History in Full Color

For the first time in Connecticut, a youth camp highlights the population and history of black and brown LGBTQ+ individuals.

The Marsha P. Johnson summer youth camp was the first of its kind in the state.

ALSO INSIDE:
• Mr. and Miss Gay New Haven returns this summer
• PRIDE New Haven celebrates 20 years: A Preview
• A major victory for trans people in CT prisons
Welcome to our second issue! As I said previously, we expect this fresh effort to bring a print publication to Connecticut's LGBTQ+ community will evolve as we find our footing. We were excited to hear from those of you who found the publication and read our first issue, and appreciate the feedback you've provided around the issue - it helps us as we build the publication.

We're deep into summer now, which means a few things. First is that summer camps are in session. One exciting development about this summer is that some very motivated people pulled together our state's first LGBTQ+ youth summer camp focused on black and brown individuals and history. We have a report back from one of the organizers of the camp, who shares what was accomplished in the week-long offering.

For some, summer is a time to applaud Connecticut taking another step toward normalizing rights for members of our community. This time, it was a law allowing transgender individuals in prison to be placed in a facility that matches their gender identity. Reed Miller applauds Connecticut taking another step forward a person who has long been fighting for the rights of our LGBTQ+ community. This time, it was a law authored by members of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut that raised thousands of dollars for the Pride Center's scholarship funds, as well as the Stetson Library branch of the New Haven Public Library.

As I said at the start of this letter, your feedback is valuable. We want to hear what's working - and what's not. Email us at nhglcc@gmail.com and let us know what you want to see in these pages!

Finally, in the excitement of getting the first issue out the door, we didn't put any information in here about how to advertise! Our next issue will also double advertise! Our next issue will also double the number of paid opportunities will be available in some cases. Thank you for picking up this issue of Centerline, and we hope you enjoy what this issue - and our community - has to offer.

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An important victory in CT for trans people in prison

by Reed Miller

Trans people who are kept behind bars in Connecticut can now be placed in the facility that matches their gender identity. According to the Hartford Courant, “In addition to housing, it also gives inmates the right to be searched by a correction officer who matches their self-identified gender, to be addressed in a manner consistent with their gender identity and have access to commissary items, such as clothing, that matches their gender identity.”

Following a wave of anti-trans initiatives around the country, this is very good news as it sets a promising precedent. Jennifer Levi and her team at GLAD should be applauded.

“I’d like to tell you why this matters to me. I grew up outside of Rochester, NY, and went to college in nearby Buffalo. I headed back to Rochester in 2009 with my name change documents to request that the DMV issue me a license with my correct gender marker on it, which fortunately they did with little fuss. (Getting my next university to do the same for my ID was a bit trickier — I made sure the administrators regretted asking me casually if I “had the surgery.”) I’ve had to fight for access to medical and mental healthcare from time to time as well, but aside from that, there have been few institutional roadblocks for me as I transitioned. Did I mention I’m an over-educated white man and from an affluent suburb? I’m sure that has had nothing to do with it...

Around the time I headed over to the love for that complicated city, I call her Queen City Shay. Although we are about the same age, while I’ve been traveling and studying, Shay has been coming up with clever ways to survive inside the variety of men’s prisons she’s been transferred to. Depending on the permissions du jour, I can occasionally send her art supplies beyond a ball point pen. She creates expressive pieces about other trans women she knows inside, tattoo designs, or another favorite: sports cars. Check out onthelineart.com to see some of her work, like the piece included in this article, which represents her and another trans woman taking in the sunlight together.

When I go to visit a couple times a year, I buy her chocolate from the vending machine, sit facing the specified direction, ask about the latest crushes she’s spotted on the yard and how her transition is going. Then I wait for the guards to bark at us visitors to leave, and pass through the clanking steel doors, down the razor wire tunnel.

After a drawn-out struggle, Shay gained access to hormone replacement therapy. So now, she’s in a men’s prison, wearing the assigned men’s clothing, and experiencing bodily changes associated with another round of puberty. When I went through my own second puberty, I had support groups, online forums, respectful friends, and a loving family. She had attempted to start support groups, but it’s up to the whim of the warden and the availability and willingness of practitioners nearby to facilitate.

I’m involved in social justice activism, nationally with an LGBTQ/HIV+ prisoner support and solidarity group, Black & Pink, and locally with Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ). Civil disobedience confronting the prison industrial complex is the likeliest way I’d end up behind bars. I’ve avoided intentional arrest so far, in part because I’m very unsure how I’d manage as a trans man in jail. Trans men I know who’ve done time in women’s prisons report continual harassment which has strained their already fragile self-confidence. From our membership survey, Coming Out of Concrete Closets, we know that trans people face extreme levels of multiple forms of abuse while incarcerated.

Enabling trans people to be housed in a binary-gendered prison** that most closely aligns with their gender identity could mean significantly less emotional, physical, and sexual harm is done to them. Access to gender-affirming clothing and being called by appropriate pronouns is also a serious win. Speaking about this policy with Patricia Trimble, a powerhouse trans woman who tirelessly organizes for change while locked up in Missouri, she thinks that trans awareness education will be a key component for its success. A vindictive guard can place a transphobic prisoner in a cell with a trans person, with predictable consequences. Planning for prison-wide trans 101 trainings could pre-empt some of the possible negative outcomes.

At the end of the day, while we celebrate this victory, we need to remember that the people we’re discussing are being treated like animals, kept in literal cages, for years on end. Also, note that the “right to be searched” by someone who matches their gender identity is merely a preference in who will legally sexually assault them. This is not a just or moral way to treat human beings, it’s simply slightly less inhumane. We can, we must, and we will do better.

*You can find a prisoner penpal or two at blackandpink.org! **The answer is not to build trans & non-binary prisons. When you build them, they fill up. More beds = more arrests.

"Queen City Shay" creates art in prison. She identifies as female, and now has access to hormone replacement therapy, but continues to be assigned to men's prison. In Connecticut, a new law allows trans individuals to be assigned to a prison that matches their gender identity, an important step forward in trans rights efforts.

DMV, I started writing to a few LGBTQ penpals in prison, having connected to them through the Transmission Prison Project. Shaylanna had a rough childhood in Buffalo and we bonded over our
Pride in the Park

Triangle Community Center's annual festival takes over Mathews Park in Norwalk each year and brings with it a fun mix of entertainment, community and LGBTQ+ pride.

Photos by RahVisions
twentieth century, aided by documentaries like “Paris is Burning” (1990), drag sensation RuPaul Charles, and songs like “Vogue” (1990) by Madonna. Drag and LGBTQ+ performance art began to be not just a competition but a performance for entertainment purposes at clubs across the country. During the rise of ball culture in the 1970s, audiences also had their eyes on the Miss America pageant, where winners were defining themselves as educated and professional. Soon, modeled after Miss America, LGBTQ+ culture and pageant culture started to mix together with the start of national LGBTQ+ pageants.

Nationally, there are several large drag pageant systems: Miss Gay America, the first pageant system, was established in 1972, and Mister Gay All-American was founded in 1983. Miss Gay USofA, a separate pageant system, was first held in 1986, open to all biological men ages 21 and up, and Mister Gay USofA started in 2009. Many of the national pageants such as Miss Gay USofA barred transgender people, and so in 1980 the Miss Continental Pageant System was born, accepting of all gender identities. The pageant system Entertainer of the Year was founded in 1991, owned by a nonprofit organization called The SLS Pride Foundation, supporting causes including the arts and education. Finally and most recently, All American Goddess was

Off a Successful First Year, New Haven Pageant Expands

by Rebecca Spadacenta

New Haven drag queen Sylvia Heart, also known as Connecticut’s Barbie, is planning a special event for this year’s PRIDE New Haven celebration: Mr and Miss Gay New Haven Pageant - an LGBTQ+ pageant for Connecticut residents ages 21 and over. What started out as a fun idea to fill time between performers at last year’s PRIDE Kick-Off Event, has now developed into a full blown event in itself. “A happy accident,” says producer and host Sylvia Heart. LGBTQ+ pageants are not a new phenomenon. Before large organized events of today, Underground Ballroom culture emerged in the 1920s, where individuals could perform in drag in a safe queer space. In the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the Stonewall Riots and lack of representation of the POC in mainstream LGBTQ+ culture, the Harlem Ballroom blossomed a new element of competition, where participants would walk the runway, showing their outfits, personas, and performance styles for prizes. At some of the Harlem Balls there would be upward of 150 awards in an evening.

The popularity of drag and ball culture grew towards the end of the twentieth century, aided by documentaries like “Paris is Burning” (1990), drag sensation RuPaul Charles, and songs like “Vogue” (1990) by Madonna. Drag and LGBTQ+ performance art began to be not just a competition but a performance for entertainment purposes at clubs across the country. During the rise of ball culture in the 1970s, audiences also had their eyes on the Miss America pageant, where winners were defining themselves as educated and professional. Soon, modeled after Miss America, LGBTQ+ culture and pageant culture started to mix together with the start of national LGBTQ+ pageants.

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When & Where

This year there is a preliminary competition, which will take place on Friday, August 17, ahead of the main event on Friday, September 14. Both events will take place at Partners Cafe and start at 10:30 p.m.

For details, visit the NHPC website: http://www.newhavenpridecenter.org/programming/pride.
founded in 2006, requiring contestants to have been born male but not barring any outside gender expression, surgery or hormones.

Besides the large national organizations, many pageants exist in local spaces. Connecticut boasts three years of the Mr and Miss Gay Connecticut Pageant, and large surrounding cities such as Boston’s Pride Pageant and Providence’s Triple Crown Pageant host LGBTQ+ inclusive events. Now, in New Haven, Sylvia Heart is creating an amazing, accessible and inclusive pageant as part of our twentieth year celebrating PRIDE New Haven. At last year’s event, the first Mr and Miss Gay New Haven were crowned - Rob McMullin and Venus Neveah.

Heart herself has competed in one pageant, the 2017 Miss Fire Island Pageant in New York. She is modeling the Mr and Miss Gay New Haven pageant after her own experience, but with twists to how she wants it to run.

“My pageant, my rules. As far as my part goes, you can expect a fun and sassy show and some high glam mixed with a sailor mouth,” says Heart. “As far as the contestants go, who knows what they will come up with. Connecticut has some of the most creative and underrated drag, so the sky is the limit, and personally I am excited to see what people come up with.”

Mr and Miss Gay New Haven must have the smarts and poise to know who they are inside and out, someone with an amazing style and a personality to match. They must represent Pride, New Haven, and Connecticut the way they should be represented. “We aren’t looking for cookie cutter pageant-bread kings and queens,” exclaims Heart. “We want that special someone with an edge.”

The winners of Mr and Miss Gay New Haven do have responsibilities to uphold. They will be present and perform at the PRIDE Block Party following the pageant, and attend the pageant the following year to hand off the crown. They will also attend the New Haven Pride Center’s Dorothy Awards, a large annual soiree and fundraiser. Winners will wear their crown and sash to all events, representing themselves in a manner becoming of the titles they hold and will uphold the standards of love, honor, and respect.

An all-LGBTQ+ pageant like Mr and Miss Gay New Haven has great significance in that all are welcome and included. So come, have fun, be creative, and show your best self, and for the onlookers, be entertained and want to compete next year!
The annual fundraiser, organized by members of the Imperial Sovereign Court of All Connecticut, raised thousands of dollars for the Stetson Library branch of the New Haven Public Library, and the New Haven Pride Center's Scholarship Fund.

Photos: #NHVdrag by Daniel Eugene Photography
Celebrating 2 Decades of Pride in New Haven

by Patrick J Dunn

PRIDE New Haven is a visible infusion of LGBTQ+ celebratory programming that highlights the culture, art, and history of New Haven and Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ community. Through this high-visibility series of events over the course of the 4-day festival, we come together to turn downtown New Haven into a community-wide safe space for New Haven and Connecticut’s vastly diverse LGBTQ+ individuals.

PRIDE New Haven has a long tradition as being built by the community, for the community. Many of the planning committee members have served on the committee for years (or even a decade or more), and PRIDE New Haven has survived shifts in the economy and pride culture. Robb Bartolomeo and Gotham Citi Cafe have been involved since the beginning, and the New Haven Pride Center is heavily involved today, as it was 20 years ago at its founding.

Pride festivals have always been important to me, going back to when I moved to Connecticut at the age of 18. Sometimes I get asked “do we even need Pride Festival anymore?” In those moments, I am reminded of the scared 18-year-old that I was that felt comfortable for the first time in my life at my first pride; being around so many people that looked, acted, and loved like me was special. That is why we still need Prides, because they give our youth and our new to being out community members to have a safe place to express themselves.

Of all the Prides, PRIDE New Haven will always have a special place in my heart. It was at PRIDE New Haven that I attended my first gay event in New Haven over a decade ago, it was at PRIDE New Haven that my counterpart

2018 will mark the 20th anniversary of an official pride celebration in New Haven.

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Kiki Lucia had one of her first performances, and it was – and continues to be – at PRIDE New Haven where I look around and see my community laughing together, coming out as their authentic selves, and showing off their individual creative spirits.

PRIDE New Haven 2018 will feature a series of events meant to highlight and promote LGBTQ+ safe spaces throughout New Haven – whether it be our LGBTQ+ Bars, Gotham Citi Nightclub, Partners Café, and 168 York Street Café, LGBTQ+ owned business Lyric Hall Theater and Barracuda Bistro & Bar, or public spaces throughout downtown New Haven.

Some PRIDE 2018 Highlights are:

**Escapade: An Unusual Experience** returns to Lyric Hall Theater in the heart of Westville neighborhood. A creation by New Haven dancer/choroegrapher Luis Antonio, Escapade fuses drag, circus arts, dance, and music to tell stories of love, loss, and acceptance. Escapade will perform is special PRIDE edition on Thursday, September 13th; tickets will be $25 with discounts for students and Center Members.

**Mr & Miss Gay New Haven** competition invites drag queens, drag kings, bio divas, go-go dancers, and more to battle it out for the titles of Mr and Miss Gay New Haven. A pageant modeled after many of the national and regional pageant systems, contestants will strut their stuff and talents for the crowns. Free event takes place on Friday, September 14th at Partners Café and is hosted by Sylvia Heart.

**PRIDE March and Block Party** where we come together as a community to shout out our visibility with dozens of vendors, information booths, and food trucks, a big stage with performers from across Connecticut, AND many other fun filled activities these events invite us all to come together and enjoy a shared experience. Kick-off with the March through downtown New Haven at 3:00p and then join us for the Block Party at 4:00p on Saturday, September 15th on Center Street.

**PRIDE After Party** keeps the celebration going into the night after the Block Party and is held at the PRIDE presenting sponsor Gotham Citi Nightclub. With entertainment, dancing, and more all night long, it’s the not to miss party in town! **PRIDE Brunch** is always a lot of fun and has a long tradition of being a part of PRIDE New Haven’s weekend. This year we aren’t having one but TWO official brunches – the first is our Comedy Brunch at Barracuda Bistro & Bar featuring the talents of some of Connecticut’s fabulous comedians and the second is the Hearty Brunch at 116 Crown. Both brunches will take place on Sunday, August 16th.

**PRIDE Tea Dance** will feature multiple bands and musicians. Dance under the early evening breeze at New Haven’s oldest LGBTQ+ establishment York Street Café on Sunday, August 16th.

For more information, visit: [http://www.newhavenpridecenter.org/programming/pride/](http://www.newhavenpridecenter.org/programming/pride/)
By Jeremy Cajigas

During the week of June 25th to June 29th, a collaboration of four organizations got together to host the very first black and brown LGBTQ+ summer camp in Connecticut. Understanding that with the times that we are living in, it is very important that we stand in solidarity with communities who are most impacted by the systems that oppress them and queer youth of color are almost at the bottom of the totem pole.

With queer youth of color needing a safe space to get together to talk about their issues and begin to organize around them, the Citywide Youth Coalition, Hearing Youth Voices, Grow Hartford, and Planned Parenthood of Southern New England did their best to provide that space for youth. Understanding that with the times that we are living in, it is very important that we stand in solidarity with communities who are most impacted by the systems that oppress them and queer youth of color are almost at the bottom of the totem pole.

During this week-long experience, we dove into the history of black and brown folks in the LGBTQ+ movement and discussed icons like Marsha P. Johnson, who the camp is named after. We also talked about Stonewall and the Gene Compトン’s uprising. We watched documentaries like “KIKI” to learn about the underground ballroom community which has also served as a safe space for queer youth of color since before the 80’s. We talked about current issues affecting queer POCs like homelessness, mental health, mass murdering of trans woman of color, the reality behind pride now, racism, and the abuse and rejection we face for being queer POCs within our communities and outside of them. As a
Attendees of the Children of Marsha P. Johnson camp for queer black and brown youth participate in a group discussion.

group, we looked into the intersectionalities within the different movements like the queer liberation movement, immigrant rights movements, and the black lives matter movement.

Our very last day together, we took a self-care trip together to Ocean Beach in New London and spent the whole day together enjoying each other and being queer folks of color unapologetically out in the open.

Comments from some of the Campers

What made you want to come to camp?

Mia: Being a black Queer Woman and wanting to learn more about queer history from both a revolutionary standpoint and the ballroom culture, but also wanting to connect with other queer folks of color.

Charlie: I wanted to come to the camp because I don’t often get to be in LGBTQ spaces, especially for people of color.

Narlin: I saw that it was only for Queer POCs so I knew that it was a relatively safe space for me. Trying to decipher your sexuality while being a person of color is a challenge outside of camp. I thought that camp could help me, help me heal from the traumas that someone who identifies the same way I do has been through. And it did!

How did it feel to be in that space?

Mia: I found the answer to something I always knew I needed but never knew was there. I was glad to be able to be
listened to and be able to listen and learn as well. I finally found my Village.

Charlie: It felt relaxing and natural to be in that sort of space.


What impact did the camp have on you?

Mia: I was happy to be in that space with everyone and finally be myself. On the last day I felt a bit sad to have to depart from the people I grew so close to that week, but I was excited to know that we will continue to meet on a monthly basis.

Charlie: The camp made me feel empowered and educated.

Narlin: The camp had a very positive impact. I left knowing I have a community of people I could turn to. I left knowing that all the things I’ve been through are real and valid.

I left knowing that I could get through this world that wasn’t made for us to survive, but that I could survive.

What did you enjoy most?

Mia: Our beach day was the best to be able to go as a community together and be queer and proud and not be ashamed by the looks or comments of others.

Charlie: I enjoyed creating connections with people just like me.

Narlin: The part that I enjoyed the most, I would say would probably be meeting people. Being in a white dominated space made me feel alone and scared once I arrived the first day of camp I didn’t feel alone anymore.

If you had the opportunity to do it again, would you?

Mia: 1,000 times YES!!!

Charlie: Yes, of course!

Narlin: In a heartbeat!

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