighting for.

The ruling came in the case Bostock v. Clayton County, which was consolidated with two other cases— one an anti-gay discrimination case filed by Daniel Zarda, and one an anti-transgender discrimination case filed by Aimee Stephens. Perhaps most stunning for LGBTQ activists and allies was that usually-conservative Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. and Justice Neil Gorsuch voted with more progressive Justices Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan.

Gorsuch, a Trump appointee, wrote the majority opinion, declaring, “Ours is a society of written laws. Judges are not free to overlook plain statutory commands on the strength of nothing more than suppositions about intentions or guesswork about expectations.

“In Title VII, Congress adopted broad language making it illegal for an employer to rely on an employee’s sex when deciding to fire that employee. We do not hesitate to recognize today a necessary consequence of that legislative choice: An employer who fires an individual merely for being gay or transgender defies the law.”

But even as the celebrations began, there were those who urged against complacency. Chase Strangio, a trans activist and ACLU attorney who was on the team representing Aimee Stephens, cautioned via Twitter, “Do not let the bare minimum of legal victory lull us into complacency. We must continue to resist and dissent and rise up. We deserve wins like these AND we deserve so much more.”

And questions certainly remain as to how far-reaching the ruling will actually be. While the Supreme Court has declared that the word “sex” in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does specifically include sexual orientation and gender identity, But will this interpretation hold true in other federal statutes?

Brian Klosterboer, an attorney with the ACLU of Texas, said this week that the interpretation of “sex” in this ruling won’t automatically apply to other federal statutes and policies, “but I do think it is a big step forward, especially for LGBTQ people in Texas, where we didn’t have a lot of existing legal protections.” In fact, he noted, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which hears cases appealed from federal courts in Texas, “has ruled in a lot of similar cases, and they have said that transgender and LGB people are not covered under ‘sex.’”

And while the Bostock ruling this week “is very profound, and should apply to other situations” in which federal statutes prohibit discrimination based on sex, such as in housing, education and healthcare, such an interpretation isn’t a given.

The issue of discrimination in healthcare is especially prominent right now, after the Trump administration on June 13 rolled back regulations put in place by the Obama administration specifically stating that the Affordable Care Act prohibits discrimination against trans people under wording prohibiting discrimination based on sex.

“Several courts have already held that the ACA does include protections for transgender people, and this ruling gives more fire to that,” he said. “It helps put Trump on very unstable grounds to try and claim that ACA does not protect transgender people.”

Klosterboer stressed that, as protests continue across the country in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, the black man killed by a Minneapolis police officer, “It is important to note that the groundwork for this decision was laid 50 years ago by, especially, black trans women [at Stonewall] and black civil rights activists.

But he also pointed out that just because such discrimination has long been prohibited by law, “as recent events are proving again, that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t happen.”

“Before this ruling, some employers were not afraid to say, ‘I’m going to fire you because you are transgender’ or ‘because you are gay or bisexual,’ because they thought that was legal. When it comes to racial discrimination, most of them know better than to come right out and say that they won’t hire or are firing someone because of their race. But we all know that still happens,” Klosterboer said. “The ruling this week was definitely a momentous ruling. It says that LGBTQ people have this formal, legal equality. But the fight for actual lived equality continues, especially for those with multiple identities, like black transgender women. The work continues, the fight continues to turn these rights on paper into realities.”

Effects on mental health

The Bostock ruling definitely extends beyond the workplace and into the realm of mental health for LGBTQ people, according to licensed professional counselor Candy Marcum.

“I knew I was a lesbian at an early age, and I knew that meant I would have to take care of myself financially,” Marcum said this week. “Getting and keeping a job meant security and survival. This was at a time when the Stonewall Riots had just happened, and LGBTQ people were starting to stand up for what was fair and right. We stood up for equal rights, not special rights. And yet, I could lose my ability to be self-sufficient if my employer didn’t like the fact that I was a lesbian.”

For many LGBTQ people, Marcum continued, that meant “hiding their authentic selves — no photos on the desk that spoke of who we loved and who we dated. Social talk around the water cooler was about changing pronouns, so as not to ‘out’ ourselves.”

But, she said, that takes a toll on a person, emotionally and mentally and even physically.

“When you hide who you are, you lose a part of yourself,” she said. “You lose the part that says, ‘I belong,’ the part that says, ‘I’m a good person.’ When you have to hide, you build up shame inside you. That’s why there is a higher incidence of alcohol and drug abuse in the LGBTQ community. Abusing alcohol and drugs is a way to deal with the shame, with the internalized homophobia.”

The Supreme Court’s ruling this week takes away that weapon used to keep so many in the community in hiding and battling their own internalized shame.

“This Supreme Court ruling gives us, the LGBTQ community, the opportunity to heal our emotional wounds and hold our heads up high,” Marcum said. “So go ahead: Put those adorable photos of your loved ones on your desk. Use the correct pronouns. Legally, you get to be your authentic self. You can celebrate your fabulous selves.”

Be aware of subtle discrimination

But even as you celebrate, Klosterboer said, be aware of the possibility for subtle discrimination, and be prepared to fight for your rights if the need arises.

“If you feel like you are being discriminated against because you are LGBTQ, document everything as much as you possibly can,” he advised. “These cases are very fact-intensive. It matters what the boss or the manager says. And get it all in writing if you can, things like email and evaluations. Having it in writing is always better.”

And, he said, if you feel like you are being discriminated against in relation to your employment, don’t wait to act.

There is a limited time frame in which you can file a complaint with the EEOC, so do it sooner rather than later.

“And if you feel like you have been discriminated against, talk to a lawyer,” he said. “This ruling gives people an avenue for help they didn’t have last week. Use that avenue.”

Brian Klosterboer, above and, Candy Marcum, right
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CommUNITY Voices

A long time coming

One man’s employment journey, from discrimination to protections

This week’s Supreme Court ruling, in Bostock v. Clayton County, protecting LGBTQ individuals from discrimination is a long-awaited victory for our community. In many ways, I feel my generation of LGBTQ people experienced the worst of discrimination in the workplace. Homosexuals of earlier generations were certainly dealt with more cruelly, and I would never diminish their struggle.

But for my generation, choosing to live forced us to accept that we would never feel secure in our employment.

The laws against homosexuals were ironclad, but it was increasingly difficult to outright ban us. We found cracks in the sidewalk where we could survive. Employers knew that. But they also realized that we could be starved out. That they could, at least, rid their own companies of the queers.

Let me share with you one man’s journey — my journey — through an employment history that continues still.

Having a gay or lesbian employee was a convenience quickly recognized in the workplace, just as was the convenience of having single employees. That individual is expected to be flexible and available at any hour. And yes, LGBTQ people were put in the category of single, regardless of our relationship status. (Back then, we were not encouraged to discuss our personal lives at work because it made straight people uncomfortable. If we did that, we were seen as “forcing” our sexuality on them and their values.)

I was fortunate to spend years in San Francisco. Many of the people there were natives of a city with a very long history of tolerance. They had lived their entire lives around LGBTQ people. And in time, I started to feel like I could be myself, wherever I might live.

But moving back to Texas quickly challenged that notion, particularly in the workplace.

Here in Dallas, I found my industry — high-end restaurants — to be incredibly homophobic.

Among front-of-the-house staff, my hetero counterparts were young, white, smart-mouthed underachievers. And management allowed them to serve a lot of attitude; it was considered part of their charm with the guests.

But the rare black man in this mix, if he acted the same way, was usually seen as a troublemaker that was getting out of line. A gay man who acted that way was shirll and “just too gay.”

It was acceptable to weaponize words and stereotypes against us to run us off, to force us into being the dancing clown or to resort to heavy eye-rolling that both excused and encouraged the abuse.

But wait! There’s more! The AIDS darkness managed to further increase the hostility.

My partner became sick very soon after we moved to Dallas.

When my partner died, my manager called me — but not to express condolences. He called to confirm that he’d gotten the message that I missed my shift because I’d spent the day with the undertaker. He wanted to know if I wanted to work that night. He was short-staffed without me.

He said since “the guy I lived with” had been sick so long that surely his death could not have come as a shock.

It took that pandemic for us to begin to realize that not only were we not allowed to mention our lives, our deaths meant nothing, as well.

I watched partners of the men who died purposely denied survivor benefits by the company that employed me. I was told by the CEO that no more gay men would be hired until a cure for AIDS was found. But she was “kind enough” to assure me that the gay men already working for her would have jobs as long as they lived. The bitter irony is the rest of those men lay in their graves.

So no more gay men were hired FOR FIVE YEARS — until another, even more homophobic, regime took over.

I also have to mention the part that closeted men played in the employment. I have suffered setbacks for speaking to these men openly about my own life, for acknowledging them as gay themselves in private conversations within the workplace.

Involvement with one of my employer’s new ventures landed me in another city for a short period. Everyone else on the opening management team was straight. I was gay, so I wasn’t chosen for the team until I created a needed position as the service trainer. The entire staff, hired by my gaydar-deficient hetero counterparts before I arrived, consisted solely of women the male managers wanted to have sex with and gay men.

I felt bound to invite all of those gay men for a cocktail hour to caution them about corporate’s anti-LGBTQ hiring policy that was strictly enforced. In hindsight, it was a naive and intrusive move on my part. The closet cases brought out the knives, and by their hand, I was brought to slaughter. The malice directed by those in the closet towards those of us living openly has been lethal.

Yes, our job situation has gotten tremendously better. But for many, many others, the discrimination has remained a very real and present danger — until Monday, June 15, when we got an unexpectedly wonderful 6-3 ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court.

A good thing has happened at a time when it seems very little happens that is good. Combine that with other positive rulings from the court this week — rulings on gun control and immigration laws and DACA — and it looks like we may be back on the right track.

Gary Bellomy is a longtime activist for LGBTQ rights and other social justice causes, and is manager of Hotel St. Germain in Dallas.
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.foundation
Getting into a little trouble with queer rapper Big Dipper

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES • Executive Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

Many artists are in lockdown; TV talk shows are winging it from their hosts’ basements, and tons of folks are unemployed. But it seems that Big Dipper — the hirsute queer rapper — is having a moment. His new EP dropped last month; he just started a weekly live chat on the Growlr app; he is about four seasons into a weekly podcast, a Drag Race recap show with Willam and Alaska, and he even finds time to judge bulge contests online. Does that feel weird — having a positive experience during the pandemic?

“I wouldn’t say it’s positive,” he corrects. “I am participating in the strictest self-imposed social distancing at home [in Los Angeles], so it’s not awesome. I was planning to be this kind of busy anyhow. Some of my [musician] peers have just released music and were planning to tour this summer, and I have drag queen friends who were expecting to be busy. But I am very lucky to be able to [produce].”

Not that even he hasn’t felt the sting of coronavirus. Touring — live performances — is his wheelhouse as an artist but also his bread and butter. The bear events, the Pride celebrations that were slated to eat up his June and July? Vanished. Still, that left Big Dipper time to chat with us about the scope of his enterprises, reconciling rap’s homophobia with his own passion for hip-hop and the criteria for judging a bulge contest.

Dallas Voice: Let’s run through some of the projects that are keeping you busy right now, starting with Big Dipper Live on the Growlr app — it seems like a perfect fit considering your appeal. Big Dipper: Yeah. I had been in contact with Growlr about collaboration in the past, then about a year ago they were acquired [by a bigger company] and were able to integrate a large chat feature into the app. That’s when they reached out to me. So every Thursday [at 8 p.m.] I’m on the app and just talk for an hour. We’ve been having great conversations — about body positivity, racial bias in policing. Obviously, I’m a talker, but I was kinda nervous about doing a livestream. But it’s been great to engage with people.

How did you develop your podcast Sloppy Seconds with Big Dipper and Meatball (formerly Unbearable)? I feel like I have a quintessential bear vibe about me — I’m chubby, I’m covered in hair — but that’s not necessarily the first box I would check on [my identity]: I might tick queer first; I might tick artist first. And Meatball is an L.A. drag queen who competed on Season 1 of Dragula [whom I was friends with]. She’s fat and a bear [but also a drag queen], and I thought what an interesting thing it would be to start a podcast about identity [within the gay community]. And it quickly devolved into nasty sex stories.

Dragula [whom I was friends with]. She’s fat and a bear [but also a drag queen], and I thought what an interesting thing it would be to start a podcast about identity [within the gay community]. And it quickly devolved into nasty sex stories. It’s out every Friday.

You have a new album, called The Ham and Cheese EP, that dropped the same week as Lady Gaga’s Chromatica … so, no competition. Still, I wonder who your musical influences were, because I detected a little Eminem, and a little Kesha, and those aren’t two artists I would generally think of in the same breath. That’s so interesting. I’m 35, and so the [artists who were big in the] early 2000s? Those influences are burned into my brain: Busta Rhymes, Missy Elliott. I love the rough-gruff vocals on the verse and a sweet hook on the chorus like Ja Rule did in his collaborations. I was a big Eminem fan because I was a white kid, but then his homophobia took over … he was definitely an influence, but I finally realized I’m not a fan. The Kesha party-music vibe I totally see.
I got into the indie rap scene for a while — mainstream-adjacent music, with more ingenuity. Then Nikki Minaj came out, and I felt she has punchlines with all her lyrics. I am drawn to that. I’m a [heavy set] rapper wearing a thong — those things don’t go together! It bothered me [at first] that people thought I was a comedian [when I simply like serious music with a sense of humor]. Lonely Island was making music that people would watch over and over again and quote and say to one another — it is a joke, but it is also good music. Drag queens do that a lot — Alaska [Thunderfuck] makes original songs about saying your makeup is terrible. I think there’s a way to harness that to be both funny and good music. But I do hope people crack a smile [when they hear me].

I’m a rapper because I can’t sing. Hip-hop is still a young musical genre but also a global influence. The pop charts are [dominated] by rappers, but my cadence isn’t traditionally rap. I consider it pop music marketed with hip-hop beats.

What came first: Being a hip-hop fan or knowing you were gay? That’s kind of tricky. But I definitely was a hip-hop fan first, because I probably latched onto it before I even identified my sexuality. The first song I ever bought was Skee-Lo’s “I Wish.” And I loved Criss Cross because I was their same age. I tried to dress like them. So I locked in my love for rapping [before I was even aware of sex].

Hip-hop, especially in the past, was notorious for its homophobia. How did you square that circle of being a gay kid with hip-hop dreams? I squared it around the misogyny [already present in rap]. There was already an amount of objectifying women, so I thought, “Well, we have all culturally decided that if you’re playing music across the airwaves, you’re going to be talking about sluts and ‘hos, but we’re just gonna turn a blind eye to the messaging in the lyrics and dance to it on the dance floor.” But because I had to grapple with that, when I first began working on what you might call the “Big Dipper project” a decade ago, I set out with a focus on sexuality. I decided I’m switching all the objectification from women to men. Female rappers do this all the time: Nikki Minaj talks about how great her pussy is, so I talk about how deeply I’m going to suck your dick. Which is also why I strip in my shows and reveal my body, even though [my body type] is not seen as traditionally attractive or sexy. I’m also taking that power back — by wearing a thong and bringing that message out from the shadows. The goal was never a political message, even though you can see it as a direct line from my music to empowerment and visibility. I just wanted to have fun — my role model was Britney Spears. The goal was selfish... but the impact has been empowering, and I love that.

You’ve also judged bulge contests. How does that work? Are you just a size queen? If a dick is huge, I can be a size queen. But there should be a lot of fun personality — costumery, vibe, confidence. If your confidence is there, it’s more about who the dick is attached to than the dick itself.
‘The Surrogate’ intelligently confronts the dilemma of a modern family

ARNOLD WAYNE JONES | Executive Editor
jones@dallasvoice.com

The Surrogate begins, as most pregnancies themselves, with a sense of frantic disorientation: We start in the middle of a date, interrupted by a phone call; we jump to a bathroom and a successful pee-stick test then find out the mom is “the vessel” for a gay couple; we’re 10 weeks into the first trimester before we’re 10 weeks into the film. This is not, it seems to signal, going to be a “process story.”

Then Jess (Jasmine Batchelor), the mother-to-be, gets an amnio and learns that the fetus she is carrying for husbands Josh (Chris Perfetti) and Aaron (Sullivan Jones) has a genetic abnormality — an extra chromosome, causing Down syndrome. And things slow down a lot. Suddenly the frenzy of joy and anticipation becomes a weighty moral dilemma, one with at least three prongs, each a parent with skin in this game. We can see where this is going: How do three people make a decision about the life of their child?

Writer-director Jeremy Hersh’s debut feature is a heartwarming and heartbreaking portrait of a modern family that, despite its melodramatic bona fides, rings with authenticity. He’s best at the naturalistic dialogue, which sounds entirely improvised in its meandering detail, but makes its points and illuminates the inherent conflicts compassionately. The scenes with real Down syndrome children resonate with beauty and love, but the stakes are equally inescapable. What are the ethical implications, as well as financial and social, of ending a life because of what a test shows?

Ultimately, though, the film is called The Surrogate, not The Surrogacy — the gay couple are integral aspects, but this is really a character study of Jess, whose performance rarely hits a false note. The plot follows her journey from supportive bestie to crusader to defiant daughter. Eventually the film does track any of the tropes you expect (including a confrontation with the fathers), but that’s less a weakness than a necessary element of this kind of story. But it’s handled thoughtfully. And of course it raises specters of “normality:” What if the child had sickle cell? Or was gay? Does your opinion change if the couple made the decision based on race? (It does devolve in the final minutes, though until then it succeeds.)

The Surrogate was set to have its world premiere at SXSW earlier this year, but its debut as a streaming film does nothing to diminish its stature as a serious summer film.

Available online at Monumentreleasing.com/the-surrogate-theatrical.
We may never know the full truth about the gender-bending Wild West icon Calamity: The Many Lives of Calamity Jane by Karen R. Jones (Yale University Press 2020) $28; 303 pp.

You can call yourself whatever you want. Nobody says you can’t have a different name every day, if that’s your wish. Re-invent your life; create a new past; change your birth year, and tell new stories. Nobody cares if you do. Become whoever you want to be but, just know that, as in Calamity: The Many Lives of Calamity Jane, the truth might catch up.

When one thinks of women of the Wild West, the list is short, and Calamity Jane is toward the top. Born May 1, 1852, or possibly 1856, Martha Jane Canary was the oldest child of a gambler and a “woman of the lowest grade,” says Jones. Her parents left Missouri when Martha was a child and moved to Montana to take advantage of the gold rush there, but they didn’t even get a taste of its wealth before they both died.

Martha was a teenager then, and, to her credit, she did whatever was needed to survive — never staying in one place for very long, living hand-to-mouth in what became a “pathologically itinerant lifestyle” that she maintained on and off for her whole life. It’s how she likely got her nickname: calamity followed her from campsite to saloon to jail cell.

By the time she was out of her teens, Calamity Jane’s reputation was as wide as the prairie. She boasted about having been a “female scout,” but some of her claims don’t follow facts. Canary said that she drove stagecoaches and rode for the Pony Express, but dates don’t always match up. In early adulthood, she got into a habit of wearing men’s clothing, which caused scandal and titillation for much of her life and which led to genderfluidity today. There are so many instances where truth differs from legend, in fact, that we may never know the whole story about her.

It’s this aspect of Calamity that will keep you on your toes: As Jones sifts through the myths and mysteries of Canary’s life, we, too, begin to see not just a complex woman but also fascinating (for a western novel fan) slices of fiction-crushing facts about the Old West.

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the former centers on Canary’s cross-dressing, which Jones admits was common in Canary’s day, and not just for her; the difference, perhaps, is that she was unabashed about it. Because she was an anomaly by way of reputation and fame, Old West denizens gossiped about Canary; newspaper accounts mention her mode of dress quite often, and Jones hints at unknowns in her gender identity. Since Canary loved to embellish and because she seemed comfortable with a foot in many worlds, concrete evidence either way is elusively slippery.

Hollywoodization aside — and there’s plenty of that when it comes to Calamity Jane — it seems that the question may remain open. As for something that pulls this tale all together, though, and offers tantalizing reading, find Calamity and call it good.

— Terri Schlichenmeyer
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Two bingeable series drop this week, and the latest documentary about one of the most evil men in American politics (and he was gay!), will keep us glued to our screens for the next several days.

**The Politician.** At the end of Season 1 of this Ryan Murphy subversive comedy, ambitious teenager Payton (Ben Platt) had moved to NYC and decided to run for state senate against a popular incumbent, who herself has eyes on the vice presidency... and is secretly part of a throuple. Sexual politics are as much a part of the title as power-grabbing, and when Murphy is involved, you never know what direction it might head in. Add in queer icons Judith Light and Bette Midler, and you’re primed for campy delight. The entire second season has just been released for bingeable consumption. *Available on Netflix.*

**Bully. Coward. Victim. The Story of Roy Cohn.** Perhaps because he was a mentor to Donald Trump, Roy Cohn — the unethical lawyer and red-baiter who rallied against gay people while he was secretly trawling sex clubs (he died of complications from AIDS in 1986) — has been in the news again lately: To last year’s documentary *Where’s My Roy Cohn?* You can add this one, directed by Ivy Meeropol, granddaughter of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, whose executions Cohn maneuvered. Wow. *Available on HBO.*

**Love, Victor.** One of Hulu’s newest originals is an adaptation of sorts of the queer teen coming-out feature *Love, Simon.* Victor is a closeted Hispanic kid in a new town navigating his gay identity within the constraints of his peers, family and culture. All 10 episodes have just dropped. *Available on Hulu.*
Putting the FUN in ‘dysFUNctional family vacation’

Howdy friends. Today I woke up in kind of a funky mood. Seems like a sad or funky mood is the new normal. But then I thought, “Not today Donald … I mean, Satan! Today, I will not mope around this house and blankly stare at a screen to pass the time away. Today, I will put some Bailey’s in my coffee and some pep in my step. I will have a great day!”

I am thankful that I woke up at all, that all my critters are healthy and that I am loved. That is enough to turn anybody’s day around.

Usually when I want to cheer myself up, I think of where we can go on our next vacation. But that doesn’t seem right these days. I have been off work for three months. It’s not been a vacation, but God knows when I will be able to take time off in the future!

Really, I just wanna get back to work. But it is nice to think of the vacation possibilities: an Alaskan cruise, snorkeling someplace tropical and beautiful, New York for a Broadway musical or even a camping trip in Oklahoma. Everything sounds so exciting after three months at home.

Bitch, at this point it would be exciting just to visit friends across town.

When I was a kid, we didn’t go on many vacations. As a matter of fact, my family only went on one actual vacation. It was years after Mom and Dad got divorced, but they decided to take my sister and me on a Big Texas Vacation.

I was 14, and my sister Brandy was 11. And out of the blue, Mom told us to pack a bag because we were going on vacation. She said we were going to play it my ear and just see where the day takes us, but that we were going to start on the coast in Galveston.

My sister and I are both pretty cynical. I remember telling her, “This isn’t going to end well.” Brenda and James Love — the parents — were not known to get along for more than an hour at a time. But hell, what did we have to lose? We were excited just to go somewhere.

We had friends that would tell us about these cool family vacations they took to the Grand Canyon or to Disneyland, and we were lucky if we got to go to Six Flags once during the summer. I’m not dissing the parents; we were poor, so they really did do the best they could by us. And looking back now, I realize what a big deal this dysfunctional family vacation really was.

So the day came, and we loaded up Dad’s truck and took off.

This was in 1987, and the front of the truck was cramped, so my sister and I laid down a blanket and rode in the back of the truck. Fuck a seatbelt! (That was way before they had laws against what we were doing.)

We had a big bag of Doritos and a couple of Dr. Peppers, so we were set. It felt like it took days, what with all the bouncing and wind whipping we went through. But we made it to Galveston in one piece. We stayed at a little motel across from the beach, and we hit the beach til sunset that first day.

The next day, Dad wanted to go fishing, and Mom wanted to lay on the beach. So Brandy went with Dad, and I went with Mom. They fished off of the pier near we were laying out on the beach.

I was kind of scared of the ocean. I saw Jaws when I was five, and it scared me for life. So did Jaws 2, Jaws 3 in 3-D and the super-ridiculous Jaws 4. I think we had even rented Jaws from Blockbuster just a few weeks before this vacation, so that shit was fresh in my mind.

So I am exploring the beach, being that goofy kid looking for cool shells and rocks, when my Dad yelled for me to get into the water and untangle my sister’s line that had somehow gotten caught on something under the pier. So I, not wanting to be a wuss, swallowed down my fear and followed her line into the darkness under the pier. I could see the line; it didn’t look like it was caught on any of the beams but instead just went straight down into the water.

My evil sister told me to hurry up and to quit being a wuss. I crept closer and closer. The water kept getting deeper and deeper. By now it was almost up to my hips. I finally got to the line and pulled on it. It felt stuck, so I pulled on it again. And that’s when the shark she had hooked flew straight up at me, near my face, slapping me with its tail.

I fucking screamed like the last girl in a horror movie and Jesused my way out of its tail.

Unfortunately, Dad’s follow-through on that was lacking.

The next day we went to Houston so we could go to AstroWorld. That day started off great. Dad and I rode just about every thrill ride they had at AstroWorld. There was a space shuttle ride, kind of like the pirate ship ride at the State Fair, except this one went all the way around — back and forth, back and forth, and then all the way around. Well, ALMOST all the way around.

The first time we went completely upside down, there was a click, and something locked. We were upside down and not moving — like, at all. Change is falling out of pockets; sunglasses are crashing down onto the roof of the ride below us.

Then the ride operator comes over the loud speaker and politely tells us that the ride has malfunctioned, but it would only be a minute before they got it fixed.

It took 12 minutes.

That is a long time to be upside down, with all the blood rushing to your face. Some people were yelling or laughing; some were freaking out. We just sat patiently, waiting to get back down. I think that was the last ride we rode that day; our stomachs were done.

As we leave the park and head to Dad’s truck in the parking lot, it hits us — the most horrible, rank smell of fishy death I have ever smelled. The cooler that held Brandy’s prize shark was open and little Miss Shark had been sitting in the Texas summer heat all day.

We smelled it from so far away in that parking lot, and that smell stayed with us into San Antonio where we went to see the Alamo, and it followed us all the way home — even though we threw the shark away in a trashcan at AstroWorld.

My family only went on one family vacation, but it was a doozy. And it is one of my favorite childhood memories.

Remember to always love more … That’s it. Just love more! XOXO, Cassie Nova

Putting the FUN in ‘dysFUNctional family vacation’

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### Out and About

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**Solution on Page 18**

**Across**
1. Billy Elliot epithet
2. Billy Elliot epithet
9. Chyler, who just came out
14. Top
15. Sad about having no porn?
16. Els with tees
17. Capricious notion
18. Fruit of Peter Pears?
19. Big HMO provider
20. With 30-Across, Chyler played Janey in this flick
23. Tail for Pluto?
24. Kenan’s ___ the Dead Bury Their Dead
25. On account of
27. Star Wars villain
30. See 20-Across
34. Soho pub drink
35. Chain of gay bathhouses
37. Weatherspoon once of roundball
38. Aspen vehicle
40. Auto extra
41. Star-crossed, to Shakespeare
44. Prepare to shoot off again
46. Wilder classic
49. Magneto portrayer McKellen
51. Enjoy E. Lynn Harris again
53. Klinger portrayer on M*A*S*H
55. Chyler played Lexie in this medical drama
56. Time of Spamalot
57. Scarborough Fair spice
58. Like a straight line, for short
59. Muddy ground
60. What Whoopi does, on The View
63. Election da.

**Down**
1. Man who can become a queen
2. Kahlo’s eight
3. Cut out
4. Young man’s part in Shakespeare’s day
5. Head of a monastery
6. Very much
7. Refrain from tongue use
8. What Georgia did in Gone with the Wind
9. Lush meadow
10. Builder that sounds like an ED med?
11. Audrey Hepburn et al., psychologically
12. Gershon of Showgirls
13. AIDS flick Under ___
21. Source of soft balls
22. The Bee Gees’ “___ Me”
26. Make changes to
27. Millay’s alma mater
28. Touch upon, with “to”
29. Bottom’s cry
31. Bit player
32. “___ little silhouetto of a man…”
33. Enjoys a Rubicon restaurant
36. ___ Cabin Federation
39. Convention attendee
41. Star-crossed, to Shakespeare
44. Prepare to shoot off again
46. Wilder classic
49. Magneto portrayer McKellen
52. Coming-out
54. One in dreadlocks, often
56. Time of Spamalot
57. Scarborough Fair spice
58. Like a straight line, for short
59. Muddy ground
60. What Whoopi does, on The View
61. Theater admission
63. Screw up
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