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EPIC 2020 Dallas Black Pride events cancelled; DSP to support other events



Officials with Dallas Southern Pride, the official host of Juneteenth Weekend and Dallas Black Pride, on Wednesday, Sept. 23, issued the following statement announcing that the organization's EPIC 2020 Dallas Black Pride weekend events have been cancelled:

"The health and safety of our community and patrons has always been at the forefront of our decision-making. As such, considering COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on the Black community, as many of you are aware, we made the difficult decision to cancel our "EPIC" 2020 Dallas Black Pride weekend celebration events with the main event being held at EPIC Water Park.

"As an organization, we have made it a priority to align our community activities with COVID-19 guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as social distancing orders in place from local and state governmental agencies.

"Although we felt it best for us to cancel our events due to their sheer magnitude and size, we have decided to support a few local promoters who are able to operate in compliance with all local COVID-19 guidelines and protocols relative to event capacity.

"As such, to provide continued community support, Dallas Southern Pride will be partnering with Abounding Prosperity Inc. to do free HIV testing for access tickets to events held during Dallas Black Pride Weekend 2020. Testing will be on site at Abounding Prosperity Inc., 1705 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Dallas, Wednesday, Sept. 23-Friday Sept. 25, from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. each day, as well as Saturday, Sept. 26, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Additionally, AP Inc will be on location at several events to do testing on their mobile testing unit for free access tickets while supply lasts.

"For 23 years, you have trusted Dallas Southern Pride to provide you with a safe and exciting Juneteenth and Pride experience. We look forward to celebrating with all of you next year when we anticipate it is safer for the large-scale events you have come to love and expect from us.

"As always, in the spirit of UNITY within our

Dallas Black Pride community, and among patrons and owners, Dallas Southern Pride wants to encourage you all to celebrate safely. We hope this small gesture will convey how much we value you and our commitment to your safety and wellbeing.

"Lastly, check our website and follow our social media pages for information concerning Dallas Southern Pride. Below are the events we are supporting:

- Through Friday: 9 a.m.-6 p.m., HIV testing at AP Inc., 1705 MLK Jr. Blvd.
- Friday: 10 p.m.-midnight, KKMS at DEC on Dragon St, 1414 Dragon St.
- Friday: 12:30 a.m.-2 a.m., Rudeboy Entertainment at Marty's Live, 4207 Maple Ave.
- Saturday: 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., COVID 19 Food Giveaway, AP Inc., 1705 MLK Jr. Blvd.
- Saturday: 4-6 p.m. KKMS Day Party at BAR 3606, 3606 Greenville Ave.
- Saturday: 10 p.m.-12:30 a.m., Oh! and Citiboyz Entertainment present the Ultimate Pride Party, 1135 S Lamar St.
- Sunday: 4-7 p.m. KKMS at DEC on Dragon St., 1414 Dragon St.
- Sunday: 10 p.m.-midnight, Rudeboy Entertainment at Marty's Live, 4207 Maple Ave."

— Tammye Nash

League of Women Voters Dallas launches voter information website

The League of Women Voters of Dallas has a new website in place offering voter tools and information for Dallas County residents for the November election, and, according to a press release, "In this year of voting in a pandemic, vote by mail interest and need for poll workers, we are taking painstaking efforts to ensure the information is accurate."

The last day to register to vote in the Nov. 3 election is Oct. 5. The League of Women Voters has placed registration forms outside of 16 public libraries and at all Dallas College campuses, and LWV volunteers are attending numerous outdoor voter registration events around Dallas County. A list of places where you can find these events is on the website.

LWVD released its VOTE411 voters guide for Dallas County on Sept. 21, in both English and Spanish. To find your specific candidates and read their views on key issues, visit VOTE411.org and put in your address.

LWVD also started a Monday Voter Hot Line, open each Monday from 2-4 p.m and 6-8 p.m. Call the office at 214-688-4125, leave a message with your phone number, and someone will call right back to help answer your questions on voting. You can call their office at other times as well if you have questions, and someone will get back with you as soon as possible with an answer.

Vote by Mail Ballots are already being mailed out, and LWVD reminds voters that it is very important to sign the ballot with the same signature you used when you requested the application because Dallas County Elections office has a review process, and ballots will be

rejected if the signatures do not match. And Texas does not have a process to let you know if that happens.

LWVD recommends four options for returning a mail-in ballot:

- Mail your ballot early by dropping in a blue postal box or going into the post office.
- Drive over to Dallas County Elections Department at 1520 Round Table Drive with your ballot, the carrier envelope and your ID and return your ballot in person.
- Check with your political party to see if there is a free driving service that can take you to the Dallas County Elections Department to return your mail in ballot.
- Or use UPS, FedEx or an established courier service to deliver the ballot to your county elections office.

— Tammye Nash

Texas LGBTQ Chambers introduce Out To Vote Early



Tony Vedda

The Texas LGBTQ Chambers of Commerce this week rolled out Out To Vote Early, a nonpartisan initiative designed to educate and motivate people to vote early.

"With early voting, one can mitigate risk and more safely and securely participate in our democracy," they Texas LGBTQ Chambers wrote in a press release. COVID-19, the cutbacks at the U.S. Postal Service and the potential for natural disasters bring many challenges and uncertainties ahead of the 2020 election. The goal of the initiative is to make sure every vote gets counted while reducing danger and avoiding

chaos and long lines at the polls.

"As chamber leaders, we have been preparing a Get Out The Vote Campaign for the 2020 general election," said Tony Vedda, president and CEO of the North Texas LGBT Chamber of Commerce. "We think Out To Vote Early is a more practical and relevant message considering the impact COVID-19 has on the voting process."

Tammi Wallace, president & CEO of the Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce, agreed. "Our geographic location makes us susceptible during the most active hurricane season in modern history. Early voting gives voters the choice of day, time, and location which is more important in 2020 than it has ever been before," she said.

Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce CEO and President Tina Cannon added, "The Out To Vote Early campaign is just the first step in the Texas LGBTQ Chambers' advocacy efforts to make sure all Texans are included and respected."

Participating individuals and groups will receive Out to Vote Early content to share with their community, network, fans and followers. They will receive a uniform toolkit to "help bring visibility and awareness to not only voting but voting early."

Individuals, small business owners, employee resource groups, non-profit organizations, community organizations, school groups, neighborhood associations and anyone who is making a plan to vote are welcome to participate in the effort.

For more information visit the Texas LGBTQ Chambers of Commerce website.

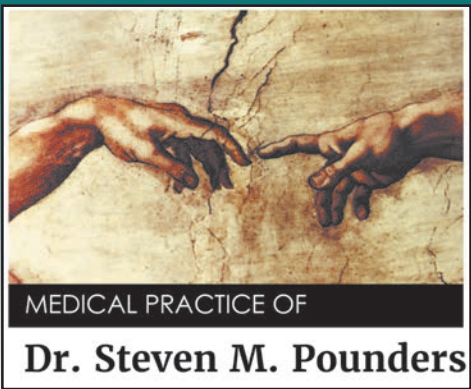
— David Taffet

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We ALL back Biden/Harris

NGMA's 12 LGBTQ newspapers come together in an historic joint endorsement of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris; our future relies on their victory

PAUL SCHINDLER | Gay City News

Courtesy National LGBT Media Association

Among the many compelling reasons to make sure that Donald Trump and Mike Pence are not re-elected on Nov. 3, perhaps the 26 most compelling are the transgender Americans — most of them trans women of color — known to have been murdered this year.

We needn't be simple-minded in making this argument. Trump and Pence did not pull the trigger, and those who did must, of course, bear the consequences for their horrific acts.

But the all-too-toxic environment that too many of our transgender siblings have endured in their lives has gotten immeasurably worse over the past four years, under the Trump administration.

For this reason and many more, in an historic move, the 12 newspapers of the National LGBT Media Association, which represents the nation's oldest and most established LGBTQ publications with a combined circulation of more than one million readers, this week are issuing this joint endorsement of the Joe Biden/ Kamala Harris ticket.

From the start, Donald Trump has used the trans community as a punching bag to prove his toughness to his socially conservative base hungry for a strongman willing to turn back the clock. He has denied trans folks the ability to serve openly in the military; he has sought to strip them of nondiscrimination protections in healthcare; he has worked to rob trans youth of dignity in their schools, he has and battled to take away the right of student athletes to compete in sports.



And against the trans community — as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans — Trump's administration fought tooth and nail to prevent the pivotal advance we won at the Supreme Court in June — the recognition that we enjoy employment nondiscrimination protections thanks to the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Still, Trump and his see-no-evil GOP Senate allies refuse to move the Equality Act, which would extend those nondiscrimination protections across the board in areas like housing and public accommodations. For them, the nation's most embattled minority are bigots who want to enshrine their right to discriminate under the cloak of "religious liberty."

As in every other aspect of this endorsement, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris offer a stark and redemptive alternative.

After Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell denied President Barack Obama federal judicial appointments in Obama's last year in office, McConnell and his colleagues have rubber-stamped an unprecedented number of judges — many of them viciously right-wing, others lacking in even the most elementary judicial qualifications — whose influence

will last for decades to come.

The cornerstone decision in protecting reproductive freedom — *Roe v. Wade* — may already be doomed by the Trump court's configuration. Give him another chance or two to name a member to the

of science, a posture at one with his hostility to fact-based discourse on almost any public policy issue. It's no surprise that the nation's free press and the unfettered right of Americans to vote — the twin jewels of American democracy — are, in his mind, enemies of the people.

Meanwhile, Trump is most at ease with fellow authoritarian figures around the globe, whether it be Russia's Putin, North Korea's Kim, Turkey's Erdoğan or Brazil's Bolsonaro.

Since Hillary Clinton lost the presidency in 2016 even while winning almost three million more votes than Trump, the Democratic Party has undergone an internal battle of sorts for its soul, pitting insurgent, left-leaning candidates, many of them young newcomers, against more moderate establishment figures — on issues from racial justice to healthcare policy, economic inequality and climate change action. Those are

all areas on which debate is legitimate, indeed needed.

But here's the thing: With four more years of Trump, there is no real consequential venue for having those debates. Trump and his enablers are draining the oxygen out of our democracy.

Debating between left and center in the House of Representatives is no substitute for regaining the White House and the Senate. Only then can we have our debates, lick our wounds and set a course for a better tomorrow.

This election will be decided in a small number of states — perhaps as many as a dozen, more likely just a handful. In all of the battleground states, LGBTQ activists and our progressive allies are on the ground working to elect Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Especially in a year when much of the campaign will be carried out on the air and online rather than in person, all of us — everywhere across the nation — can pitch in to help in those states where a boost for Biden is most needed.

Grab a bucket, adopt a state and dive in to the battle. None of us should wake up Nov. 4 wishing we had done more. ■

high court, and the ball game will definitely be over.

Trump's governing has been much like his court appointments: Where he is not cruel, he is merely incompetent.

Mexican and other Latin American immigrants have been slurred in overtly racist terms, and their children have been caged. Muslim newcomers to America have also been stigmatized where they have not been blocked outright.

And the damage is not limited to the newcomers. Latinx and Muslim-American citizens have faced increasing levels of hostility and hate crimes.

Trump saw "very fine people, on both sides" during the 2017 neo-Nazi invasion of Charlottesville, Va., but he's been snide in reacting to the Black Lives Matter movement, telling Bob Woodward, in response to a question about why he can't bring himself to empathize with Black citizens, "You, you really drank the Kool-Aid, didn't you?"

The coronavirus' most recent surge — in the Midwest — and the wild fires raging through wide swaths of the West are only the most calamitous indicators of Trump's refusal to accept the basic facts

RBG

The life and legacy of a legend

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
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According to Jewish tradition, a person who dies on Rosh Hashanah is a “tzedeck,” a person of great righteousness. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who will be remembered as one of the most beloved Supreme Court justices in U.S. history, died just as the holiday was beginning.

Her death prompted an outpouring of grief from those who loved, admired and respected her, but it also prompted a wave of fear from progressive advocates who worry that Trump will nominate and the for-now Republican-controlled Senate will confirm a right-wing jurist to

the court that could lead to the unraveling on years of progress toward equality.

President Trump said he was sad to learn of her death and called her “an amazing woman who led an amazing life” — appropriate words and rare coming from someone who rarely compliments those who oppose him in any way. In one of the last court decisions of her career, Ginsburg sided with the majority in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, a case that resulted in sexual orientation and gender identity being included in the sexual discrimination coverage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Trump’s justice department had filed a brief opposing nondiscrimination.

Ginsburg had a lifelong history as an advocate for equality, making her mark either as an attorney, a judge or just an individual activist on issues ranging from



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

women’s rights to LGBTQ equality and more. She was co-founder of the Women’s Rights Project of the ACLU, saying, “Women’s rights are an essential part of

the overall human rights agenda, trained on the equal dignity and ability to live in freedom all people should enjoy.”

Although she graduated first in her

RGB, Page 11

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Campaigning for a new way of policing

Trans woman Freyja Odinsdottir is running for Denton County sheriff in hopes of changing a system of oppression

STEVEN MONACELLI | Contributing Writer
steven@proteanmag.com

There may be a new sheriff in town in Denton County. At least, that's what candidate Freyja Odinsdottir is hoping for. While Odinsdottir has prior experience in law enforcement — including previously working for the Denton County Sheriff's Office as a corrections officer, a supervisor and a member of the special operations team — she is far from your typical candidate for sheriff.

Notably, Odinsdottir is a trans woman running a write-in campaign to unseat an incumbent sheriff, Republican Tracy Murphree, who threatened physical violence against any transgender woman who dared to enter a public restroom occupied by his daughter during his 2016 campaign.

Moreover, Odinsdottir is a single mother of two who, in addition to pursuing a master's degree in exercise physiology, presently works as a dominatrix and adult content creator.

Her identity as a trans sex worker,

Odinsdottir said, has led to harassment and even threats against her life. "I've been the target of a lot of vitriol," she said. "A lot of people have dug up my dead name and tried to slander or smear me on social media. I have eyes and ears in the seedier parts of the internet and have been informed that it is ill advised for me to see any new clients right now because the idea has been floated of trying to lure me into a trap."

But Odinsdottir isn't intimidated; this is, in fact, far from her first dash with danger.

Before working for the Denton County Sheriff's Office, Odinsdottir worked at a lot of other dangerous jobs. She started working as a bouncer in New York City when she was just 15 years old, then enlisted in the Marine Corps, serving in the infantry in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I am not a stranger to facing death," she said.

Still, Odinsdottir takes the threats seriously, noting that she is "worried about my children and my partners. I am worried about what will happen to them or how it could impact their lives if something were to happen to me."

Odinsdottir's campaign began — in spirit, at least — on June 1 when she was the first person arrested in the protests against police brutality in the city of Denton. Following her arrest, several of her politically-minded friends encouraged her to run for sheriff, given her background in law enforcement.



Freyja Odinsdottir. Photo by Juniper St. Butcher

But it took a while for her campaign to begin in earnest, due in no small part to Odinsdottir's own reluctance.

"I said no a lot," she recalled. "But eventually, the other alternative candidate said they didn't want to do it, so I said yeah. The reason I am running now is because ... something needs to move. Someone needs to do it."

What is it that needs to move? Odinsdottir said her biggest priorities are ending the aspects of the system that maintain racial inequalities and fighting corruption in law enforcement. A key

part of her focus is a return to sound policing principles, specifically, those of Sir Robert Peel who, in 1826, framed the authority of law enforcement as rooted in the desire of the community for the police to have that authority.

Odinsdottir points specifically to issues like qualified immunity and the need for real higher standards. "Cops talk all the time about how they're held to a higher standard, and yet they can get away with crimes that your average civilian can't," she explained. "Where's the higher standard? I think there should

CAMPAIGNING, Page 10

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CAMPAIGNING From Page 8

be an absolute zero tolerance for excessive force [by police]. I don't think there is a justification for shooting a man seven times in the back."

Ultimately though, Odinsdottir doesn't believe that the burden of ending crime should fall on law enforcement. Instead, she said, law enforcement must be one part of a much larger effort in which the primary focus is addressing mental health, economic oppression and economic instability.

"It's not that some people are driven to crime more than others; it's about resources," she said.

Properly allocating police resources is key, Odinsdottir said, adding that she would work with the district attorney and with legislators to stop the prosecution of petty drug offenses and consensual sex work. That would allow her to reallocate resources to more significant issues like violent crime, human trafficking and cartel activity as well as toward rehabilitation and harm reduction efforts.

Specifically, Odinstotter said, she would like to take civil forfeiture funds

— typically spent on tactical equipment — or county funds generally and instead spend the money on better training, benefits and pay for the officers to encourage the recruitment and retention of good officers. She believes that current training and hiring practices do not value intelligent officers, an issue that must be addressed, she said, in order to achieve better policing.

Higher pay and better training would come with higher standards of integrity, too, Odinsdottir continued. "Integrity should come on its own — doing the right thing even if no one is looking. But if it's not there on its own, the way you get that is through transparency and accountability. You have to hold officers accountable for their actions."

Odinsdottir believes this higher standard extends to notions of bravery and fearlessness, too. "A lot of the violence that happens between police and the public is a result of cops just being cowards," she said. "If you show up to an occupation where violence is an inherent risk and you are not ready to die, every day, then you have no business being in



Photo by Juniper St. Butcher

that occupation. ... For all the times that I've been shot at, I can never say I was in fear for my life because when I punched into work, it was no longer about my life."

And in terms of rehabilitating the community's relationship with police, such standards are key, she added. "You need to be able to say there are good cops and that we reject these bad cops. But at this point it has become endemic," she said. "It's a problem that has been around so long that the rot has been promoted to the top."

And that explains why Odinsdottir is seeking the position of top cop in Denton County after having left her previous career in law enforcement.

"When I first got into law enforcement, I thought that if I were just a good cop and did a good job, I would get promoted," she said. "But I learned real quick that it didn't matter. If I wasn't willing to fall into these systems of oppression, I wasn't going anywhere." ■



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RGB, From Page 7

class in 1959 at Columbia Law School, when she was recommended for a clerkship with Justice Felix Frankfurter, he said he wasn't ready to hire a woman. After working in a law firm during the summer of her second year in law school, she expected a job offer from that firm after graduation. Despite her stellar performance, the firm didn't offer her anything. Neither did 12 other law firms where she interviewed.

Ginsburg clerked for a U.S. district judge in New York, then went to work at Columbia Law School's International Procedure Project where she co-authored a book on Sweden's legal system and translated Sweden's judicial code into English.

In 1963, Ginsburg joined the Rutgers Law School faculty where she soon learned she was being paid less than the men. She won one of her first fights for equal gender rights when she and other women on the faculty pressed for and won equal pay.

As a result of that success, she began to handle sex discrimination complaints referred to her by the ACLU. Sometimes she took cases of discrimination against men, because she saw that kind of discrimination as harmful to everyone. In an early case, a husband was denied spousal benefits from the military because he couldn't prove economic dependence on his wife, while wives of military men were automatically given those benefits.

In another case, Ginsburg argued that a widowed father should receive social security benefits from his deceased wife who had worked. Before this case, only widowed mothers received those benefits.

When she lost in court, as she did in a case on discrimination against pregnant women, Ginsburg lobbied Congress to act. Her work resulted in an amendment to Title VII called the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978.

Her career as a judge began in 1980 when President Jimmy Carter appointed Ginsburg to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. In 1993, President Bill Clinton appointed her to the U.S. Supreme Court.

As a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, Ginsburg was always on the side of nondiscrimination for the LGBTQ community. She was in the majority on *Romer v. Evans* in 1996, *Lawrence v. Tex-*

as in 2003 (which overturned the Texas sodomy law), *Windsor v. U.S.* in 2013 (which overturned part of the federal Defense of Marriage act), *Obergefell v. Hodges* (which made marriage equality legal nationwide) in 2015 and *Bostock v. Clayton County* this year (which declared that Civil Rights Act protections against employment discrimination included LGBTQ people).

While she was a champion of abortion rights, Ginsburg was not a fan of *Roe v. Wade*. She felt it was too broad. She also didn't like that it was based on privacy rights rather than gender equality. Deciding the case under the Equal Protection Clause would have left it less open to later attack, Ginsburg believed, according to the author of an upcoming biography, Mary Hartnett, in an article in the New York Times.

While she was passionate about women's and LGBTQ right, Ginsburg was very strategic. She would have preferred rulings that legalized abortion incrementally, the way several earlier rulings led to marriage equality.

Ginsburg wrote a number of important decisions and dissents during her 27 years on the court. She wrote the dissent to *Bush v. Gore*, declaring "The conclusion that a constitutionally adequate recount is impractical is a prophecy the court's own judgment will not allow to be tested," ending with, "I dissent," rather than the traditional "I respectfully dissent."

Equality on the line

With the loss of Ginsburg, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, abortion rights, civil rights, disability rights and more are on the line.

Amanda Williams, executive director of the Lilith Fund, wrote, "The vacancy on the Supreme Court creates bleak uncertainty for the future of abortion access in the U.S. There is a very real possibility that *Roe v. Wade* could be severely chipped away or completely overturned."

Texas state Rep. Celia Israel said, "As a young lesbian, society told me that I should stay silent about who I was. Because of Justice Ginsburg, the next generation will never have to feel that way.

"When she voted to validate my

RGB, Next Page 11

COVID-19 VACCINE RESEARCH

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CONTACT PERSON: Research Department
EMAIL ADDRESS: vaccine.study@ntidc.org

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RGB, From Previous Page



People gathered at the Supreme Court Friday, Sept. 18, in Washington after the court announced that Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has died of metastatic pancreatic cancer at age 87. (Alex Brandon/Associated Press)

family, and all LGBTQ Americans, she changed our country forever. I'll always be grateful," Israel said.

Human Rights Campaign CEO Alphonso David noted that Ginsburg's "decades of work helped create many of the foundational arguments for gender equality in the United States, and her decisions from the bench demonstrated her commitment to full LGBTQ equality."

Republicans are determined to replace Ginsburg within the next six weeks, before the election. Since 1975, the average time it takes from day of nomination to confirmation is more than two months. The quickest confirmation was for John Paul Stevens in 1975, which took just 19 days.

Unless four members of the Senate block consideration of the nomination, there's little Senate Democrats can do to postpone consideration of a nominee until after the election or after the inauguration of a new president should Trump lose in November. And that prospect is daunting for progressive advocates.

We're all lamenting Ginsburg's loss, noted Kierra Johnson, deputy executive director of the LGBTQ Task Force who, the Task Force announced this week, will become executive director of the agency next year when Rea Carey steps down.

"She was so significant in multiple ways," Johnson said. "She literally inspired and yielded an entire generation

of women in law."

Among the LGBTQ community, Ginsburg's passing ignited an anxiety, Johnson said, because she fought so tirelessly and vehemently for our community. And on the rush to replace Ginsburg and name a successor before the pioneering jurist's funeral had even been held, Johnson added, "We're not operating as business as usual."

Johnson said she's been in contact with many other progressive organizations to discuss strategy but there was little they could suggest to stop the confirmation of the nominee without four Republican votes to delay. So Johnson and the Task Force are continuing their efforts to get out the vote for the November election encouraging people to vote to for candidates that support LGBTQ and women's issues up and down the ballot and reminding them that who's in office does matter.

At the funeral service held inside the Supreme Court building on Wednesday, Sept. 23, Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt said, "This was Justice Ginsburg's life's work, to insist that the Constitution deliver on its promise that 'we the people' would include all the people. She carried out that work in every chapter of her life."

Before her burial in Arlington Cemetery this weekend, Ginsburg scored two more firsts, becoming the first woman and the first Jewish person to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol.

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commUNITYvoices

In memory of RBG

We lost a hero last week, so now we all have to step up and fight

When I learned that Ruth Bader Ginsburg had died, I was eating these little peanut butter granola bites I really like. I immediately felt like I was going to be sick. I don't think I'll ever want to eat them again.

The next morning, my sister sent me a photo of my four-month-old niece reaching for the image of a little woman with a bun on her head and wearing a black robe. It was a board book about RBG. That image, more than any op-eds about what her legacy meant or how Trump and Mitch McConnell would shit on it, put things in perspective for me: Every day the future seems bleaker and bleaker. But there is still a future to fight for.

Some people are feeling more hopeless than ever. Others are stepping up and getting involved in ways they never dreamed of before. If you fall into the latter category, great. Welcome. Thank you for coming.

If you fall in the former category, no judgment here. The last four years have been psychological warfare on every good and decent person. So much pain in so little time! And it's exhausting.

But if you're looking for something to do with your anxious energy, I highly recommend volunteering for a campaign. Find someone who is running for office who shares your values, someone who makes this current hellscape a little less shitty. And then help them win.

And here's the thing: The top of the ticket is important, but you don't have to choose to volunteer for Joe Biden. The truth is down-ballot races — and "down-ballot" literally means races further down the ballot underneath the presidential ticket — are just as important as the presidency. Unfortunately, down-ballot races are also the races most likely to suffer from what is called "drop-off" voting. That means someone gets a ballot, fills in the circles next to Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and then leaves the rest of the ballot blank because said voter



D'Anne Witkowski
Creep of the Week



has never heard of these other people. It's trag-

ic.

Now in some states you can vote "straight-ticket," which has nothing to do with heteronormativity and everything to do with checking one box that means, "I vote for all of the Democrats." The Republican option also exists but, you know, gross. But, of course, not everybody does this. (Here in Texas, as of this year, straight-ticket voting is no longer an option, thanks to Republicans, who pushed through a bill to eliminate straight-ticket voting in the 2017 legislative session, and to Gov. Greg Abbott, who signed the bill into law.)

See, here's the thing with, say, a state House race. If you get someone to commit to voting for your Democratic state House candidate, that helps all of the Democratic candidates on the ballot because that voter is much more likely to vote for other Democrats, especially the ones who appear on the ballot before your state House race.

In fact, the more investment a voter feels in an election, the more likely they are to bother voting in the first place. If the only people you know on the ballot are Trump and Biden, it's easy to think that your little vote doesn't make much of a difference. (You would be wrong, but I understand the thinking.) But if you know that your state House candidate is a badass, and she has been knocking on doors, safely, with, say, a county commissioner candidate, you will be more invested in voting.

If you're thinking, "I don't have the

time to volunteer, I'm trying to home-school my child while also working from home and trying not to get COVID-19," I understand. Everybody's busy.

But if you're doom-scrolling through Twitter to see when Trump calls RBG a "hag" — and, really, it's only a matter of time — then you have time to do something positive to make sure that Trump and his supporters don't win more elections.

Another good argument for working on a state race: Should Trump manage to replace RBG with another conservative, things like abortion rights, LGBTQ protections and marriage equality are all on the line. If overturned, those will all go back to the states who can decide what is illegal and what isn't.

Here are some of the things you can do for campaigns: Make phone calls; knock on doors — some campaigns are doing this; some aren't. Any campaign worth volunteering with should have a strict protocol of mask-wearing and social distancing to keep you and the people you're talking to safe. Also, write post cards, deliver yard signs, make more phone calls.

I have done all of these things and more, and I've lived to tell the tale. It's not always fun — there are some people who love to call voters, for example, and those people are weird but also golden wonders any campaign would love to have — but it's necessary work.

Nobody said defeating fascism would be easy. Let's go. ■

D'Anne Witkowski is a poet, writer and comedian living in Michigan with her wife and son. She has been writing about LGBT politics for over a decade. Follow her on Twitter @MamaDWitkowski.

Welcome to the Hotel Pandemic

Most of what we take for granted in a hotel stay isn't available during the Age of COVID-19

DAVID TAFFET | Senior Staff Writer
taffet@dallasvoice.com

I hadn't been out of Dallas since March, and I just needed to get away. So we booked a hotel room in downtown Austin for a three-night stay, and we were off.

I was expecting pared-down hotel service. But even so, I was surprised — not by what was missing but by how easily some of that could have been compensated for. And I'm purposely not naming the hotel, because the staff was friendly and helpful when asked, and this isn't meant to be criticism of any of them.

I drove up to the front door, and a valet was there to greet me as usual — nothing different so far. But I didn't need valet service or help with my luggage; I just needed to park my car while I checked in. The valet jumped in the car and pulled it to one side and asked if I needed a cart for my luggage. No porters or bellhops.

The front desk was protected by plexiglas; other than that, the check-in procedure was pretty normal. But that was actually the start of the problem. The rates may be the same, but the service is not. A few simple warnings and suggestions would have been helpful.

The hotel's website still mentions room service, a restaurant, free breakfast and a Starbucks. What wasn't available was room service, a restaurant, free breakfast or a Starbucks. Yes, even the Starbucks, on ground level opening to the street, was temporarily closed.

Had I checked in sometime in March — no problem; that would have been expected. But this was September, six months into the pandemic. There's been plenty of time to update the website.

And the inconvenience of the closings could have been easily rectified. A simple sheet of paper handed out along



with my room key or placed on the desk in my room could have simply said, "While food service has been suspended in the hotel, here are a few places you might enjoy within a few blocks of the hotel."

The hotel is a block from 6th Street. There were plenty of wonderful restaurants and bars serving food in the area. Not only could the hotel have turned something negative into something positive, they could have been helping out a few local businesses — their neighbors — who are also struggling.

Housekeeping has also been curtailed. What most hotels are doing is leaving a couple of days between guest stays in rooms. I'm not sure if they're disinfecting right after a guest leaves or letting the room sit a few days before entering.

But during the stay, housekeeping is not entering the room. And again no warning — not a surprise once we realized it, but hey! Let me know!

As it was, when we needed clean towels, we had to hunt someone down.

There was an easy fix for that, too. Start with letting us know that no one would be by to straighten our room, then compensate for it.

Here's how:

We were registered for a three-night stay. Leave a couple of extra towels and an extra roll of toilet paper in the room. Or, just as easy, let us know if we need anything from housekeeping — like extra towels — we should call a particular number, and someone will deliver them to our room.

And there was a coffee pot in the room with four single-serving coffee packets, two packets of sugar and four paper cups. Again, the reservation was for two people for three nights. Normally housekeeping would have replenished the supply each morning while making up the room. If there will be no daily housekeeping service, leave enough coffee and add-ins for our stay.

I asked at the front desk, but they didn't have coffee refills. We never did figure out where to get more. So we ventured out early each morning for coffee.

Understand, I'm not complaining about how service has changed. I liked the precautions they're taking, and I never felt unsafe during my stay. While these new normal ways of doing things have been going on for months for them, it was my first venture out to a hotel since the pandemic hit. I could

have used some help navigating that first visit and doing it safely.

The hotel was obviously understaffed. I understand that their revenue is down drastically. But the parking lot was half-full each night of my stay. So, at least for this one downtown Austin hotel, this is not a disaster. And those things that could have made a difference wouldn't have cost anything.

But maybe it's not just about safety. Maybe the big corporation that owns this hotel brand has a strategy. If they acknowledge there's no food or even an operating soft drink machine in the hotel, maybe I might decide to book at a similar hotel down the street?

Now how could I be so cynical about corporate America? Well, here's one little piece of evidence: Safety is the concern inside the hotel, but who was it who met me on the driveway and immediately jumped into my car where I hadn't been wearing a mask? The valet.

And cost for valet service? An excessive \$49 per night.

The least important part of my visit was having someone park my car for me. I did just fine parking my car in the hotel garage myself. ■

ILGTA Foundation auctioning vacation packages



Nice. Côte d'Azur

Because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to Statista.com in an article posted online on Aug. 21, the global business travel market is predicted to lose some \$810.7 billion U.S. in revenue this year. And as the death toll in the U.S. has surpassed 200,000 and new infections here continue to pile up, many countries — The European Union, Canada, Thailand — have closed their borders to U.S. citizens.

But, as the ancient Persians would say, this too shall pass. And when it does, man, are we going to be ready for a road trip ... a really fabulous road trip to somewhere really amazing! And thanks to the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association Foundation, you can start planning for that road trip right now.

Through Sunday, Sept. 27, you can bid online on more than 30 fabulous travel packages to visit an LGBTQ-friendly destination and, at the same time, help fund the ILGTA Foundation's efforts to make the whole world a friendlier and safer place for LGBTQ travelers.

Maybe you want to bid on a two-night weekend stay for two at the OWN Hotels Ipanema Visconti's Promenade Visconti, known as one of the best accommodation options in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Or maybe you would rather go for a three-night stay at the Eaton Hotel Hong Kong, or two nights at the Sorano Hotel Tokyo, or two nights at the Hyatt Paris Madeleine?

Or perhaps you'd rather stay closer to home. If so, you can bid on two nights at Easton Hotel D.C., or two nights in

an executive suite at MGM Resorts Las Vegas, or even three nights at AxelBeach Miami Hotel. And these are just a few of the destinations, a list of which also includes New York City, Sao Paulo, Côte d'Azur, South Africa, San Jose del Cabo, Mexico City and more.

And to make it all even better, all packages are valid until at least September 2021, which means you can bid now and travel later, when it is safer.

Or you could just make a cash donation to the foundation, if you are feeling generous.

All proceeds from the auction benefit the ILGTA Foundation. Founded in 2012 as the charity arm of ILGTA, the foundation focuses on educating government and industry leaders, providing fellowships to young LGBTQ travel professionals and supporting LGBTQ-owned businesses in emerging destinations — all with the goal of making tourism safer for LGBTQ people around the world.

The International LGBTQ Travel Association was founded in 1983. It is the world's leading network of LGBTQ-welcoming tourism businesses and provides free travel resources and information while working to promote equality and safety within LGBTQ tourism worldwide.

To check out the vacation packages being auctioned off, visit Tinyurl.com/y5zvmz82 by Sunday to register and bid on your favorite package. All auction prices are in U.S. dollars, and winners will be notified by email after the auction closes.

— Tammye Nash



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Sony's PS5: What we know so far

SLOTHNINJA597 | contributing writer

Hey nerds, let's talk all things PS5.

The latest and greatest generation of the PlayStation was originally announced way back in June, when we got the first look at the new, sleeker white-and-black console and controller during Sony's alternative to E3. (There is a leaked image with a black dual shock controller that suggests there may be a black PS5 in the



slothninja597
Contributing Columnist

works, too.)

They excited us with the specs of the most powerful console they have ever produced. And if specs are your jam, I have the 411:

- CPU: AMD Zen 2-based CPU, 8 Cores/16 Threads, up to 3.5 GHz
- GPU: 10.28 TFLOPs, 36 CUS @ 2.23 GHz
GPU architecture: Custom RDNA 2
RAM: 16GB GDDR6, 256-bit
Internal storage: 825GB Custom PCIe SSD
- Expandable Storage: PCIe SSD Slot, External HDD
- Disc Drive: Ultra HD Blu-ray, up to 100GB/disc
- Audio: Tempest 3D AudioTech

We will still get 30fps with some games up to 60fps. Now, you might ask: Why a 30fps cap with such a powerful new console? Straight answer: The player's television. Honestly, the standard 4k TV does not have the capacity to run the higher frame rate.

One of the other things they have sprung on us is two versions of the new console: You will have the ability to purchase the console with or without the disc drive. So the folks that want that physical copy of the game can still get it, while others who want instant gratification of a game on launch date can opt for the digital version.

What did we learn new on the Sony Livestream Sept. 16? Only what we have all been waiting for: launch date and price point.




First the most important thing: The digital only version will be just \$399, and the version with the disc option will be \$499.

This is amazing since the digital option is the same release price as the PS4 was way back in 2013.

The new devices become available Nov. 12 in the U.S., Canada, Japan, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea with the console dropping for the rest of the world on Nov. 19.

There was a pre-sale on Sept. 17, but all pre-orders sold out in minutes. Never fear though: They will make more!

Contact our gayming columnist at slothninja597@gmail.com.



REGISTER & FUNDRAISE TO HELP END HIV

The fundraising efforts for LifeWalk is now more important than ever. During the pandemic, Prism Health North Texas has seen an increase in testing, behavioral health services, and people returning to care at the organization. Many are losing their health insurance due to job loss and have turned to organizations like Prism Health North Texas to receive care and request assistance for rent assistance, HIV medication, food, and more.

Join us in fundraising and "walking virtually," so individuals living with HIV can continue to access and maintain treatment during this critical time.

Register today at LifeWalk.org.



LifeWalk 2020

Totally Virtual



09.25 World premiere of 'ROOTED'

The AT&T Performing Arts Center presents the world premiere of B. Moore Dance's production of *ROOTED: envisage Dance Installations* in its outdoor venue, Annette Strauss Square, marking the second live performance on the center's Dallas Arts District campus since the pandemic hit. *ROOTED*, drawing inspiration from the repertoire created and curated by Bridget L. Moore, presents imaginative statement pieces building on the concepts of connectivity to re-imagine past works to reflect the present. The performance begins at 8 p.m.; all social distancing protocols will be enforced. Visit ATTPAC.org for tickets and information.



Rack Focus founder Israel Luna, right, with Brandi Amara Skyy and Joe Hoselton

09.26 Rack Focus Round 10

A group of budding filmmakers have had three months to complete a project — from pitching their concept to industry pros to producing a film no more than 10 minutes long. And now it all comes to fruition when Dallas filmmaker — and Dtv producer — Israel Luna hosts the red carpet premiere of *Round 10* of his popular film competition, *Rack Focus*, on Saturday at Studio Movie Grill Spring Valley, 13933 N. Central Expressway. Doors open at 2 p.m., and the event will include screenings of seven independent films, each followed by a talk-back session with the cast and crew. The audience and a panel of judges vote on their favorites, and nine awards will be presented. Seating is limited, and all social distancing protocols will be enforced. Visit RackFocusDallas.com for details and tickets.

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Cassie Nova

Ruth, Ruby and some hipsters

Hello all. So, as I sit down to write this, it is the morning after we learned about the passing of the incredible Ruth Bader Ginsburg. My heart is still racing, and I am worried as hell about what is to come. But can we, just for a moment, smile for the life she led.

She made a difference in all of our lives. She was a true American hero. She deserves statues; she deserves to be on our currency. Hell, let the phrase “You’ve been Gins-burged” be a thing, and let it be said every time someone opens up a can of whoop-ass and serves up some justice.

RBG’s lifelong fight for equality for all should be a template we should all follow. She was a beacon of light, and, even though she has passed, I hope we all feel her goodness in the universe.

Honor her life by voting, please. If you are not registered to vote, please hurry and get it done. You only have until Oct. 5. Ask your friends if they are registered to vote, and if they aren’t, fucking walk them through the process. Please.

In other shitty news, Miss Greg Abbott said basically that all businesses can be open up to 75 percent of capacity — unless that business is a bar. I get it; people drink and don’t care as much about social distancing and masks. But how is doing shots at a restaurant any different?

It doesn’t seem fair — like bars are the only reason for the spike in cases of COVID.

I live in constant fear of catching the Rona, but people that work in bars just want to go back to work. Give us the opportunity to follow the same rules as everyone else. JR.’s was doing a great job of following the rules before we were shut down — again.

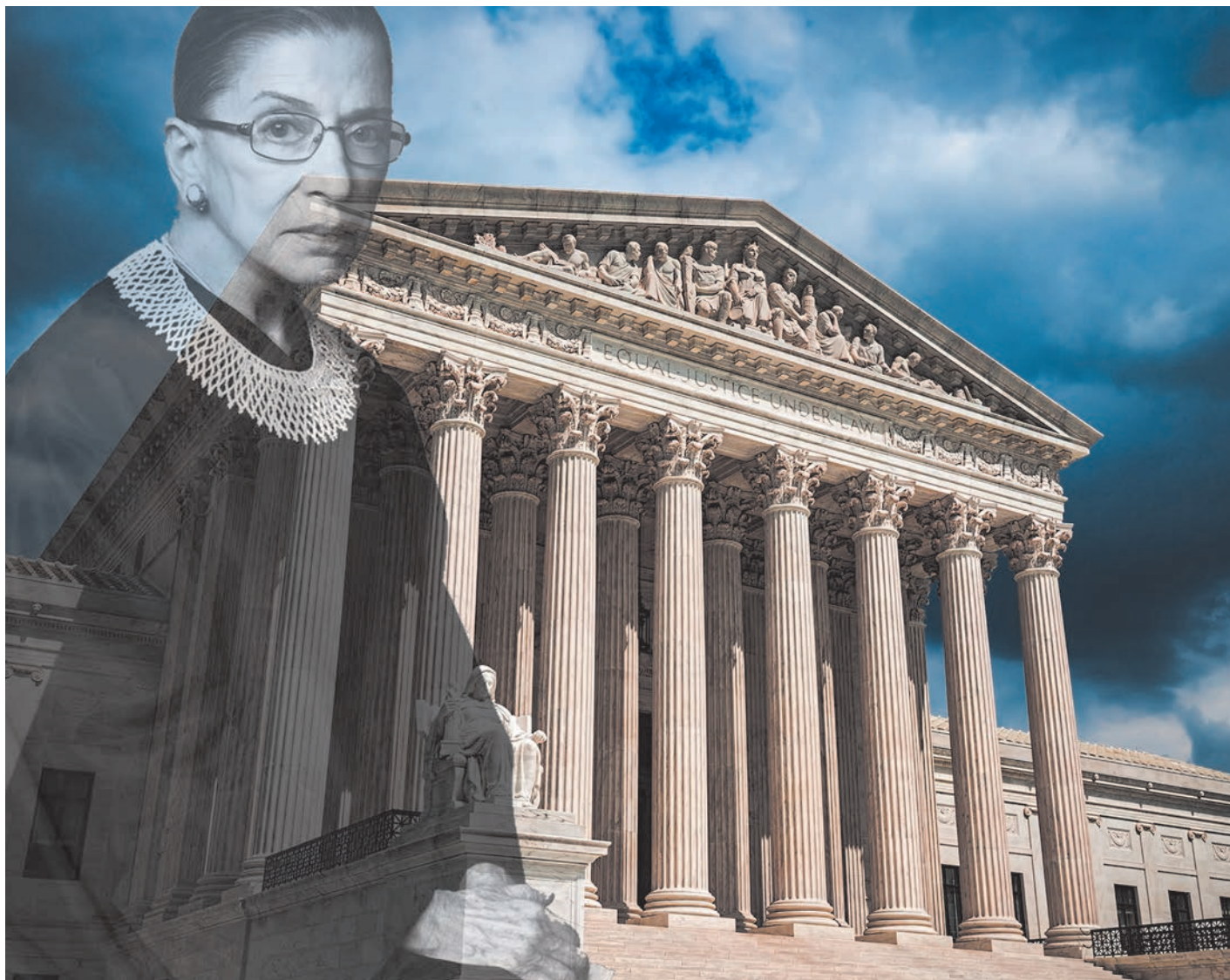
Letting the rest of the state open up but singling out bars feels like a slap in the face. Having a food truck outside does not prevent anyone from getting corona.

Sorry y’all; I am just frustrated ... and fat.

No joke y’all. Quarantine has turned me into a master chef. Why, God? Why am I such a good cook?! I know when I finally get back on the stage, instead of my usual hourglass figure, I’m gonna be shaped like a walrus — just an amorphous blob, inch-wormin’ my fat across the stage. I will have to roll onto my side and flap my flipper-fat arm to wave to the audience as I tell everyone in my best Lisa Simpson voice, “I wash myself with a rag on a stick.”

But the first one of you that calls me fat ... Fuck a social distance! Ima sit on you!

In Ruby news — for those that don’t know, I have a 130-pound tortoise named Ruby, and I think she has decided to murder me. I am not joking, that bitch will walk up behind me and try to trip me. I don’t mean she just walks up, and I stumble over her, I mean she comes up behind me, rears back and launches herself into the back of my



she is a supervillain. I kinda understand it; I get evil too on those hot-ass days. Yesterday she walked up to me and let me pet her on the head and tickle her neck, so it seems with the cooler weather the more chill she is.

For those of you thinking how cool it is having a big-ass tortoise, it is. But before you run out and get one, you should know there is a chance they can be possessed by an evil demon. They absolutely will destroy anything they hate. Ruby hates our gnomes and will knock down every single one she can.

And you will have to fortify your yard with strong fences or lots of long spikes driven far into the ground to keep them out of areas. They will eat most of your plants, and,

legs.

She is evil.

Luckily the weather is getting cooler. The only times she gets like that are days it is near 100 degrees. It’s like the heat gives her superpowers, and

of course, they might try to kill you.

Don’t get me wrong; I love my Ruby. I love to just watch her mosey around the yard eating grass. I love that she is nose; if there is anything going on in the back yard, she has to check it out and be right in the middle of whatever is happening. I love that every time I walk out the back door, she leaves her hidey-hole to come greet me.

I love that she eats like Pac-Man, and I make the sounds in my head as she crunches through her veggies. I love that I have watched her grow from the size of a silver dollar to the behemoth that she is now.

I read somewhere a while back that hipsters get weird pets to seem interesting, and it got me thinking, am I a hipster? No, I am not. I like things or trends because I actually like them, not ironically.

I will drink a craft beer or cider, but I hate most IPAs. Most of them taste like some random fruit got fucked by a tire fire: “Oooh, this tastes like grapefruit and hops, then tire fire!” “This one has hints of passion fruit, then tire fire.” “Try this one; it tastes like unborn sea monkeys with hints of plum, then a tire fire.”

I can’t grow a beard and don’t have much plaid. I don’t have any tattoos yet. I like indie artists, but I like mainstream ones, too. I do try to take reusable bags with me to the grocery store, but I don’t look down on those that don’t. I have ugly socks, but I love them. Actually, I have lots of ugly things and

not ironically.

Nope, I am not a hipster. But I am an asshole on occasion. Does that count?

Remember to always love more, bitch less and be fabulous! XOXO, Cassie Nova

Cassie Nova’s FreakShow airs every Monday at 8 p.m. on Facebook.com/Cassie-NovasFreakShow.

this week’s solution

A	S	S	N	L	A	M	P	S	S	K	E	D
E	T	T	U	A	D	I	E	U	W	I	R	E
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S	T	O	P	S	E	D	A	N	S	E	E	R

browse

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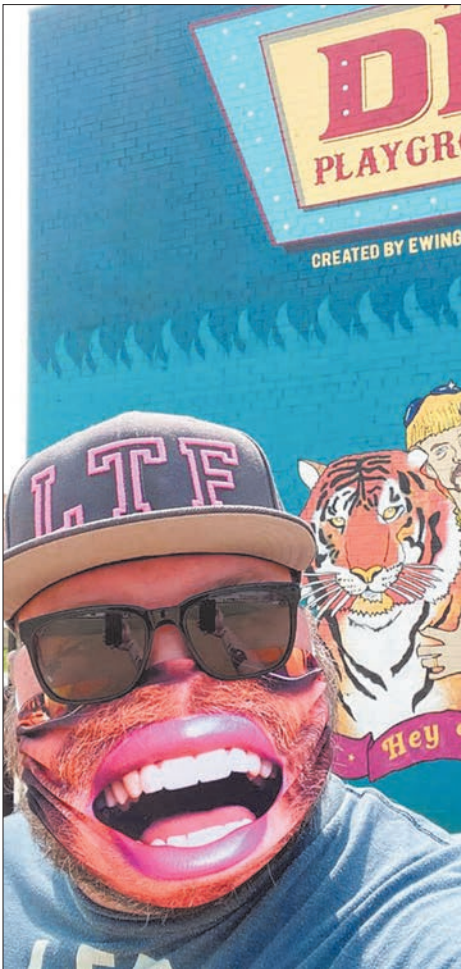


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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
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57	58					59					60		61	62
63						64					65			
66						67					68			

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- 1 The A in GLARP (abbr.)
5 Aladdin's find, and others
10 TV listings
14 Caesar's accusation
15 Foucault's final word
16 Hide a mike on
17 Jamie of M*A*S*H
18 "___ tov!"
19 Ball of film
20 Yeadley Smith movie about a Black transgender woman who befriends a white cis boy
23 Boneless cuts
24 Blazing
26 '60s march site
27 Lang. of Queen Esther
30 Discussion venue
31 Bear of the night
32 South Korea's capital
34 ___ Side Story
35 With 53-Across, what Smith said about the script
38 Construction site chapeau
41 "___ Yellow Brick Road"
45 Club for guys in the navy
46 "More or less" suffix
47 Heart chart, for short
48 Caligula's tongue (abbr.)
49 Short-legged dog
51 Discoverer's cry
53 See 35-Across
57 Zhivago heroine
59 Converted pounds
60 Man or Lesbos
63 Straight-laced
64 Kahlo's cohort
65 Gay activist, e.g.
66 Obey the red light
67 Family car
68 One looking into crystal balls
- 12 Humanist of Holland
13 Pride's place
21 Castro Street, on BART
22 On vacation
23 ACC school
25 Mouth-to-mouth pro
27 Macbeth setting
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32 Schindler's List symbols
33 Spectators
36 Fagin of Oliver!, for one
37 Madonna song of 1990
38 Spokes' center
39 Queer ___ three-dollar bill
40 Maid on Will & Grace
42 Tempestt of The Cosby Show
43 Tie up, orally
44 JFK info
50 Terence of Smallville
52 Police actions at Stonewall
54 Hoar
55 Used firehouse poles
56 It covered Caesar's Johnson
57 Johnny Mathis disks
58 Paul Cadmus' output
61 Writer Harper
62 Blow it
- Down
- 1 WWI troop group
2 More theatrical
3 Leisurely walks
4 Confidant of Juliet Capulet
5 Teachers in The King and I
6 Figure skater Rippon
7 1987 Masters winner Larry
8 "Every duke and earl and ___ is here"
9 Infection fighter
10 Didn't spit
11 Richard Chamberlain's Dr. role

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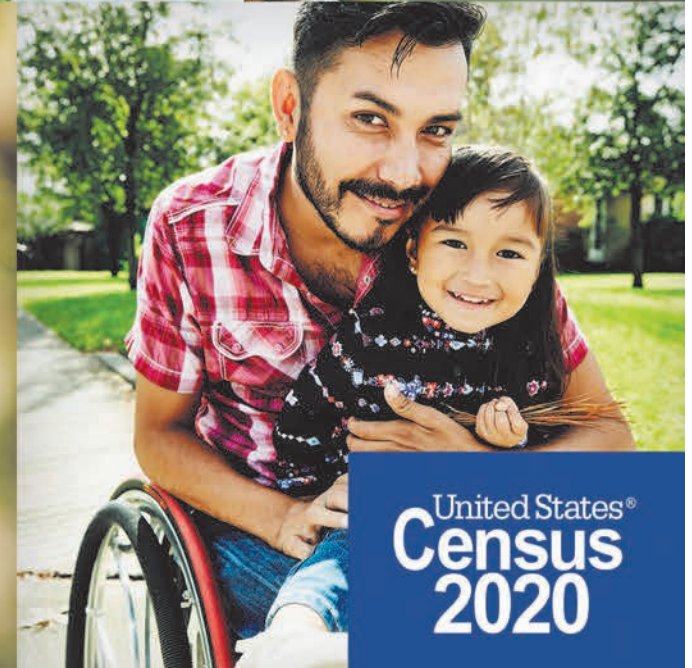


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