

The Official Newspaper of Alfred University

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Tennessee Aims to Criminalize Gender-Affirming Healthcare and Drag

Alyra Rain, Staff Writer

On March 2nd, 2023, Tennessee governor Bill Lee signed a bill into law that makes public drag performances illegal. The law classifies “male or female impersonators” as an “adult cabaret performance” and bans them from public property or anywhere they could potentially be seen by minors. People convicted of their first offense would face misdemeanor charges, punishable by up to a year in prison, while anyone convicted a second time would face felony charges and could be jailed for up to six years.

Many organizations, such as the ACLU, have publicly condemned this law by saying that its terms are vague and that it deliberately seeks to harm the LGBTQIA+ community. The law makes no differentiation between people in drag and transgender people, meaning that it would be possible for a trans person in Tennessee to be arrested for doing anything that could possibly be classified as “harmful to minors.” There is also no distinction between a “male or female impersonator” and an actor, meaning someone performing a role of a different gender in a play could receive criminal charges.

“The language is vague enough that... They could say I, just going about my daily life, am an ‘impersonator,’” said Dahron Johnson, a trans

outreach worker, in an interview with the New York Times.

Performers across America have been affected by this law. A New York drag queen who goes by Monalisa said that, “I’m performing not for myself but for my sisters and brothers in the LGBTQIA community in Tennessee—legislation was just passed that will essentially force our community back into the closet.”

Gov. Bill Lee also recently signed a ban into law on gender-affirming healthcare being given to minors in the state.

The law states, “that medical procedures that alter a minor’s hormonal balance... are harmful to a minor when these medical procedures are performed for the purpose of enabling a minor to identify with... a purported identity inconsistent with the minor’s sex.”

This bill only states that gender-affirming care is harmful for trans children and teenagers. Cisgender minors are still permitted to receive hormone therapies, which are common among both cis and trans teenagers. Gender-affirming care for trans teenagers has been shown to reduce suicide rates by up to 73%. Groups like the ACLU and the Trevor Project, a nonprofit focused on suicide prevention for queer youth, have



Above: Drag queens and allies advocate against Tennessee’s legislation.

condemned this law.

The Trevor Project stated that, “decisions about transgender medical care should be made between trans patients, their doctors, and their families. Politicians have no business deciding these personal matters.”

Despite the 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, Tennessee also recently passed a bill allowing individual county clerks to deny marriage licenses to queer couples based on religious beliefs. It also threatens the rights of interracial

couples, whose marriages were legalized nationwide in the 1967 Supreme Court case *Loving v. Virginia*, and anyone else whose relationship could potentially go against a clerk’s personal “conscience or religious beliefs,” according to the language of the bill.

Tennessee’s recent new laws are indicative of a wider pattern across the United States. 487 anti-trans bills have been introduced in a total of 46 states in 2023 alone.

As of the publishing of this article, a federal judge in Tennessee temporarily blocked the drag ban.

Controversy Re-Ignited: The Nashville Shooting

Alyra Rain, Staff Writer



Above: A police car outside of Covenant Presbyterian Church School.

On Monday, March 27th, six people were killed in a shooting at a K-12 school in Nashville, Tennessee. The Covenant School is a Christian private school associated with the Presbyterian Church in America. Three nine-year-old students were killed, as well as a substitute teacher, the head

administrator, and a custodian.

The suspect was identified first as a “young female teenager” and then as 28-year-old Audrey Hale, who attended the school and is believed to be a transgender man known as Aiden.

Queer communities, while mourning the losses in Nashville, are already

fearing anti-trans repercussions as a result, despite the fact that over 97% of mass shootings in the United States are perpetrated by cisgender men.

Republican Congress member Marjorie Taylor Greene, who previously introduced legislation to make gender-affirming care for trans people a felony, tweeted, “How much hormones like testosterone and medications for mental illness was the transgender Nashville school shooter taking? Everyone can stop blaming guns now.”

The shooter utilized at least three weapons, including two assault rifles and a pistol. Investigators said that at least two of the guns were obtained legally in the Nashville area.

President Biden called on Congress to ban certain types of assault rifles, which he has done many times without success since assuming the Presidency.

On Tuesday, the day after the

shooting, he said that he, “can’t do anything [about limiting gun violence] except plead with the Congress to act reasonably.”

Biden also ordered American flags to be flown at half mast until March 31st “as a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless acts of violence perpetrated on March 27, 2023, in Nashville, Tennessee.”

Social Justice Spotlight: Deeper Context

Floyd Kessler, Guest Submission

DEEPER CONTEXT

An Artist Talk with Floyd Kessler

An intimate look into my portfolio as an Alfred student, and how my Trans and Jewish Identity play a role in understanding current events and modern culture

April 6, 2-3pm
Holmes Auditorium

A Social Justice
Thesis
Presentation



Floyd Kessler, Senior Painter, Class of 2023, will be giving an artist talk as part of his Social Justice Studies minor on April 6th. For posterity, this is Kessler's artist statement.

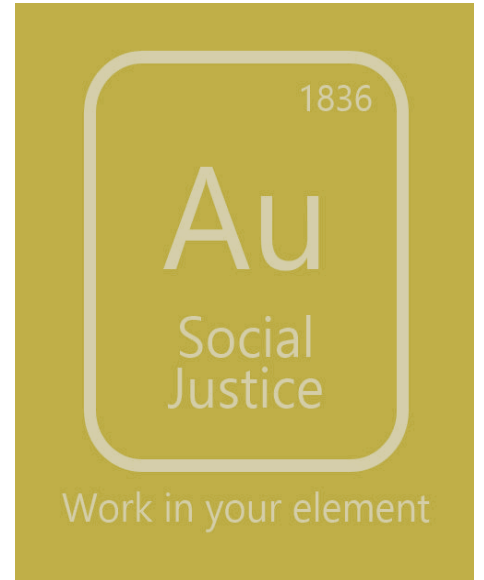
"The talk, titled Deeper Context, centers around my artist portfolio, and how my personal identity as an out queer and Jewish person helps me to relate and reflect on current events and modern culture.

"Through making art, I am able to interrogate and process the oppressive structures that frame the intersection of my identities as deviant.

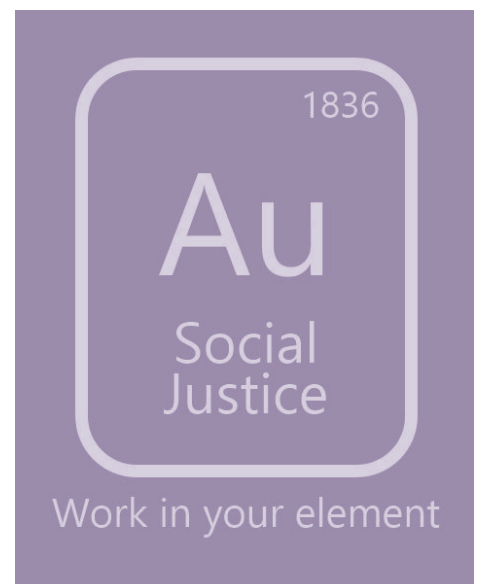
As an artist making reflective work, it is important for me to understand and be in touch with current events, while also understanding and incorporating relevant historical elements.

"It is my hope that by sharing my unique history, and my passion for creating this body of work, I am able to develop empathy not only for my experience but of others within my communities with viewers of many backgrounds.

"I greatly look forward to sharing my artwork with you, as well as my story. Thank you."



Icon Credit: Dr. Beth Johnson



What Hot Dog Day Means to Alfred

Claire Squicciarini, Staff Writer

This is the 51st year of Alfred celebrating Hot Dog Day. The origins of this day are not pinpointed as it is celebrated in places as far as Canada and Australia. Hot Dog Day started in Alfred in 1972 by Alfred University students Mark O'Meara and Eric Vaughn. The festivities in Alfred include a parade down Main Street, vending booths, bouncy castles, wiener dog racing, a concert (this year's being The Plain White T's), and much more, including lots and lots of hot dogs.

Although Alfred is not the first or only place to celebrate Hot Dog Day, it has become a special day in Alfred's heart, especially for the students.

"I am excited to see people doing people things and having fun," first-year student Abby Scanlan said.

Hot Dog Day has become a celebration of being done with the school

year. Students can kick back and enjoy the events after working hard during the semester.

"I just hope I get the full experience. I was a COVID freshie and it wasn't occurring then, and last year it wasn't on Main Street," says Alfred University senior Rachel Fleischman.

Sadly, many students have yet to experience the full range of Hot Dog Day due to the effects of COVID. However, this year the celebration will be the closest to normal it has been in three years. This may be the last Hot Dog Day for the students who have missed out, but luckily they still get to have this amazing experience before they graduate.

Another great aspect about Hot Dog Day is the opportunity it brings for current students and alumni. Many aspects of Hot Dog Day are student-run, which allows students

to show off their talents that they are proud of, and clubs and organizations they are proud to be a part of. As for the alumni, they can come back to enjoy the festivities and reminisce on the memories of the good old days.

Unbeknownst to some, the day following Hot Dog Day, the women's soccer program hosts an alumni game.

"When it comes to our current student athletes, it gives them the opportunity to build relationships with former players who went through the same experiences," says Alfred University Women's Soccer Coach Craig Yanni.

Hot Dog Day has been an amazing celebration in Alfred since its creation. For alumni and students alike, the day is jam-packed full of activities and exciting experiences. It allows for the students and people in Alfred to

come together as a community and have some fun.



Look for the Light: A Retrospective on HBO's *The Last of Us*

Sam Sage, Editor-in-Chief

The critically acclaimed and widely watched HBO show *The Last of Us* had its finale on March 12th, 2023, leaving old and new fans alike heartbroken and ready for the second season.

Maintaining a 90% and above critics' score on sites such as Rotten Tomatoes, IMDb, and Metacritic, the show was a success in the eyes of many. While some viewers were quick to shun the show for portraying LGBTQ+ relationships in the form of Frank (Murray Bartlett, *White Lotus*) and Bill (Nick Offerman, *Parks and Recreation*) and Ellie and Riley, across the board it seemed that Naughty Dog and HBO greatly succeeded in bringing *The Last of Us* from the video game world into Hollywood.

Beloved and infamous characters such as Bill, David, and Marlene were amplified by showrunners Craig Mazin (*Chernobyl*) and Neil Druckmann (*The Last of Us Part II*), who took the source material and realized that some characterizations needed to be made more pertinent and powerful—limiting any cognitive dissonance between players and viewers.

Fans of the game knew Bill as a brash, agoraphobic character who was likely homosexual, and audiences hardly knew Frank as anyone other than Bill's "partner" that hung himself. When the episode "Long, Long Time" premiered, everyone was curious as to how Frank and Bill's story would ultimately depart from the game. Most viewers were delighted and heartbroken at the authentic and tender exploration of a gay relationship during an apocalypse. Organizations like PinkNews and GLAAD were quick to make the relationship well-known and applauded. *The Last of Us* is not new to canonically queer relationships, with

the video game *The Last of Us Part II* having a central storyline between Ellie and her partner Dina. However, Frank and Bill's relationship was an elevated take and much needed representation in an industry that has a habit of "killing its gays."



Above: Joel and Ellie riding from Wyoming to Colorado in the episode "Kin"
Below: Frank (left) and Bill (right) share a tender moment in "Long, Long Time"



The exploration of Ellie and her friend Riley (Storm Reid, *Euphoria*) stayed relatively the same from the *The Last of Us: Left Behind* game to the HBO show, with the writers adding a little more context into their interactions to better serve the idea of a youthful, lesbian relationship.

On the other side of representation, viewers met the highly contro-

versial and infamous character of David (Scott Shepard, *Bridge of Spies*). Despite having little-to-no content warnings prior to the show, fans of the game were quick to go to social media to warn new fans that the episode featuring David portrayed

material and giving an honest, and horrific, look at the before, during, and aftermath of such an event.

Going back to the roots, in the finale, viewers met Ellie's mother Anna (Ashley Johnson, *Critical Role*) and learned how Ellie became immune to the Cordyceps virus. In these same scenes, fans were shown how the Firefly group leader Marlene (Merle Dandridge, *Greenleaf*) came to care for Ellie. While Anna and Marlene's relationship is not incredibly fleshed out or specific, the further characterization of Marlene allows for Joel's inevitable dilemma to help the Fireflies or help himself a little more difficult for some audience members to answer for themselves.

Looking ahead at season two, HBO has already renewed the show with Mazin and Druckmann beginning to write the script. They say that it is possible that the second game, *The Last of Us Part II*, will serve as the show's second and third seasons due to the heavy material and lengthy gameplay associated with the property. Bella Ramsey and Pedro Pascal, as Ellie and Joel, respectively, are still set to star in the second season. Fans of the game have begun guessing who will play Abby and Lev, central characters in the *Part II* storyline. Lev's original voice and motion capture actor, Ian Alexander, has used their platform on TikTok to promote the show and has encouraged HBO to look at them to reprise their role as Lev—citing the importance of having trans actors play trans roles.

The second season of *The Last of Us* will likely not premiere until late 2024, but Pascal has been quoted as assuming that filming will begin later this year.



Left: Joel, Tess (Anna Torv), and Ellie head to the Boston capitol building in "Infected"



Middle: Sam (Keivonn Woodard) shows Ellie the ASL sign for 'Endure and Survive' in the episode of the same name



Right: Ellie reads Riley some puns in the episode "Left Behind"

The Decline of Saxon Spirit...Grievous or Good Riddance?

Anonymous, Guest Submission

This semester has seen somewhat of a resurgence in campus activities participation, from Team Trivia hosted by the Writing Center to Rochester trips to see shows like *Beetlejuice* and *Hadestown* led by the CSI. Still, a complaint echoes around campus: What happened to student participation? More than a few clubs have gone to the wayside in the past few years, and the ones that remain alive are often gasping for air. Turnout at student activity events has often been shockingly low despite incentives like prizes and free food.

Many might attribute this decline in campus participation to the COVID-19 pandemic; the university shut down, then moved to mostly remote classes and remote activities, and strict CDC protocols were with us up until a semester or two ago. It's true that the pandemic might have allowed us to be more well-adjusted to spending time either by ourselves or with a smaller circle of friends than we were previously in the habit

of prior to March 2020, but campus admins and faculty say that AU's campus life had begun to flounder long before COVID.

Old Fiat Lux News articles and withered alums tell ye olde tales of riotous St. Patrick's Day parades, bustling Greek life (which is no longer relevant at Alfred), and a campus-wide vested interest in activities. Now, although student organizations still carry on and accomplish many community and social events, the participation from the general student body and the public—that is, those who are not committed club members—is very low, and club members and officers, no matter how dedicated, are decidedly waning in numbers.

Another angle could be, as the Boomers say, “those darn phones,” or to put it more eloquently: the increased ability to communicate over the internet with more-accessible-than-ever-before technology, connecting people all over the world

across any amount of space instantly, allows individuals to form relationships and groups that better suit their current interests and social needs; thus, there may be decreased interest in physical social spaces, where etiquette norms and the luck of the draw are god. There is little-to-no control over your environment in many public settings, and perhaps the younger generations are opting for the safety and predictability of the internet.

One final factor is that in college settings specifically, there is a sort of “team spirit” that students need to adopt in order to fully enjoy the social benefits of the institution. Increased awareness of the pitfalls of herd mentality could be part of the reason that many people are opting for the perceived individual route—especially if your institution happens to perpetuate institutionalized discrimination, limit disability access, and refuse to address instances of racism. Student events depend heav-

ily on school funding and approval, and some students feel there is a lack of control in this area.

It's true that events full of empty chairs are disappointing for those (often students themselves) who have put effort into organizing it, but the blame may not lie entirely in an “antisocial student body.”

As students of Alfred University, which events will we choose to go to? Which organizations will we choose to support? And how will we build a campus life that is by the students and for the students that truly represent us?

Rich B*tch: For Mature Audiences Only

Sam Sage, Editor-in-Chief

The first days of April treated Alfred audiences to *Rich B*tch* by Rachel Lynett. Directed by Jonathan Ziese, assistant professor of theatre for AU, and starring Genesis Taina Luciano, Nkanyiso Dlamini, Stephanie Vargas, Shirite Westreich, and Erie Hammond, *Rich B*tch* is about a group of tough love, high status friends who knew each other in college and are now coming together to celebrate Emma (Dlamini)'s “bachelor” party.

Taking place in a five-star hotel in Las Vegas, audiences at Miller Theater watched as the friend group met and quickly self-destructed as each character brought their own secrets, trauma, and privileges to the table.

Topics like sexual violence, performative poverty, infidelity, marriage insecurity, race/gender/class intersectionality, and abortion carry the conversation over eight scenes—with the witty and bitchy banter to break up some of the more slow-paced and gutting exchanges.

Dani (Taina Luciano) is at the forefront of most of these exchanges, battling attacks (both perceived and legitimate) and dealing her

own. Opening and closing the play, the audience had their experience primarily painted by whatever Dani is doing or saying to move the story along. The Las Vegas party wouldn't have been the same without Dani, for better or for worse.

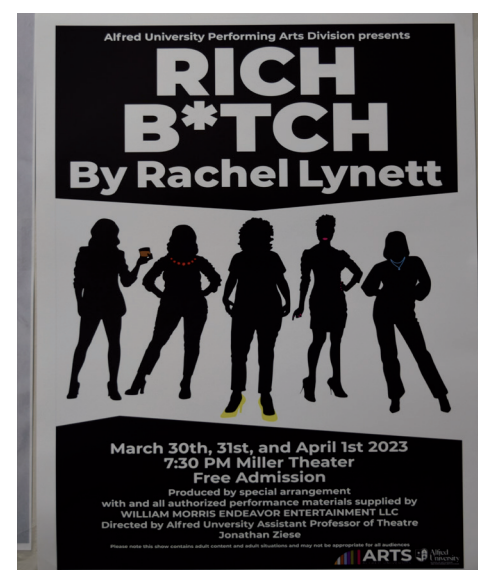
However, a part is often only as good as the ensemble. Izzy (Vargas) is played well, a woman caught between the past and future as she reconciles the present scenario of Dani versus Vivian (Westreich). Vivian is a more minor part, but Westreich doesn't let audiences forget she's there, in the ever-relatable position of being an after-thought in the grand scheme of another's life. Dlamini's Emma is boisterous and sympathetic, as many may not be able to relate to her position but can see why she is struggling in her rock-hard place dilemmas. Finally, Maddie (Hammond) is a well-meaning but brash woman that brings to light all of the questions of, “Why are these women still friends?” Hammond does well, though, in keeping her character memorable, if not infamously so, as the embodiment of the mistakes we see or hear about (or do) on a

daily basis.

In conclusion, despite slower portions and clunky transitions between taboo or rough topics, the actors and the creative use of props and positioning made *Rich B*tch* a more elevated experience than if it had just been words on a page.

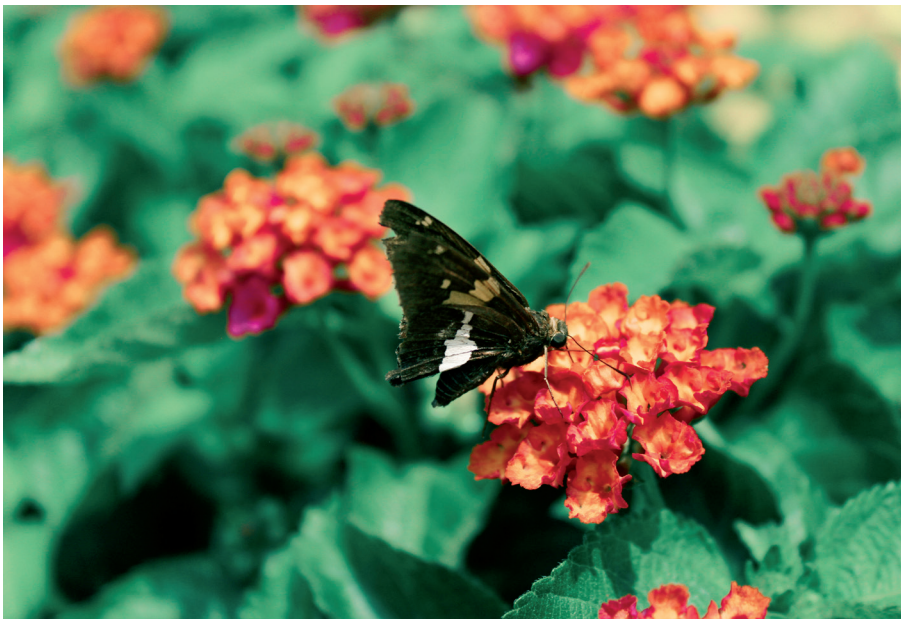
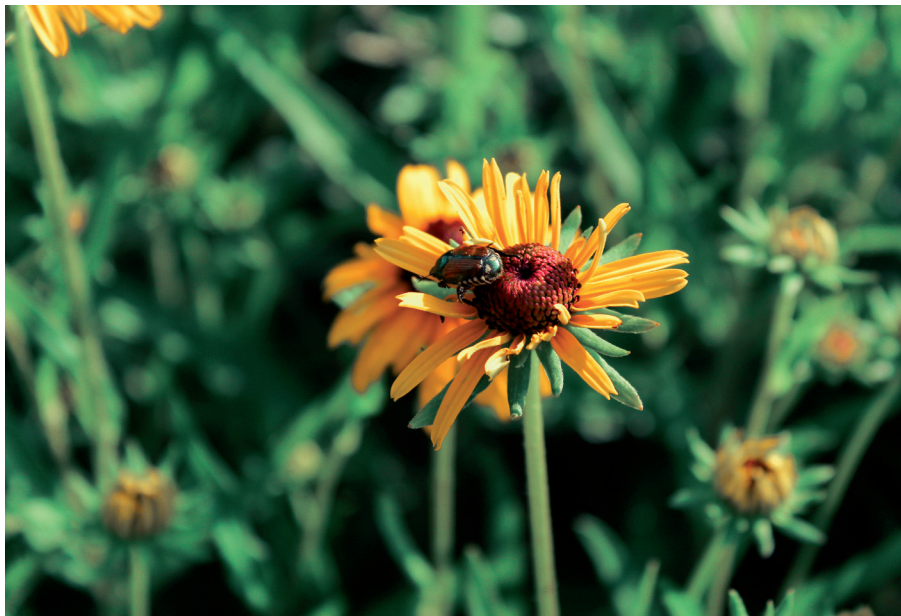
Below: (for left to right) Vargas, Westreich, Hammond, Dlamini, and Luciano get heated in scene two “Restaurant.”

Right: General poster for *Rich B*tch*.



Credit

Jason Crocker, Staff Photographer



Credit

Sam Sage, Editor-in-Chief



Credit

Jo Castine, Copy Editor





Eid Mubarak

Friday, April 21st

Cultural Eid Dinner with Guest Speaker Brother Mohammed

6:00 pm in the Knight Club

RSVP on AU Connect

FIAT LUX NEWS

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Positions for staff writers, photographers, editors, and more are available.

Email us at aufiatlux@gmail.com with questions or come to our weekly meetings on Fridays at 5:30pm in the Prunty-Russo Media Lab, Powell Campus Center to get involved.

Submissions to the FLN should be emailed to aufiatlux@gmail.com as attachments.

For articles, attach a word document or use the “insert files from drive” option in your gmail to attach a Google document. Name all files as “Your Name - File Name”. Please include your name and submission title in all submitted documents. Photos should be attached to emails and submitted as high resolution JPEGs or PNGs.

Make sure to include who took the photograph or where the photograph came from.

Front Cover Credit: Ellie Gamble



UNITY DAY 2023

CULTURAL FAIR WITH FOOD, MUSIC, AND ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY, APRIL 28TH
11 AM -2 PM

MIDNIGHT BREAKFAST

Monday, May 1st
10pm-12am
Ade Dining Hall

Take a study break and unwind before finals start on Wednesday



Use Board or Powell Swipes

NEW CLUB ALERT

ALFRED GOES GREEN

want to make a positive impact in Alfred? join us!

SEND MEMBERSHIP REQUESTS TO:
alfredgoesgreen@alfred.edu

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!
[@alfredgoesgreen](https://www.instagram.com/alfredgoesgreen)





FRIDAY, APRIL 28TH
LEAVING AT 5PM

PINE HILL HIKE

LEAD BY THE WILD LLC AND ASA

\$2 Movie Thursdays in Hornell

Check back weekly to see whats showing

Limited seats in the van or drive yourself

