A Good Shepherd

Fort Worth’s Celebration Community Church honors Pastor Carol West

by James Russell, Page 8
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Blake suffered numerous injuries when he was attacked after the Pride Parade Sunday.

Hate crime victim overwhelmed by support from community

A fundraising page, GoFundMe.com/er4rfxdg, has been started for Blake, the man who was attacked on Wycliff Avenue after the Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade last Sunday, Sept. 20. Blake has asked that only his first name is used in media reports until the men who assaulted him have been caught.

Blake said he spent 24 hours in the hospital and needed 40 stitches on his face to repair the injuries inflicted in the attack. Fortunately, he is expected to fully recover.

The GoFundMe page set up by his friends should cover his hospital bills from Sunday night. Donors covered the $3,000 initially requested to cover the emergency hospitalization within the first 24 hours after the page was set up. The total so far doesn't cover the additional expenses Blake will face while he recovers.

In a correction to the original story, Blake said he was on a side street near Cedar Springs when one man hit him from behind with a baseball bat, while two others began kicking him. Because he was temporarily blinded by the attack with the bat, he was unable to give a clear description of his attackers.

He was then thrown in the assailants' car and driven to the intersection of Wycliff and Sylvester streets, a few blocks away, where he was dumped on the street in a pool of blood. The attackers took his cell phone, but not his wallet or money. While laying in the street, Blake said he was able to call for help before going unconscious. Someone from one of the neighboring houses called 911.

An ambulance transported him to Parkland Hospital, and, Blake said, “The whole team there was great.” He has followup appointments with his doctors next week.

Because the attack happened after the Pride parade and because of anti-gay language used during the attack, police are investigating the assault as a hate crime.

Blake just moved to Dallas a few weeks ago and was supposed to have a final job interview on Monday. He was able to postpone the interview until he recovers.

Rather than focusing on the attack, he said he’s been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the LGBT community, the Dallas Democratic Party and the community in general.

Dallas could jeopardize perfect MEI score by announcing it early

Dallas received a preliminary perfect score of 100 on the Municipal Equality Index, but could jeopardize that score by announcing it early. The MEI is not released until November, but after City Council received the new scores on Monday, Sept. 21, Dallas Morning News and Dallas Observer ran with it.

Scores were adjusted to account for changes stemming from the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on marriage equality. Without Texas blocking Dallas from being the city it wanted to be, the MEI score became 96. Additional recognition, including sponsoring the Coalition for Aging LGBT’s conference, appointing the group’s Cannon Flowers to the LGBT Task Force, formation of a new employee resource group and recognition of the task force gave Dallas an additional four points.

The only other city with a score of 100 is Austin. Of course, publishing this information could give Dallas a penalty. Even a one-point penalty puts Dallas behind Austin but it still means we are one of the most inclusive cities in the country.

— David Taftel
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Miley is a spayed Australian cattle dog mix estimated to be about four years old. She has a salt-and-pepper coat. Her Dallas Animal Services ID number is A904457.

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prepare the science garden and paint exterior doors at Lee Elementary School, 2911 Delmar Ave. Register at Bit.ly/1OuQ1ue. Lunch follows at Libertine Bar, 2101 Greenville Ave. For more information contact Rob Peters at 781-472-0745 or roblpeters70@gmail.com.

- Sept. 27: Gay Author Alex Sanchez Speaks at Fort Worth Public Library
  The critically acclaimed author of eight award-winning young adult books speaks about growing up gay, emigrating from Mexico to Texas at a book signing at Fort Worth Public Library, 500 W. 3rd, Fort Worth. Tickets are free. For more information, contact 817-392-6012 or TeenScene@fortworthtexas.gov.

- Sept. 29: Transgender 201: Beyond Jenner
  Dallas Stonewall Young Democrats host workshop to discuss transgender issues from 7-9 p.m. at Cathedral of Hope, 5910 Cedar Springs Rd. A $100 Starbucks gift card will be raffled. For more information contact Scott Payne at board@dsyd.org.

- Sept. 30: Tarrant County Gay Pride Week Kick-off
  Kick-off for Tarrant County Gay Pride with Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price at Trinity Park Arts Pavilion, 2401 University Dr., Fort Worth.

OCTOBER.

- Oct. 1: Trans Pride Initiative Board Meeting
  Open to the public. 6:30 p.m. at Brazos Room, Center for Community Cooperation, 2900 Live Oak St. For more information e-mail Nell Gaither at nell@tpride.org.

- Oct. 1: Fort Worth PFLAG Meeting
  Meets every first Thursday of the month from 7-9 p.m. at First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church, 1959 Sandy Lane, Fort Worth. For more information, call 817-428-2329 or visit PflagFortWorth.org.

- Oct. 2: Fort Worth Teen Pride
  Youth and young adult event includes free food, entertainment, drag show, prizes and more from 6-10 p.m. at Agape MCC, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth. Free for teenagers 13-18 with valid ID. $5 suggested donation for accompanying adults. For more information contact info@RLC365.org or LGBTQ Saves@gmail.com.

- Oct. 2: Brandon Michael Fugate Memorial Golf Tournament
  Golf tournament benefits The BMF Project for Search and Rescue, which provides funds and resources for search and rescue agencies and provides emotional support for families during the process from noon-6 p.m. Tee off at 1:30 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. at Riverchase Golf Course, 700 Riverchase Dr., Coppell. $100 before Sept. 28 or $125 after. For more information and to register online visit Thebmfproject.org.

- Oct. 3: DFW Trans Ladies Monthly Meeting
  Meets from 7-8:30 p.m. on the first Saturday of every month at Agape MCC, 4615 E. California Parkway, Fort Worth. For more information, email info@dfwtgladies.org or visit DFWTGLadies.org.

- Oct. 3: Tarrant County Pride Parade and Street Festival
  Parade begins at noon in downtown Fort Worth followed by a street festival until 6 p.m. at Main Street and 9th Street featuring live entertainment, vendors, and food.
The Good Shepherd

JAMES RUSSELL | Staff Writer
rusell@dallasvoice.com

Wednesdays are fellowship night at Fort Worth’s Celebration Community Church, the largest LGBT and allied nondenominational church in Tarrant County. It’s always packed on Wednesdays.

That says something for a church founded in 1993 as a satellite campus of White Rock Community Church in Dallas. The 35-member congregation grew fast enough that it quickly became its own church.

In May 1998, the growing congregation rented space at 908 Pennsylvania Ave. At the time the property was still owned by St. John’s Evangelical and Reform Church, founded by German immigrants in 1882.

After a membership spike, the historic church located on the city’s Near Southside since 1915 saw its membership dwindle, and St. John’s merged with First Congregational Church in west Fort Worth in 1999.

Meanwhile, Celebration was growing. It needed more space as its programming grew. The church was so successful that the congregation decided to hire its first full-time pastor, and called West to lead the flock.

When the board voted to purchase the building, the Rev. West stepped up to the challenge of raising money. But she didn’t seize the pulpit and threaten hellfire and brimstone on those who didn’t donate. Instead, she led by example, entering a 10K fun run to raise $50,000 for a down payment.

She raised double that amount. For the past 17 years, Celebration has continued to grow, and once again, the church needs more space. Members and staff agree it’s all because of the leadership of their founding pastor.

To honor her service to the church — and to the greater North Texas LGBT community — the board decided to name its new community center for West. Not only will the Rev. Carol West Community Center create the first permanent LGBT community center in Tarrant County, it will also be the first facility named for an out lesbian in Tarrant County, according to a review of Tarrant County historical records.

(Van Cliburn Recital Hall, named for the late pianist, is the first facility in the county named for an out LGBT person.)

The decision to name the community center for West was unanimous.

“When the board told me, I was surprised,” West said. She was just as surprised when told by the Dallas Voice it is the first building named for an out lesbian in the county.

When completed, Celebration will have more gathering spaces for congregants after worship services, additional parking spaces and a columbarium for members who wish to be buried on the church’s property.

West may have been surprised, but the Rev. Lisetta Thomas was not. Thomas, who has worked with West for 15 years, described West as perceptive, politically aware and spiritually grounded.

“I have a seminary education, but she has taught me things you don’t learn in seminary,” Thomas said. “She has the ability to convey wisdom in a tangible way for others.”

Indeed, in a time where church attendance across the country has plummeted, Celebration has seen its membership swell to 650 members.

“It has grown because she knew from the start what was necessary to build the church. She had a vision and made it happen,” Thomas said. “Not everyone has that ability.”

Spiritual, but not religious

West’s path to pastor of Celebration was paved in part by the AIDS crisis. Before joining Celebration, she was trained, ordained and worked for what was the Metropolitan Community Church of Dallas, now Cathedral of Hope.

She didn’t grow up spiritual however. Raised in Irving by “liberal and open-minded” parents, West said she only sporadically attended church services.

“They really didn’t attend after they got married. We’d occasionally go to a Methodist church and visit churches of other denominations,” she recalled.

After obtaining an undergraduate degree from University of North Texas, then North Texas State University, in Denton and graduate degree from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, West taught English at Irving High School for 20 years. Around that same time, she began attending a small MCC fellowship in Fort Worth.

It was the 1970s, and being gay and Christian wasn’t exactly welcomed by most denominations.

“The MCC was a wonderful experience. I felt like a hypocrite [attending other churches then] because you were told you couldn’t be LGBT and Christian,” West said.

MCC was wonderful enough, in fact, that she decided to pursue ordination. At the time, MCC-Dallas was the region’s go-to church with a LGBT outreach. She trained as a student clergy member and was ordained under the Rev. Michael Piazza.

“I was the first woman ordained under Piazza,” she said.

But West didn’t have time to recognize her historic moment; the AIDS crisis was at its peak and the congregation was dying off.

Student clergy members weren’t permitted to conduct services, but they could do funerals.

“The MCC was the only church doing funerals” for those who had died of AIDS, West recalled. Even after she was ordained, she continued to conduct funerals, basically a necessity for any clergy member ordained by the MCC.

But she also took on a special role: she was the church’s AIDS chaplain, making hospital and home and hospice visits that few others would make at the time. Nurses and doctors wouldn’t even deliver meals to patients, West said. Those trays were placed outside of a patient’s room.

West gets why people are still horrified by the inhumane treatment toward those dying from the disease that was initially called GRID, or gay-related immune deficiency. Still, she said, “[Peo- ple didn’t respond] out of meanness but fear, because they didn’t know its origins.”

But the crisis also often brought out the best in many people. Some parents of young men with AIDS wound up attending MCC-Dallas. Gaining their support during a volatile time brought peo-
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BROADWAY AT THE BASS
A gay couple trying to file an affidavit of common-law marriage with Tarrant County say they were stopped by a clerk at the Arlington Sub-Courthouse, who refused to accept the filing. The men, who asked not to be identified at this time, have been together 23 years. The Texas common-law marriage code allows a couple who has presented itself as married to file a common-law claim rather than applying for a marriage license. The clerk at the Tarrant County office, reportedly acting under instruction from someone else, would only accept the document if the men changed the date to June 26, 2015.

Their attorney, Jon Nelson, disagreed for a number of reasons.

"This is an affidavit," he said. "What the state of Texas is asking my clients to do is file a false affidavit and subject themselves to criminal penalties."

Rather than apply for a currently dated marriage license, this couple needs to prove they were married in 2009 to access retirement benefits. One of the men worked for the city of Dallas and retired six years ago. When the Dallas Employee Retirement Fund was discussing extending benefits to same-sex couples last year, board members discussed current retiree and agreed that legal out-of-state marriages would be recognized.

When Councilman Lee Kleinman addressed common-law marriage, there wasn’t agreement, but Kleinman insisted in all cases same-sex couples would be treated equally with opposite-sex couples. The board agreed that retired employees in same-sex relationships who can prove they were married at the time of retirement would receive benefits equal to other married couples.

Texas is one of just nine states that still has common-law marriage, and there are two kinds of common-law marriage accepted here. The first is informal but accepted by the state: The couple must agree they are married, cohabit within the state and represent to others they are married. At that point, the state recognizes the marriage as legal.

A pension board, however, doesn’t have to recognize that marriage. So a couple in Texas can file a declaration of marriage with the county clerk’s office. That’s what this couple decided to do. Nelson said his clients’ affidavit stated they lived together as a married couple and presented themselves as a married couple for the past 23 years. During that time, neither was married to another person.

Nelson said the clerk is asked to swear that the couple is who they say they are and have presented a form that is properly filled out. The clerk is not asked to interpret the document in any way, he noted.

Nelson had another problem with the county clerk’s office asking the couple to change the date on the document and perjure themselves.

"When a court declares a law unconstitutional, it, in effect, never existed," Nelson said.

Since the Obergefell v. Hodges decision that legalized same-sex marriage came into effect, marriages performed before the decision are valid from the time of those marriages.

Common-law marriage in Texas may be declared at any time and the affidavit filed at any time and the marriage is recognized from the date the couple declared they were together.

In addition to pension benefits, common-law marriage may be preferable for couples to file for purposes of proving parental rights and placing names on a birth certificate. In the case of Jim Obergefell, the U.S. Supreme Court decision made his marriage legal, even though his husband had died more than a year earlier. He had sued for purposes of a death certificate.
A related case was settled earlier this month in favor of recognizing the marriage of an Austin lesbian couple.

Sonemaly Phrasavath and Stella Powell had been together eight years and had a union ceremony that was not legally recognized at the time. Powell died of cancer in 2014 and her family tried to take property from the estate.

Phrasavath filed a lawsuit to have her marriage to Powell recognized by the state of Texas as a legal common-law marriage. A Travis County probate judge declared the marriage legal and Phrasavath becomes the legal heir when the suit is finalized on Oct. 5.

Nelson said common-law marriage is useful when the status of two individuals has to be established prior to a court decision. In addition to pensions and probate, he said other cases include those dealing with birth certificates and custody.

In the case of birth certificates, a couple may have legally married in Texas this summer or in another state over the past few years. But a couple had to be married at the time of the birth or adoption of their children to automatically be placed on a birth certificate.

An affidavit of common-law marriage may cut the amount of other legal work required to have both parents' names placed on a Texas birth certificate.

West is grateful to lead a thriving church with outreach to the LGBT community. And certainly Tarrant County is long overdue for a LGBT community center. But this is a shepherd who has grander visions — visions of justice for all.

“I look forward to the day where LGBT churches don’t exist,” West said. “When that day comes, the faith will be so much better.”
Creep of the Week: Mike Huckabee makes much ado over Eric Fanning’s gayness

just out the rainbow M16 assault rifles because things are about to get fabulous! The United States Army is about to become the world’s biggest Pride parade, thanks to President Obama’s nomination of Eric Fanning for secretary of the Army. The only thing you need to know about Fanning is that he’s a gay. What other qualifications does one possibly need to essentially be CEO of the U.S. Army? Well, lots, actually. And Fanning’s credentials are pretty impeccable. He’s currently serving as the undersecretary of the Army, and his list of qualifications is so long it would take up this entire column space. But if you ask Mike Huckabee, R-Will-Never-Be-President, Obama just picked the first guy to come up on Grindr.

On Sept. 19, Huckabee took to Facebook to criticize Fanning’s nomination: “It’s clear President Obama is more interested in appeasing America’s homosexuals than honoring America’s heroes,” the Huckster wrote. “Veteran suicide is out of control, and military readiness is dangerously low. Yet Obama is so obsessed with pandering to liberal interest groups he’s nominated an openly gay civilian to run the Army. Homosexuality is not a job qualification.”

I’m not sure what Huckabee means when he says that Obama is all about the gays at the expense of “America’s heroes.” Is he saying that Obama should have nominated a military officer instead? The secretary of the Army is a civilian position, which Huckabee should know. I guess he’s saying that the mere act of nominating a homosexual is a dishonor to our troops.

But it’s not like Obama just nominated Nathan Lane. Even Fox News saw through Huckabee’s homophobic bullshit.

On a Fox Business morning show, host Sandra Smith asked Huckabee what his deal was with criticizing Fanning, since he “is widely seen as very qualified for the job.”

“He may be very qualified for the job,” Huckabee said, “and if he is, then nominate him because he’s qualified to lead the Army, not because of his sexual orientation. Why are they making such a big deal and talking about it?”

By “they,” he means the Obama administration. There is, of course, no evidence that Fanning was nominated because of his sexual orientation, nor is there any evidence that Obama just can’t shut up about how gay Fanning is.

Huckabee, on the other hand, cannot shut up about it: “I had people who were gay who worked on my staff, who have served in my administration when I was governor. I never went around saying, ‘Hey, I’ve got some homosexuals that are working for me.’ What’s the point? If they’re qualified, hire them.”

Oh, so Huckabee has worked with known homosexuals, eh? Well then he couldn’t possibly be homophobic.

“I just think this president is so into symbolism, so into trying to prove to everybody that he’s this open-minded guy,” Huckabee said. “Maybe he’s trying to make up for the fact that until, gosh, what, just three years ago, he still took the position that many of us do, and that is that marriage, for example, is a biblical issue, and it is between a man and a woman. He had this sudden revelation that it is not that way anymore.”

In other words, Obama is trying to make nice with the gays by throwing them a nomination or two.

“I just feel like the president has made this such an agenda,” Huckabee continued, “and the agenda for the military is to focus on the best qualified people, because we’re talking about life and death issues. And if he thinks Eric Fanning is the best for the job, nominate him, but leave his sexual orientation out of it.”

“You hear that, Fanning! Back into the closet for you, for the good of the country. And so Huckabee can find something else to obsess about other than how super gay you are.”

D’Anne Witkowski is a freelance writer and poet and a writing teacher at the University of Michigan. She writes the weekly “Creep of the Week” column for Q Syndicate.
Uptown Physicians Group would like to congratulate Dr. Terry Watson on his retirement after serving the GLBT and HIV communities of North Texas for over 35 years.”

“I first met Terry around the time he graduated from medical school. He was a delightful and handsome young man. Little did we know that in the early 80’s that we would embark on a totally unexpected and unknown medical journey, which became known as HIV/AIDS. At a time when many doctors refused to see AIDS patients because of fear, prejudice, and the unknowns, Terry and I along with a few other docs in Dallas never hesitated. I don’t think it ever crossed our minds that we would walk away from this horrendous epidemic. Our community owes much gratitude and respect to Dr. Watson for his many years of practice serving our community.”

— Dr. Robert Henderson
Retired Doctor
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Uptown Physicians Group extends a warm welcome to any of Dr. Watson’s patients that would like us to assume their care.

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Donald Fowler’s undertaking in bringing his world premiere musical ‘Creep’ — about Jack the Ripper — to stage taught him about collaboration, creativity ... and himself
What if this person was the killer. Why would that person do it? Why would this happen?” Then it just plummeted forward.”

The result is now Creep, for which Fowler has written the book, music and lyrics, and which — following several stagings, readings, workshops and countless rewrites over more than five years — will receive its world premiere full-scale production next month at WaterTower Theatre. But despite all the tears, sweat and especially blood Fowler has poured of himself into its creation, the process has proven to him one thing: You can’t make this kind of art alone.

“Donald is no stranger to WaterTower,” says Terry Martin, the producing artistic director at the theater and an early backer of the musical when he directed the first staged reading of it in 2010. “I was attracted to Creep initially because the story was not one I had heard before. The plot is in no way formulaic. These were new and compelling characters in situations full of conflict.”

He’s also had the support of the creatives behind the scenes, from director Kate Galvin to choreographer Kelly McCain to orchestrator Dan Kazemi, as well as the entire cast. And he’s especially indebted to Patty Breckenridge and Nicholas Even, who’ve “literally been there since the beginning,” he says.

“From the onset, these were my friends who’ve built trust with me — the kind who you know won’t lie to you. I was super-shy about sharing any music with anyone — my family was not and still is not supportive of my music and didn’t know if I had any talent. But I played a song for Patty and she loved it. The first thing she said was, ‘How do you go about making this happen?’”

Having Breckenridge — one of North Texas’ most dynamic actress/singers — never hurts, but Even added an element Fowler has little familiarity with: Money.

“Nick headed up the fundraising,” he says. “He raised the $15,000 for the workshop [produced by Uptown Players] a few years ago. The workshop was paid for before it took place. I am so over-blessed.”

The blessings have continued since WTT announced its support, mounting a capital campaign for the premiere and tapping a large and talented slate of professionals for it.

“Linda Leonard is in my ensemble. Janelle Lutz is too!” Fowler oozes about the powerhouse performers who clamored to be in the show. And the off-stage professionals add even more to the show.

“The heads on this are super-smart — there’s some really out-of-the-box thinking,” he says. Take, for instance, the orchestrations. Fowler will tell you he’s a control freak, but knew he would have to relinquish a lot of authority to others, including Kazemi, who turned the basic score into musical theater arrangements.

“When Dan and I talked about orchestrations, we said how it could have gone Sweeney Todd very easily,” Fowler says, referring to another
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musical set in the fog-blown streets of Victorian London. “I was not interested in that — I wanted to play around with soundscape. Dan has a 10-piece orchestra [to work with], and when you hear it, it sounds like 30. We’re bowing a gong and a vibraphone.”

“I knew that it was important that I facilitate getting all the right people in the room to take this show to the next level,” Martin says.

The choreography, costumes, even the fog effect all represent huge advancements over earlier versions and even what Fowler had in his own head. And he owes a huge debt to director Kate Galvin for all of that.

“Absolutely the biggest example is Kate, who has a wheelhouse in new musicals,” Fowler says. “When she first signed on, the next day I had an eight-page list of rewrites. There was a natural propensity for tension on my end, but after I got the wind back in me, I said, ‘OK, one thing at a time. The theater didn’t hire all these people not to listen to them.’ I realized we needed to find what made those characters so interesting. Kate really challenged me to whack at the script — it’s lean and mean. It wasn’t so much taking out as it was putting more in with less. She has really made me care about those characters.

“I believe Creep has great potential beyond its Dallas premiere,” Martin declares. “Long after the curtain comes down, it will be remembered as one of the most exciting projects on our local stages this year.”

IU...
How many gay husbands do you have?!

Dallas Voice: You’ve played a lot of gigs in your life, been on a lot of stages. How did your set on the G-A-Y stage recently compare? Lewis: Oh, my god. Doing G-A-Y is one of the funnest shows I get to do, and that’s why I always go back whenever there’s an album. Literally — you can just do whatever you want. The more flamboyant, the more fun it is and the more the audience gives you so much energy. So yeah, there’s always so much love and support there.

Are you used to being around that many gays in your everyday life? I mean, yeah. I obviously have so many gay husbands.

How many gay husbands do you have?! I have my L.A. gay husband, and I have my U.K. gay husbands. I’ve got a few there, and that just constitutes as my gay best friend. If I don’t get married, then clearly we’ll end up getting married. [Laughs]

I wonder, though: Can one gay husband get jealous over another gay husband? Sometimes they do. I definitely split my time equally. And I get jealous over my gay husbands with their straight wives! So they have to split their time with them for me. It’s a partnership.

When were you first aware of your gay following? When I was doing The X Factor, every week we’d have people coming down to the show, and I found myself with a huge gay following. Again, just so much love. People were waiting for me after the shows, and I’d go and sign stuff, so it was really early on that I became aware of that.

In 2007, “Bleeding Love” elevated you in so many ways, including within the gay community. You know how we love our big, belty voices. I can’t imagine what that song did for your gaggle of gay husbands. They were loving it! And they’re always giving me opinions on what I am to wear on stage and what I am to do on stage. I’m like, “All right, guys; calm down.”

How often do you take their advice? I mean, it depends on who it’s coming from. I have my stylist — a very close friend of mine — who’s an amazing stylist. He has suggestions on wardrobe and stuff like that. And I listen. But some of them are crazy. Sometimes I’m like, “Yeah, no; you wear that.”

How do you think your gay fans will relate to I Am? I have a lot of fans who are younger and haven’t even come out to their families yet. I do this campaign called “I Am Empowered” to share stories, mantras and affirmations, and I got one guy who wrote me saying he gets bullied a lot in school because he’s gay. He says he just wants me to empower him to get through that and get through the torment, and so I know that it definitely is a very, very strong message to the gay community, especially being young and coming out and being open. It’s very hard and it’s a very difficult time, and you need to be empowered in that. You need to have the strength to stand true in what you are and who you are. And it’s a very prevalent message on the album.

How did you end up with a drag queen in the video for “Fire Under My Feet?” It was my idea. My uncle actually is gay, and when I was younger I remember he would wear makeup and eyeliner. It was the ‘80s, so you know — people were all out there. And it was always so normal to me; it was never something I questioned, never something that I found anything other than normal. So I had that experience growing up. And even though he’s not a drag queen, I wanted to put that in the video. I wanted people to know that you can be whatever you want to be.

What did you learn from your uncle about being yourself? He taught me a lot. When I was younger, it was to be accepting of anything; however people want to express themselves or present themselves is up to them. It’s not something to look at weirdly or that should be shunned. And self-expression — he taught me that. Not being afraid to show who you are.

What does it mean to you to know that your songs are being fiercely lip-synced by drag queens? I love it! A couple of months ago I actually went to drag queen bingo and they were commenting on the (“Fire Under My Feet”) video saying, “I love that you have a drag queen in there.”

Did you win at bingo? I didn’t, unfortunately. But I did get to call out some numbers, which was kind of cool!

Which line on the album means the most to you? On “I Am” it says, “Thought I would never rise again. But I am, I am.” It’s about going through times and thinking it’s the hardest time and not seeing the forest through the trees but knowing that time is such a big healer and a big factor in so many situations. I feel like so many people give up just as they’re about to have a breakthrough, and sometimes you have to go through that. The line “I am, I am,” is, I feel, a powerful affirmation to put out there when you’re going through those times.

Your vocal abilities often draw comparisons to Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston and Celine Dion. What songs of theirs would you be most apt to sing at karaoke? With Whitney, definitely “I Wanna Dance With Somebody.” I mean, everyone does that song at one point or another! Mariah… it would have to be “Heartbreaker.” It’s just so cool and I love the video — she was in the movie theater, and I remember she had the pink top and her little denim jeans. And Celine: probably “All By Myself” or “My Heart Will Go On.”

What’s your favorite note that’s ever been sung? I feel like it has to be during “I Will Always Love You” — the long-held note that Whitney does, and you’re like, “What is she doing right now? She’s killing my soul.”

Now that the album is finished, how are you feeling about the label changes you made in order to honor who you are as an artist? I feel amazing about it. I’m lucky enough to be in a position where I made that leap of faith and then, luckily, there were people at the other side to catch me and help me do what I wanted to do. I really credit myself blessed because it does take a lot to walk away from such a big situation. But, again, I knew what I needed to change and that I needed to do me and be very authentic to me, and so, this is it. I just feel lucky that I can do it; a lot of people don’t get that opportunity.

You say you had to “do me.” Did you ever feel like you were strayed from your authentic self? I feel like I’ve definitely always been true to myself, but sometimes I feel like myself, as well as other people, get a bit lost by everything that goes on within music. The heart of what we do in music is...
to connect with people and express ourselves and share that with people. But I feel like the hair and the makeup and the designer clothes takes over everything. The fame, the notoriety and letting that get to your head is so dangerous. My dad’s always told me, “Don’t believe the hype.” That’s something that’s always stayed with me.

When you look out at the pop scene, do you see a lot of authenticity? You know what I see a lot of? Amazing artists. And I also see a lot of [them] seem to be a bit lost. But again, it’s all part of an individual’s journey and it’s all part of learning about ourselves. You have to go through that learning process sometimes. There’s a lot of very young people in the industry, and being so young and vulnerable and subject to … I don’t know… a lot of impressions, sometimes you can just get lost in it.

“Bleeding Love” was a colossal success, so I have to imagine it set the bar high for you. How much pressure have you felt to match the success of that song and what it did for your career? Definitely in the beginning I felt a lot of pressure. There’s definitely been a lot less pressure the past few years, but for my second album [2009’s Echo], I felt a lot of pressure then.

When I was first recording my [new] album, even before I had a deal, there was never any pressure on me. It was just like, I’m recording music; this is what I do. With my first album, again, there really wasn’t any expectations, so I didn’t really have a lot of pressure. But then after the album blew up and went massive, there definitely was a bit of pressure. I was like, “Oh my gosh, this is happening; I’ve got to step up my game. I’ve got to be better. I’ve got to match it.” I’ve learned over the past few years that that is definitely not conducive to creativity. You have to just go down a new path and blaze a new trail.

PETA named you Sexiest Vegetarian in 2008. Where does that rank on your list of career achievements? Uhh. Quite high! Sexiest anything! I will take what I can get, soooo … that ranks very high.

What’s the sexiest vegetable or fruit? A peach. That came to you a lot quicker than I thought it would. Right?! I surprised myself even.
Dallas Black Pride shows another side of gay culture

You might think Gay Pride is over in Dallas, but you’d be wrong. Because, for the 18th year, the gay black community is uniting for a weekend of events that encourage pride among people of color. But you don’t need to be black to attend the many parties, events, speakers, shows and music that is black Pride — you just need to keep your Pride flag flying.

DEETS: Event scheduled at numerous venues. For a complete lineup, visit DallasSouthernPride.com.

Friday 09.25

5 Factor celebrates North Texans who make life better for everyone

The Resource Center’s annual 5 Factor was designed to recognize those in the community who contribute to something in a variety of disciplines. You can be part of the celebration, and raise money for the center, at a cocktail party cheering on Terry Loftis (for his role in the arts), Courtney Kerr (for her role in fashion), Brent Wilmott (for his contributions in design), The Purple Party (for its philanthropy) and Pinky’s Valet (for commerce).

DEETS: 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd., ste. 107 in the Design District. 7–9 p.m. $50. MyResourceCenter.org.

Thursday 10.01 — Monday 10.05

Howdy, folks! State Fair kicks off!

Texans are proud about how big we do things, and few are bigger than the State Fair, which settles into Dallas for four weekends. There are tons of events and attractions, especially the fried foods, but we’re really interested in Baconation, a booth inside the Tower Building that celebrates hot crispy pig parts! It’s great to be a Texan!

DEETS: Fair Park Grounds at First Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Open daily at 10 a.m. For complete schedule, visit BigTex.org.

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THEATER
Moonshine: That Hee Haw Musical. World premiere musical from award-winning team of writers/composers, based on the variety show but camped up. Stars musical from award-winning team of writer/composers, Moonshine: That Hee Haw Musical.


Friday 09.25
COMMUNITY
5 Factor. The Resource Center recognizes those in a variety of disciplines who make living in North Texas better for the LGBT (and broader) community. 7 for Parties, 150 Turtle Creek Blvd. (in the Design District). 7–9 p.m. $30. MyResourceCenter.org.


SUNDAY 09.27
DRAG
My Oh My Show. A new drag weekly show starts at the House of Blues, 2200 N. Lamar St. 10 p.m. $10–$18. MyOhMyTheShow.com.

TUESDAY 09.29
FILM
The Andromeda Strain. Robert Wise directed this sci-fi thriller, based on Michael Crichton’s best seller, about a virulent pathogen. Screens as part of the Tuesday Big Movie new Classic Series at Landmark’s Magnolia in the West Village, 3699 McKinney Ave. Sponsored by Dallas Voice. Screens at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m.

LECTURE
Lee Berger. The lead scientist who recently discovered a new branch of hominids, Homo naledi, will give his first North American lecture about the find at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, 2201 N. Field St. 7 p.m. $25. PerotMuseum.org.

THURSDAY 10.01
COMMUNITY

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**SUNDAY BUFFETS**
1pm

**ANOTHER HOMO |** Lee Berger, who led the team that discovered possible ‘missing link’ homo naledi, gives his first North American lecture since the discovery at the Perot Museum Wednesday.

**THEATER**

**BROADCAST**
*Project Runway.* The latest season of competing designers is underway. Lifetime at 8 p.m.

**CABARET**
Judy Chamberlain Jazz. The jazz vocalist’s weekly cabaret performance in the back room of Zippers Hideaway, 3333 N. Fitzhugh St. 9 p.m.

numerous parties, celebrities, cookouts, pool parties and more, many divided into “for him” and “for her” categories. For a complete schedule of events, visit DallasSouthernPride.com.

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I don’t get it. It happens all of the time, but I still don’t get it. All too often when I tell a straight man, woman or couple that I’m lesbian, I get invited to “join them” or asked if he/she/they can “watch.” Ewww.

I try to seem flattered. It means they think I’m attractive or sexy or something, right? But it feels gross. It feels like my sexuality is a perversion. Or, at the very least, it feels like I’m a sideshow act or an exotic delicacy to be enjoyed by onlookers. What it doesn’t feel like is that my sexuality is equal to and as “real” as, their own.

I want to think it’s about curiosity and openness. I want to think its about a straight man respecting his female partner’s interest in exploring her bisexuality or even lesbianism. I want to think that they’re wanting to explore their own boundaries, to expand their understanding of sex and sexuality and the many ways it can be expressed.

But I’m afraid it’s that lesbians are still considered “pretend,” like we’re dick-desirers in waiting or, at the very least, we are still on the planet for straight male pleasure, still under the thumb of the male gaze. If only we saw what “real sex” looks like! If only we were “hot enough” for men to want us! If only.

In other words, to be lesbian is to be broken or less-than. It makes me wince.

I am fearful of that because I still hear straight men say, “Why do they have to look like dudes?” and “How can she be gay — she’s so pretty!” It’s as if either they get to dictate the standard of beauty and/or if someone meets their standard, they should be granted sexual access to that person.

It’s an extension of rape culture, to put it honestly — woman-as-object. A woman is to be looked at, taken, used as sexual fantasy despite her sexual orientation, despite her choice.

Here’s the thing: Even if it’s “meant as a compliment” (which is often the explanation given for offering such an invitation just as it is given for catcalling or other harassment), it isn’t one. It just isn’t. It’s creepy and gross and no lesbian wants to be a straight couple’s third and no lesbian couple wants to “let you watch.”

And if you don’t believe me, allow me to turn the tables for you. A gay couple walks up to a straight man and says, “Can we watch you and your girlfriend/wife have sex? I think it’s so hot what y’all do in bed.” The gay couple would very likely be in danger of at least verbal (if not physical) abuse. If something doesn’t work when you flip it on its head, then it doesn’t work at all.

We have to stop treating sexuality that is different from our own as less than or as some sort of novelty. Sexuality is sexuality. All of it. All the vanilla and the kink. All the publicly approved of and doomed to the closet. All of the mixes and matches and permutations.

We don’t raise our own identity by putting down the identities of others and when straight people assume that lesbian woman want to hook up with or perform for them, they are devaluing us as people — sexually and otherwise.

Treat others as you would like to be treated. Don’t say something you wouldn’t want your momma to overhear. Would you want someone talking to your mom, wife, friend, sister, partner (fill-in-the-blank) like that? Think before you speak. Turn the tables. Pick your cliche. The message is all the same. It’s time we start respecting each other and one another’s choices. It might seem like a lark to the asker. But to those of us being asked, there is nothing fun about it.

Jenny Block is the author of the new book O Wow! Discovering Your Ultimate Orgasm. Have a question about sex you want Jenny to address? Email it to GinOnGirlsJenny@gmail.com.

Photo courtesy StephGrantPhotography.com
Making the SCENE the week of Sept. 25–Oct. 1:

- Alexandre's: Filter Kings on Friday, Jason Huff on Saturday, Chris Chrism on Wednesday, So Strung Out on Thursday.

- Brick/Joe's: Dallas Southern Pride Show with Suki the Furyan and the Beat King hosted by Ida Mae Watergate on Friday.

- Changes: Boys vs. Girls: Devil Wears Prada, an evening of turnabouts at 9 p.m. on Friday.

- Club Reflection: Trinity River Bears meeting at 2:30 p.m. and cookout at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Imperial Court Mr. and Miss Imperial Pride Pageant on Sunday at 6 p.m.

- Dallas Eagle: The North Texas Council of Clubs presents a candidate show for Ms. Fall Frolick at 7 p.m. on Friday. National Leather Association Dallas presents Leather Perspectives from 1:30-5 p.m. on Saturday. Eagle Employee Turn-a-bout Show fundraiser for Resource Center Food Pantry from 7-10 p.m. on Saturday.

- Round-Up Saloon: Sasha Leigh Chambers hosts Project Funway finale on Monday at 9 p.m.

- Sue Ellen's: Country Night with Barefoot Hippies on the main stage at 9 p.m. on Friday, Women's Chorus of Dallas LifeWalk team Zumba at 2 p.m. and Kickback at 10 p.m. on Saturday.

- Woody's Sports & Video Bar: Atlanta at Dallas on Woody's HD at noon on Sunday.

To view more Scene photos, go to DallasVoice.com/category/photos. Scene Photographer: Kat Haygood.
Scenes from Dallas Pride
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**Join us for Catholic Mass for the LGBT community First Sunday of each month Dignity Dallas Mass held at CATHEDRAL OF HOPE Interfaith Peace Chapel, Lower Level dignitydallas@hotmail.com 972-729-9572 www.dignitydallas.net**

**Pegasus Squares,** an LGBT Square Dance Club, meets every Sunday from 2:30pm-4:30pm at the Dallas School of Burlesque, 2924 Main St. Dallas. Beginner lessons start in October. Contact Rob Miller at 682-238-3442 for more info. or visit pegasus-squares.com.

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**The Thrill of the Right**

**Solution on page XX**

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10 Ty with a big stick
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60 Tutti-frutti holder
61 Japanese poem
62 Vows now legal for the LGBT community
63 Got a little behind
64 Gawks at
65 It’s for Colette

Down
1 Where a cobbler puts the tongue
2 Express ride
3 Opening amount
4 What a cowboy shoots off
5 007 portrayer Timothy
6 Brigham Young man, for one
7 Disney’s Mickey and Minnie, e.g.
8 Tavern order
9 Swine cooler?
10 Reproduced nonheterosexually
11 Jackie’s designer
12 Pasolini’s well
13 Wild male
14 Cagney’s TV partner
15 Not straight
16 Bars for gay chefs
17 Where to see Modern Family
18 Cagney’s TV partner
19 Elizabeth of Transamerica
20 Title start of a rock anthem used without permission at a rally for 49-Across
21 Murphy Brown’s TV show
22 Something to talk about
24 Shaft from way back
25 Petty of A League of Their Own
26 Has the big O
27 Let up
28 Spanish castle city
29 Gay rodeo target
30 Beach birds
31 Controversial path for same-sex partners, once
32 Perform, to Shakespeare
34 Shrek and others
37 Transvestite boast?
38 Golden years org.
39 Tickled pink
44 Blew it
45 Foppish
46 Sacred chest
48 Glenn who played for the Dodgers
49 Style of many South Beach buildings
50 Openly confess
51 It crosses Hollywood
52 Word with Mary
53 Expressed, as farewell
54 Love of Lesbos
55 Right on a map
57 Comedienne Margaret
58 Fall behind

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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**Co-Dependents Anonymous (CoDA)** is a Twelve Step Fellowship of men and women whose common purpose is recovery from codependence and the development and maintenance of healthy relationships. CoDA meetings in the area meet:
• St. Thomas Episcopal Church 6525 Inwood Road (Inwood at Mockingbird) Dallas, Texas 75209
• LAMBDAGroup 6:30 PM, Friday; 1 hour OAK LAWN CoDA GROUP 7:30 PM, Wed; 1 1/2 hours Meeting Types: Open, Sharing, Steps, Welcoming to all, Safe for GLBT

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