

Special Issue!

outWord

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As we close out 2025, Sunburst Projects looks ahead with hope and a renewed commitment to the community we serve. The need for free, comprehensive HIV services continues to grow, and your support helps us show up for individuals and families impacted by HIV across Sacramento county every single day.

Community-based organizations are essential now more than ever. Your generosity strengthens our programs, expands access to life-changing care, and helps ensure that those affected by HIV receive the support they deserve.

This holiday season, please consider making a year-end gift to Sunburst Projects, and remember to support your local nonprofit organizations that uplift the Sacramento community. Your kindness truly makes a difference.

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World AIDS Day 2025 in Sacramento

by Paul Curtis, Sunburst Projects

The Sacramento HIV/AIDS community stepped forward again this year to recognize World AIDS Day 2025, designated on December 1st every year. Since 1988 it has been a day dedicated to raising awareness across the world on the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of the HIV virus while mourning those we have lost to the disease and honoring those still living with the virus. It has been recognized around the world by governments and communities until this year, when our very own federal government chose not to recognize the day and ordered federal employees not to post or do anything to honor the day.

HIV/AIDS affect roughly 40.8 million people with roughly 1.2 million being affected in the United States. In Sacramento County there were 4,747 people living with HIV in 2023, and 181 people were newly diagnosed with HIV. With recent attacks by the federal administration on vital programs that help support those who are affected, it is more important than ever to work with community partners to support and assist those who are living with HIV/AIDS, while also working to end the epidemic through prevention and education efforts.

In Sacramento World AIDS Day kicked off with a Press Conference at Sacramento City Hall co-sponsored by Mayor Pro Tem Eric Guerra and Councilmember Mai Vang. In addition to Mayor Pro Tem Guerra, also attending and speaking were Vice Mayor Karina Talamantes, County Supervisor Patrick Kennedy and City Council Members Caitly Maple, Phil Pluckebaum, Lisa Kaplan, and Roger Dickinson. Also attending and speaking were Rev. MacArthur Flournoy, Vice Chair of the Ryan White Planning Council, and Dr. Olivia Kasirye, Public Health Officer for Sacramento County. All of the speakers called out the loss of national recognition of the day and called for a renewed commitment to ending the HIV epidemic through prevention efforts and education.



"Since 1988, December 1st has been recognized as World AIDS Day to honor those we have lost to the AIDS Virus while remembering those who are still living with HIV," stated Mayor Pro Tem Eric Guerra. "The Federal Government has chosen to ignore the annual recognition this year and disrespect the work community members, health officials and elected officials have done to ensure that the virus is destigmatized and eradicated. Today, we must come together as a community to raise awareness and have honest conversations that HIV/AIDS is still with us through education, compassion, and unity. Let's continue the work to end the stigma and find a cure."

Representatives from local agencies that

provide services to those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in attendance included Sunburst Projects, the Sacramento LGBT Center, Harm Reduction Services, Golden Rule Services, SANE, RX Healthcare, Sierra Foothills AIDS Foundation and the Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry.

In the evening an event open to the public was held at Sacramento State University in the Union Ballroom. Dinner was provided, AIDS Memorial Quilts were on display and there were resource tables from all of the local HIV/AIDS agencies serving the community, as well as other companies. The keynote speaker was Dr. Stuart Cohen, and the Sacramento Gay Mens Chorus performed as well. It was followed by a candlelight vigil outside.

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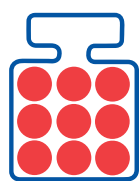
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National Park Free Entry Changes

In a move that feels less like policy and more like performance, the current administration has removed free entry to America's national parks on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth—two holidays rooted in collective struggle, progress, and freedom—while approving free park entry on Trump's own birthday.



Arches National Park, Utah

For years, MLK Day and Juneteenth have been among the designated fee-free days, offering families and communities—especially those historically excluded from public lands—a chance to experience the country's most treasured spaces without financial barriers. These days weren't symbolic add-ons. They sent a message that public lands belong to everyone, and that reflection, history, and access matter.

Replacing those dates with free admission on a former president's birthday sends a very different signal. It reframes national parks not as shared cultural heritage, but as props in a personal legacy project. While supporters

may argue it's simply a change in the calendar, the contrast is difficult to ignore: holidays honoring civil rights and emancipation are out, while a self-celebratory date is in.

National parks exist beyond politics—or at least they should. They are places of learning and connection, particularly for communities that have long been told, implicitly or explicitly, that these spaces were not meant for them. Stripping access on days that commemorate equality, while spotlighting an individual's birthday, undermines that broader mission.

Public lands are part of our shared story, and that story should be for all citizens.

Sky River Casino has launched voting for its 4th Annual Wreaths of Hope program, a festive holiday initiative that will donate a total of \$15,000 to 10 local nonprofit organizations serving Elk Grove and Sacramento County. Beginning December 1, Sky River Rewards members can vote once per day at promotional kiosks for their favorite creatively decorated 48-inch holiday wreaths, which are on display near the casino cashier. Each participating nonprofit will receive \$1,000, with additional donations awarded to the top three vote-getters: \$2,500 for first place, \$1,500 for second, and \$1,000 for third. Wreaths of Hope runs through December 31, with winners announced at an awards ceremony on January 13, 2026, reinforcing Sky River Casino's ongoing commitment to community support and charitable giving. [Sky River Casino web site.](#)



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Attorney General Bonta Pushes Back Against Federal Subpoenas Targeting Gender-Affirming Care

California Attorney General Rob Bonta has joined a coalition of 20 attorneys general in challenging the U.S. Department of Justice's ongoing attempts to obtain private medical records connected to gender-affirming care at children's hospitals.

Filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Colorado, the multistate amicus brief supports Children's Hospital Colorado's request to quash a federal subpoena seeking extensive documentation — including highly sensitive patient records — related to care provided to transgender adolescents.

At the center of the dispute is a subpoena issued by the U.S. DOJ in July, demanding detailed information about patients and their families, including names, dates of birth, home addresses, and Social Security numbers. Children's Hospital Colorado responded by filing a lawsuit, arguing that the request represents a serious violation of patient privacy and medical ethics.

"This subpoena is an unjust attack on the privacy of transgender adolescents and a threat to effective healthcare," said Attorney General Bonta in a statement. He added that the federal government's approach risks interfering with doctors' ability to provide appropriate, evidence-based treatment — not just in gender-affirming care, but across medical fields where off-label prescriptions

are a standard practice.

In their brief, the attorneys general argue that the subpoena infringes on states' rights to regulate medical care under the Tenth Amendment. They also challenge the DOJ's interpretation of the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, warning that accepting such a narrow reading could disrupt numerous areas of modern medicine where off-label drug use is both common and medically necessary.

This is not the first time Attorney General Bonta has taken on similar actions. Earlier this fall, he joined multistate efforts opposing comparable subpoenas aimed at Boston Children's Hospital and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia — both of which were ultimately rejected by the courts.

Joining California in the filing are attorneys general from Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Washington, and more than a dozen other states, signaling a broad and growing pushback against federal overreach into personal healthcare decisions affecting transgender youth.



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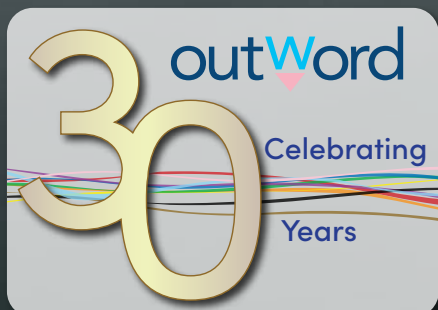
For 30 years, Outword Magazine - Sacramento's longest-running LGBTQ+ publication has been a trusted voice, sharing stories, uplifting our community, and keeping you informed.

Now, more than ever, LGBTQ+ media matters, especially given the ruthless attacks our community has already suffered. This is why we've launched a subscription and reader support donor service to help keep Outword as a resource that ensures vital information continues to flow.

Please consider making a contribution, in the dollar amount that works for you, using our relaunched Outword Rainbow Fund. Every contribution will make a difference and with a simple, and secure transaction, you can show your support.

We are proud to be one of the LGBTQ+ voices for the Sacramento community over the years, and we are committed to continuing for years to come. Let's not let our voices be silenced. Help us continue getting the Word Out.

Thank you, from the Outword team.



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Out & About

photos and words by
Chris Allan

The Sacramento Women's Chorus (SWC), led by Artistic Director Rachel Jackson, performed in the Capitol Rotunda on Friday, December 5 as part of the annual holiday music program. SWC was started in 1987 by a dedicated group of lesbian singers and has expanded over the years. Today they continue to champion the "issues of equality and rights for women and the LGBTQI+ community as well as peace and freedom for all." Also performing was Inner Harmony, SWC's a cappella small group ensemble, led by Dr. Cindy Chaffee.





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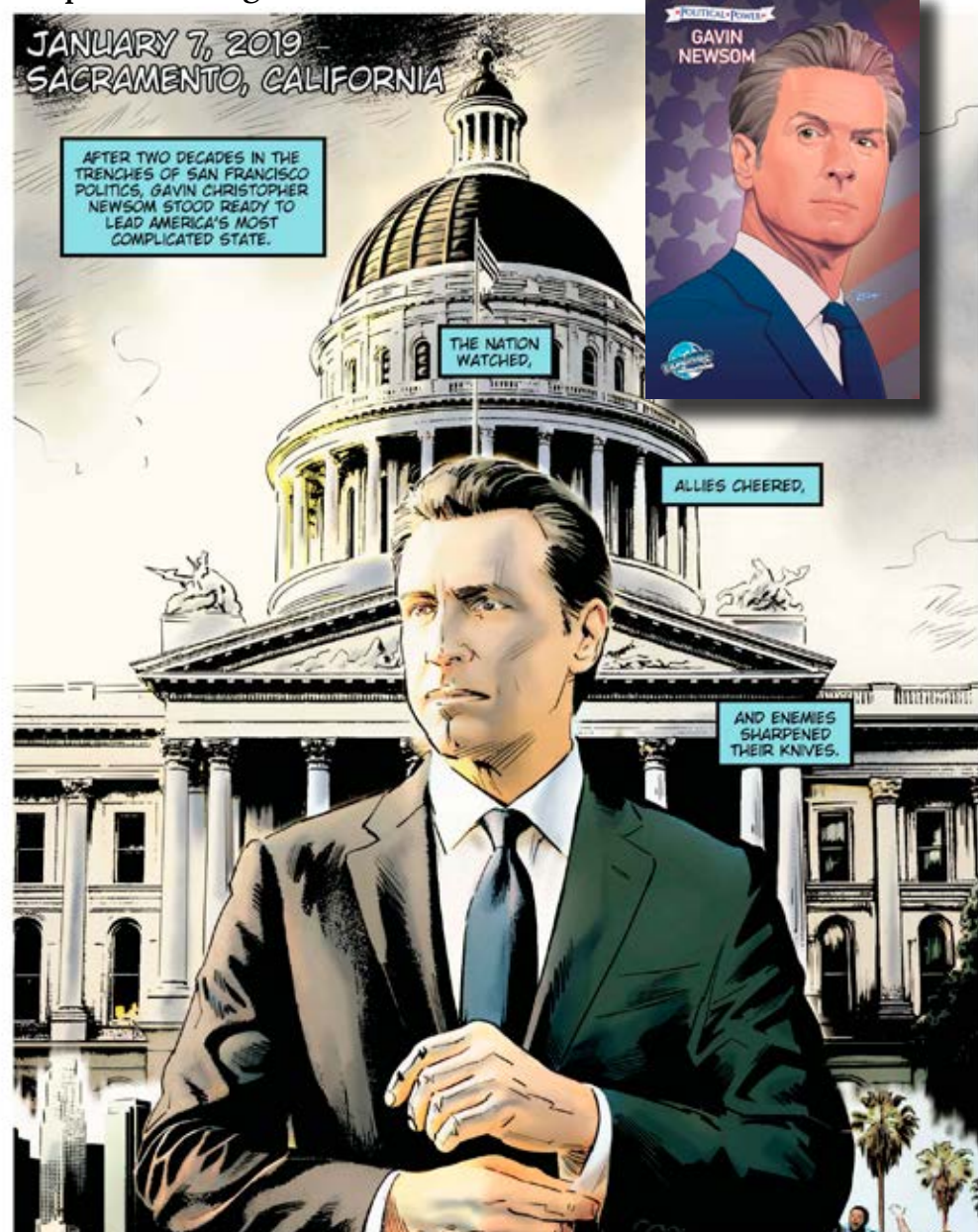
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Political Power: Gavin Newsom Brings California's Governor to the Comic Page

Politics may seem an unlikely subject for a comic book, but TidalWave Comics has spent the past 15 years proving otherwise. The publisher's long-running Political Power series continues to turn headlines into illustrated biography, and its newest release, Political Power: Gavin Newsom, is available now in both print and digital formats.



Written by Michael Frizell and illustrated by Martin Gimenez, with a cover by Pablo Martinena, the 22-page issue traces the rise of California's 40th governor through a fast-moving blend of storytelling and artwork. From Newsom's early days as a San Francisco entrepreneur backed by the Getty family to his evolution into a nationally recognized political figure, the comic captures a career shaped by bold choices and high-stakes moments.

For LGBTQ+ readers, Newsom's legacy includes one of the most defining political acts of the early 21st century: his decision as San Francisco mayor to defy state law and allow same-sex marriages in 2004. The biography also explores his tenure as lieutenant governor and governor, including guiding California through the COVID-19 pandemic and surviving a highly publicized

recall attempt. The result is a portrait of a politician marked by ambition, controversy, and resilience.

TidalWave publisher Darren G. Davis describes the company's biographical comics as a response to readers looking for something beyond superheroes. Frizell echoes that sentiment, noting that the series focuses on the person behind the politician, aiming for a balanced and well-researched portrayal rather than partisan commentary.

Political Power: Gavin Newsom joins recent entries featuring figures such as Kamala Harris, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Joe Biden, and Alexander Hamilton. As politics continues to dominate everyday conversation, TidalWave's comic biographies offer a surprisingly engaging way to step back, reflect, and see familiar figures from a new perspective. [Tidal Wave Comics](https://www.tidalwavecomics.com)

“The Dogs of Venice” by Steven Crowley

book review by Terri Schlichenmeyer

One person. Two, twelve, twenty, you can still feel alone in a crowded room if it's a place you don't want to be. People say, though, that that's no way to do the holidays; you're supposed to Make Merry, even when your heart's not in it. You're supposed to feel happy, no matter what – even when, as in “The Dogs of Venice” by Steven Rowley, the Christmas tinsel seems tarnished.



Right up until the plane door closed, Paul held hope that Darren would decide to come on the vacation they'd planned for and saved for, for months.

Alas, Darren was a no-show, which was not really a surprise. Three weeks before the departure, he'd announced that their marriage wasn't working for him anymore, and that he wanted a divorce. Paul had said he was going on the vacation anyhow. Why waste a perfectly good flight, or an already-booked B&B? He was going to Venice.

Darren just rolled his eyes.

Was that a metaphor for their entire marriage? Darren had always accused Paul of wanting too much. He indicated now that he felt stifled. Still, Darren's unhappiness hit Paul broadside and so there was Paul, alone in a romantic Italian city, fighting with an espresso machine in a loft owned by someone who looked like a frozen-food spokeswoman.

He couldn't speak or understand Italian very well. He didn't know his way around, and he got lost really often. But he felt anchored by a dog.

The dog – he liked to call it his dog – was a random stray, like so many others wandering around Venice unleashed, but this dog's confidence and insouciant manner inspired Paul. If a dog could be like that, well, why couldn't he?

He knew he wasn't unlovable but solo holidays stunk and he hated his situation. Maybe the dog had a lesson to teach him: could you live a wonderful life without someone to watch out for, pet, and care for you?

Pick up “The Dogs of Venice,” and you might think to yourself that it won't take long to read. At under 100 pages, you'd be right – which just gives you time to turn around and read it again. Because you'll want to.

In the same way that you poke your tongue at a sore tooth, author Steven Rowley makes you want to remember what it's like to be the victim of a dead romance. You can do it here safely because you simply know that Paul is too nice for it to last too long. No spoilers, though, except to say that this novel is about love – gone, resurrected, misdirected – and it unfolds in exactly the way you hope it will. All in a neat evenings' worth of reading. Perfect.

One thing to note: the Christmas setting is incidental and could just as well be any season, which means that this book is timely, no matter when you want it. So grab “The Dogs of Venice,” enjoy it twice with your book group, with your love, or read it alone.

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SF SPCA Fills Union Square with Fur and Holiday Heart

Downtown San Francisco gets an extra dose of holiday magic this season as the San Francisco SPCA returns with its beloved Holiday Windows at Macy's Union Square—now in its 39th year. Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m. through December 31, the windows will be home to irresistibly adorable cats and dogs, all available for adoption and ready to steal hearts. It's a tradition that turns window-shopping into something truly meaningful, inviting visitors to celebrate the animals already in their lives while helping others find loving homes. Full details can be found at sfspca.org/holiday.

Here are a couple of dogs that were available for adoption, as of publication date.



Lemon



Gemini



Speckle



Humphrey

The festivities extend well beyond the windows. On Saturday, December 13, the SF SPCA invites the community to spread some extra cheer with a Shelter Animal Toy Drive at Winter Walk (Stockton at O'Farrell). From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., guests can donate new toys for cats and dogs waiting for their forever families, while Cirque du Soleil ECHO cast members and Animal-Assisted Therapy Animals make special appearances from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Visitors can also stop by the SF SPCA booth at Winter Walk on select December dates to meet therapy animals, snap photos, and shop SF SPCA swag and personalized gifts—perfect for animal lovers on your list.

Adding to the holiday goodwill, the SF SPCA has partnered with Cirque du Soleil ECHO on a special seasonal collaboration. Theatergoers receive 25% off tickets, and for every ticket sold through the offer, \$3 is donated to support the SPCA's lifesaving work.

As Union Square shines throughout the season, the Holiday Windows also spotlight the joy of adoption. To help place more than 500 animals into homes, the SF SPCA is offering Name Your Price adoptions for all animals over five months old during the entire holiday period. Those ready to welcome a new best friend can browse adoptable pets at sfspca.org/adopt—because nothing says holidays quite like coming home with a little extra love.

And Now, We Scrape the Herbs



This handmade pottery herb stripper is a small but thoughtful upgrade for any kitchen. Crafted from natural porcelain clay and shaped entirely by hand, it feels warm and intentional—more like a favorite utensil than a mass-produced gadget. Each curve is designed to gently remove herbs from their stems without crushing delicate leaves or sacrificing flavor. It's practical, beautiful, and a quiet reminder that good cooking starts with tools made to be used and enjoyed. [Click here](#) to get your very own.

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- Develop and foster an environment of trust and confidence between community, stakeholders and City Council.

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For the forward-thinking gear-head who likes their style as clean as their tech, this Slate Auto logo pocket T-shirt hits just the right note. Made from heavyweight cotton with a classic fit, it's the kind of shirt that feels right whether you're in the garage, at a cars-and-coffee meetup, or just repping the future of mobility out in the wild. The understated chest pocket logo gives a subtle nod to Slate Auto's bold, EV-driven vision—perfect for someone who appreciates smart design and future innovation. Comfortable and quietly cool, it's an easy win for anyone who's already looking ahead to what's next. [Order here:](#)



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Feeling Good About Holiday Shopping at Costco This Year

For many shoppers, a Costco run is already a cherished winter tradition — the giant wreaths, the bakery's warm cinnamon scent, the sample carts handing out little bites of cheer. But this year, there's a newfound sense of appreciation for the retail giant, and it's not just about the jumbo pumpkin pies or the beautifully priced champagne. It's about values.

Costco has been in the headlines lately after taking a rare stand: pushing back on federal tariffs that have driven up consumer prices, while refusing to roll back its long-standing diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments. In a season when so many companies stay quiet or take the path of least resistance, Costco chose simply to remain... Costco. The same company that pays above-average wages, promotes internal advancement, and has long taken pride in representing the communities it serves.

For shoppers, that means something. It feels good to know that the place where you're buying your holiday treats, toys, and that wildly oversized poinsettia is also a place standing firm on principles that

support real people — employees, families, and everyday consumers.

And let's be honest: Costco during the holidays is its own kind of magic. Rows of beautifully wrapped gift sets, electronics priced in a way that makes big splurges feel possible, wines worthy of any festive table, and the comfort of knowing you're getting quality at a fair price in a moment when affordability matters more than ever.

So if you find yourself pushing a cart the size of a small moon through those familiar aisles this December, enjoy the feeling. You're not just stocking up — you're supporting a company willing to fight for fair pricing and hold onto its values. That's a holiday win all around.



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“Black Nativity” at Celebration Arts Plus, “I And You” at Capital Stage

Sacramento’s Celebration Arts and Capital Stage wrap up 2025 with intriguing productions that look like safe bets for theater fans searching for entertainment this holiday season.



Braeden Harris and McKenna Sennett costar in “I And You” at Capital Stage

I And You

Capital Stage brings the year to a close with another stealth production that, while not explicitly a holiday play, deals with themes of connectedness and grace that are perfect for the season.

“I And You” begins with two high school students thrown together on an assignment from their English teacher – a poetry project inspired by Walt Whitman’s “Leaves of Grass.”

Anthony loves jazz and plays basketball, while Caroline prefers Elvis Presley and her turtle - the emotional support stuffed animal helps her deal with the liver disease that keeps her homebound. Their initially adversarial relationship warms into an actual friendship, before the play’s late-breaking twist arrives to change everything.

That revelation – and it’s a whopper – came as a total surprise to this reviewer (and apparently the rest of the audience on opening night), and the less you know about the play going in, the better.

McKenna Sennett and Braeden Harris bring considerable skill and emotion to the production, and if you’re fond of plays with tricks up their sleeves, then this is the one for you.

“I And You” continues through Dec. 28. For more information, go to: <https://capstage.org>

Black Nativity

Closing out their theater season this holiday season, Sacramento’s Celebration Arts presents this joyous retelling of the traditional Nativity story in music, dance and verse.

I was unable to review the show before our deadline, but I can disclose that “Black Nativity” is a gospel “song play” based on the Gospel of St. Luke, using the poetry of Langston Hughes and performed by an all-Black cast of singers, actors, dancers and musicians.

One of the first plays authored by an African-American to be performed on Broadway (it debuted in 1961), “Black Nativity” delivers a powerful message of joy, hope, victory and liberation, and don’t we all need that right about now.

“Black Nativity” performs through Dec. 21, 2025, at Celebration Arts in Sacramento, and tickets are going fast. Please visit:

www.celebrationarts.net



Tavina Lynn and Ayinde Fletcher costar in “Black Nativity” at Celebration Arts

Experience the Holidays with Xtina, in Theatres

The holidays are about to get a little more glamorous. “Christina Aguilera: Christmas in Paris” is heading to theatres nationwide for two special nights only—December 14 and December 21—bringing a cinematic holiday concert experience that’s equal parts intimate, elegant, and joyfully over the top.



Photo courtesy of Fathom Entertainment

Presented as part of Fathom’s Holiday Concert Series, the film captures Aguilera in rare form, celebrating the 25th anniversary of her beloved album *My Kind of Christmas*. Filmed before just 250 invited guests on a winter-garden terrace overlooking Paris’s Musée du Quai Branly, the setting is pure romance. As the Eiffel Tower sparkles like a towering Christmas tree, Xtina delivers a stunning blend of classic holiday favorites and iconic career-spanning hits, all wrapped in old-world charm and modern polish.

Directed and executive produced by Emmy® Award winner Sam Wrench (Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour, Billie Eilish: Live at the O2), *Christmas in Paris* goes far beyond a standard concert film. Dreamy Parisian interludes sweep viewers through the City of Light, while a daring, visually rich cabaret sequence filmed inside the legendary Crazy Horse adds a bold, unmistakably Aguilera edge to the festivities.

The result is a holiday experience that feels personal yet cinematic, nostalgic yet daring—perfect whether you’re a longtime fan or simply looking for something a little more fabulous than another round of holiday reruns. It’s tinsel with attitude, tradition with a twist, and a reminder that Christmas music can still surprise.

Tickets for *Christina Aguilera: Christmas in Paris* are on sale now through Fathom Entertainment. Check local listings for showtimes and make it a holiday night out—Parisian style. [Click here](#) to purchase your tickets.



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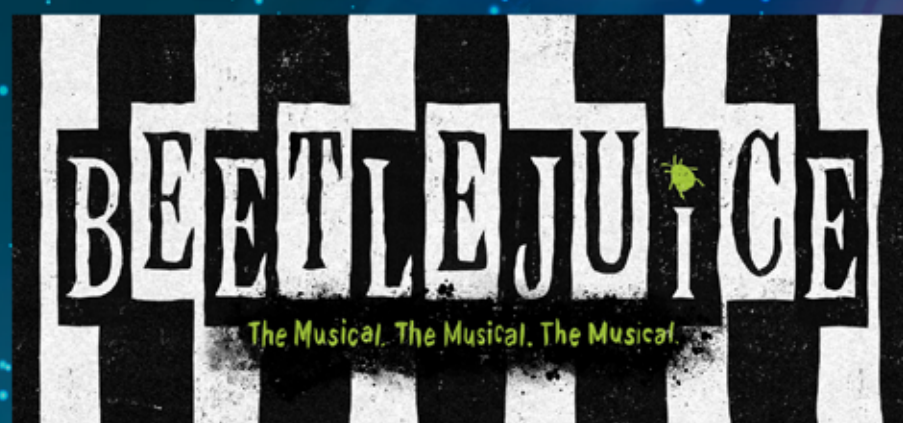
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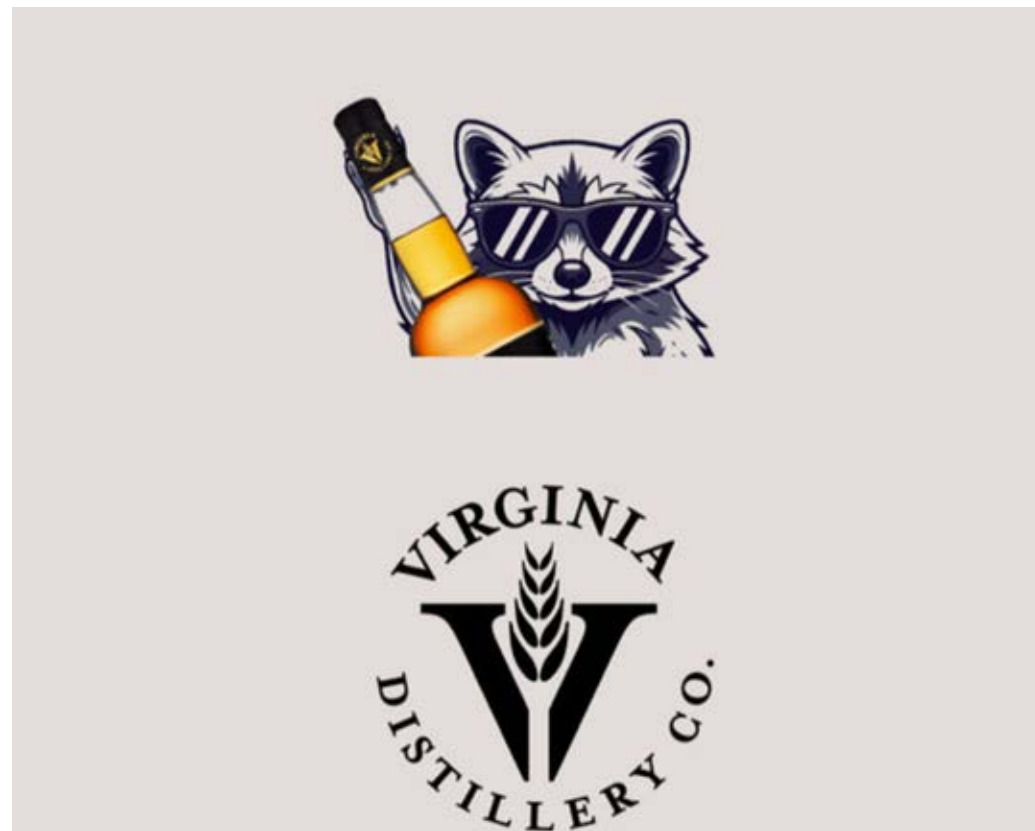
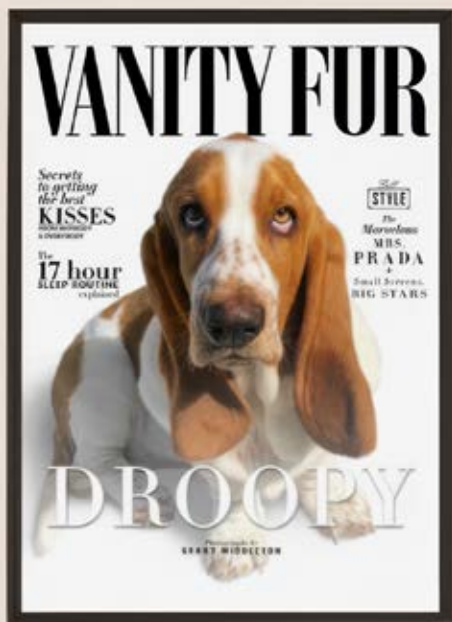


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Re-experience the jaw-dropping talent of Britain’s Got Talent winner Sydnie Christmas with “My Way,” her debut album packed with soaring vocals, timeless classics, a few fresh favorites, and yes—there’s even a Christmas track tucked in for good measure. Whether you’re gifting it to a fellow music lover or treating yourself, My Way is available as an MP3 or old-school physical CD on Amazon. Cue the applause—and [click away.](#)

Turn your pet into a full-blown cover model with PosingPig.com. Simply choose your preferred style and size, upload a favorite photo, and their artists do the rest—expertly transforming Fluffy into a glossy magazine-cover star worthy of a double take. It’s playful, personal, and guaranteed to get laughs (and maybe a little pride) from any pet parent. A truly purrrr-fect holiday gift for the animal lovers on your list. Design your [pet’s cover here.](#)



If your gift list leans quirky, funny, or just delightfully offbeat, TeePublic is a treasure trove of wearable wit and sip-worthy humor. The site is packed with artist-designed T-shirts, mugs, hoodies, stickers, and home goods that celebrate everything from pop culture obsessions to perfectly unfiltered sarcasm. Whether it’s a laugh-out-loud coffee mug that speaks your mood before caffeine kicks in, or a T-shirt that feels like an inside joke waiting to happen, TeePublic makes it easy to give something personal, playful, and genuinely fun. It’s the kind of place where you don’t just buy a gift — you find something that fits. [Coffee Mug page:](#)

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Start Your Engines! RuPaul's Drag Race Season 18

The Werk Room doors are about to swing open once again. RuPaul's Drag Race returns for its highly anticipated Season 18, premiering Friday, January 2 at 8:00 PM ET/PT on MTV with supersized 90-minute episodes – and the stakes have never been higher.



This season introduces 14 brand-new queens, each ready to bring charisma, creativity, and plenty of nerve as they compete for the crown of “America’s Next Drag Superstar.” On the line is a \$200,000 cash prize, an official makeup collaboration with Anastasia Beverly Hills Cosmetics, and, of course, a permanent place in Drag Race herstory.

The premiere kicks off with a fittingly celebratory challenge titled “Reclaim! Renew! Rejoice!” As a love letter to Drag Race legends who paved the way, the queens will dig into the show’s iconic vaults, transforming leftover treasures into signature looks that honor the past while staking a claim on the future. Expect drama, imagination, and more than a few gasp-worthy reveals.

And when the runway lights dim, the drama doesn’t stop. RuPaul’s Drag Race: Untucked, the Emmy®-winning aftershow, premieres immediately after at 9:30 PM ET/PT, offering a behind-the-scenes look at backstage tensions, alliances, and raw reactions.

Fans can get a head start today by heading to the RuPaul’s Drag Race YouTube channel to “Meet the Queens,” featuring individual interviews and official Season 18 images. Get ready – a new era of drag excellence is about to begin. Check out the [RuPaul’s Drag Race YouTube channel here](#).

Christmas Comes Early Thanks to Randy Rainbow!

The fearlessly funny Randy Rainbow strikes again with another hilarious political song parody, just in time for the holidays. Cleverly (and profanely) altering the lyrics of “It’s Beginning to Look Alot Like Christmas,” Randy skewers Trump, Hegseth, MTG, AI, and everything else he can get his hands on. Feel free to skip past his commercial for Ground News, but do not miss Randy’s latest laugh-fest, which is guaranteed to put a smile on your face: [Click here](#), or on the image.





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It's A Country Christmas This Year! Plus, A Very Jonas Christmas Album *by Chris Narloch*

There are only a handful of new holiday albums this year, but country fans will be happy as a hog in mud. In addition to the three country albums below, fans of holiday music can enjoy the soundtrack from "A Very Jonas Christmas Movie."



A Very Jonas Christmas Movie – Original Soundtrack

The boys are back with a Disney holiday film and new music to go with it this Christmas. The movie may be a guilty pleasure for diehard fans, but the music is catchy as heck, with seven brand new songs, two live cuts, and their Christmas single from 2019, for a total of ten tasty tracks.



Trisha Yearwood – Christmastime

One of my favorite country queens has a brand-new holiday album out, and she is accompanied by a symphony orchestra on all 12 tracks, including favorites such as "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch," "Blue Christmas," and "Cool Yule." Husband Garth Brooks even shows up to duet with Yearwood on the very romantic "Merry Christmas, Valentine."



Brad Paisley – Snow Globe Town

This country king wrote 8 original songs for his new holiday album, which also features 8 classic holiday tunes, including "The Christmas Song," "Jingle Bell Rock," "The First Noel," "O Holy Night," and more. "Snow Globe Town" even includes two songs from the new Hallmark Christmas movie, "A Grand Ole Opry Christmas."



LeAnn Rimes – Greatest Hits Christmas

Rimes collects her favorites from past holiday projects, along with a few new songs for a generous 16-song set just in time for Christmas. Standouts include "Carol of the Bells," "Celebrate Me Home," "You and Me and Christmas," "I Want A Hippopotamus For Christmas," and Dave Aude's remix of "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree."

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CA Museum Celebrates The Black Panthers Plus, “Black Artists in America” at the Crocker

Black artists and Black activists are currently featured in exhibits at two of Sacramento’s most prestigious museums, but you will have to act fast to catch them before they close. Read on for details.

REVOLUTIONARY GRAIN

CELEBRATING THE
SPIRIT OF THE BLACK PANTHERS
IN PORTRAITS AND STORIES

CA Museum

“Revolutionary Grain: Celebrating the Spirit of the Black Panthers in Portraits and Stories” continues at CA Museum through Dec. 14, 2025.

Featuring 42 portraits and personal stories, “Revolutionary Grain” presents former Black Panthers who continue to make a difference in their communities as lawyers, social workers, teachers, and political activists.

Photographer Susanna Lucia Lamaina’s contemporary portraits of these activists give a glimpse into their lives and careers after they left the Party.

The exhibition is a compelling look at the enduring legacies of rank-and-file Black Panther members who changed history and dedicated their lives to community service.

For more information: <https://californiamuseum.org>

Crocker Museum

“Black Artists in America: From the Bicentennial to September 11” is an exhibition exploring works by Black artists made during the transitional moment from the late 1970s to the dawn of the 21st century.

The exhibition picks up where the Dixon Gallery and Gardens’ 2023 exhibition “Black Artists in America: From Civil Rights to the Bicentennial” - on view at the Crocker in early 2024 and the second in a three-part series - left off.

The third chapter of the exhibition continues to consider the ways in which Black American artists challenged the cultural, environmental, political, racial, and social issues of the last decades of the 20th century.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Earnestine Lovelle Jenkins and includes more than 50 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper from public and private collections across the country.

“Black Artists in America” is on view through Jan. 11, 2026. To learn more, go to: www.crockerart.org



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Happy Holidays! Out & About

with Matthew Burlingame

As the holiday season arrives, may your days be warm, joyful and filled with the people and traditions you love. This time of year is also a wonderful opportunity to support the heartbeat of our community—local shops, makers and small businesses that rely on seasonal cheer. And if you're able, consider donating to smaller charities whose impact is direct, personal and deeply needed. Together, we can spread generosity, strengthen our neighborhoods and make the season a little brighter for all.

Dec. 13

The Sacramento Santa Parade brings holiday cheer to downtown on Saturday, Dec. 13, circling Capitol Park at 1300 L St. Festive fans are invited to bundle up, line the route and enjoy Santa, seasonal floats and community performers. With everyone welcome and spirits high, it's a perfect reason to celebrate the season—especially if the weather cooperates.

The Community Art & Craft Faire returns Saturday, Dec. 13, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 2100 J St., with entry on the west side of the church along 21st Street. Shoppers can explore handcrafted goods from local artisans, discover one-of-a-kind gifts and enjoy a cheerful indoor market.

Dec. 16

Get into the holiday spirit on Tuesday, Dec. 16, when Cirque Musica Holiday Wonderland comes to the Harris Center for the Arts, 10 College Parkway in Folsom. With shows at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., the all-new production blends world-class acrobatics, soaring aerial artistry and beloved seasonal music. Harriscenter.net

Dec. 19

Naughty—A Leather Christmas Party heats up at 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19, at The Bolt, 2560 Boxwood St. Guests are invited to show off festive kink, donate canned goods for a raffle, and enjoy jello shots. Special guests include Leather Santa Corey and Bootblack Boi Rae. Proceeds support the Gender Health Center and the Mr. Bolt travel fund.

Dec. 20

NorCal Resist will host its Winter Coat & Toy Drive on Dec. 20, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 2775 Cottage Way. Community members are invited to drop off new coats, toys and holiday backpack items—no sign-up required. The drive supports families served by NorCal Resist, offering a simple way to spread warmth and joy during the winter season. Norcalresist.org

Dec. 23

The Crest Sacramento hosts Elf at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23, at 1013 K St. The holiday favorite follows Buddy, a human raised at the North Pole, whose oversized antics send him on a journey to discover his real family. The 97-minute 2003 classic brings festive laughter, heart and Christmas cheer to the big screen. Crestsacramento.com

Continuing

The Folsom Historic District Ice Rink is back for the season, transforming Historic Folsom into a winter wonderland through Jan. 19. The rink, presented by Kaiser Permanente, is open daily at 905 Leidesdorff St., with sparkling lights, festive music and themed skate sessions. Visitors can pre-purchase tickets, classes and event passes. Folsomicerink.com

Upcoming

Comedy legend Cedric The Entertainer brings his signature wit and charm to The Venue at Thunder Valley Casino Resort in Lincoln on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026, at 8 p.m. Known for his quick humor and larger-than-life personality, Cedric promises a night of nonstop laughter. Tickets are available through Ticketmaster and the venue's box office. Thundervalleyresort.com

Do you have events, birthdays, or announcements to share? Feel free to send them to matthewburlingame@gmail.com.



Dec. 12

Join us at Outword's monthly happy hour Friday, Dec. 12 at 2003 K St. for a dose of Liquid Therapy! enjoy the fun from 5:30-7 p.m., with chances to win prizes and enjoy drink specials. Reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Badlandssac.com

The Sacramento Ballet's holiday classic, "The Nutcracker," returns to the SAFE Credit Union Performing Arts Center, 1301 L St. for a magical run from Dec. 12-21, 2025. The beloved Tchaikovsky score will be performed live by the Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera. The final performance takes place Sunday, Dec. 21, 2025, offering a festive finale to the season. Sacballet.org

Sunrise Rollerland hosts a "Stranger Things" Finale Skate Party from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, at 6001 Sunrise Vista Dr. in Citrus Heights. Fans can roll into the Upside Down with '80s music, retro vibes and a character costume contest with prizes. Skaters of all ages are invited to celebrate the hit show's finale in true Hawkins style. Sunrisemarketplace.com



So Many Movies, So Little Time by Chris Narloch

Movie studios routinely release a flood of films in December, and this year is no exception. Even a movie fan like me struggles to keep up with the glut of new titles in theaters, all of them hoping to make money at the holiday box office or perhaps score awards in the new year.

Below are my reviews of the films I did have time to see recently, and several of them are probably Oscar-bound.



Wake Up Dead Man

The third installment in the “Knives Out” franchise is yet another winner for Rian Johnson, the fiendishly clever creator of the TV series “Poker Face.” His new “Knives Out” mystery stars a Hollywood “who’s who” cast that includes Glenn Close, Jeremy Renner, Thomas Haden Church, Mila Kunis, Kerry Washington, Josh O’Connor, Jeffrey Wright, Andrew Scott, and Josh Brolin as a super-mean priest (and the unfortunate dead man in the film’s title). Holding all three movies together is Daniel Craig as the gay super-sleuth, Benoit Blanc—how could he not be gay with a name like that? Twist after twist, plus crazy characters who are all suspects, and super-fun performances – that is the successful recipe that makes these movies such delicious fun. In limited theatrical release before its debut on Netflix this Dec. 12.



Rental Family

After winning an Oscar for his fine work in the super-depressing drama “The Whale,” Brendan Fraser returns with this sweetly moving dramedy about an American actor who accepts an unusual gig in Tokyo, working for a “rental family” agency, playing stand-in roles for total strangers. Naturally, our hero cannot help but get close to his clients, who hire him to be a grieving mourner at a funeral or a supportive partner, etc. Fraser’s innate likability is a perfect fit for the role, and the film successfully explores themes of loneliness, family, and the search for purpose in modern life. Sadly, “Rental Family” has not found much of an audience in movie theaters thanks to a very poor promotional campaign. Don’t miss it once it starts streaming.



Sentimental Value

This new Norwegian film from director Joachim Trier is the rare European drama with a happy ending, and it deserves all the acclaim and awards buzz it has received. Stellan Skarsgard stars (and is terrific) as an aging movie director attempting to make a comeback with a new film based on his complicated family history. He has a fraught relationship with both of his daughters, one of whom he asks to star in the movie. She declines and instead, dad casts an American starlet (Elle Fanning) in the lead role. All four lead actors are superb, and “Sentimental Value” could find itself nominated for several Oscars next year, if there is any justice.



Hamnet

This magnificent movie is probably the main competition for a Best Picture Oscar next year, if Paul Thomas Anderson’s “One Battle After Another” fails to win that award. Writer/director Chloe Zhao, who did excellent work on “The Rider” and “Nomadland” and then made the truly awful “Eternals,” returns to form with this gorgeous story of love and loss, inspired by the creation of William Shakespeare’s timeless masterpiece, “Hamlet.” The great Jessie Buckley stars in the movie, along with the equally wonderful Paul Mescal, Emily Watson, and Joe Alwyn. Do not miss this movie.

Note: All four of these films were still playing at Sacramento’s Tower Theatre when this Issue of *Outword* was published.



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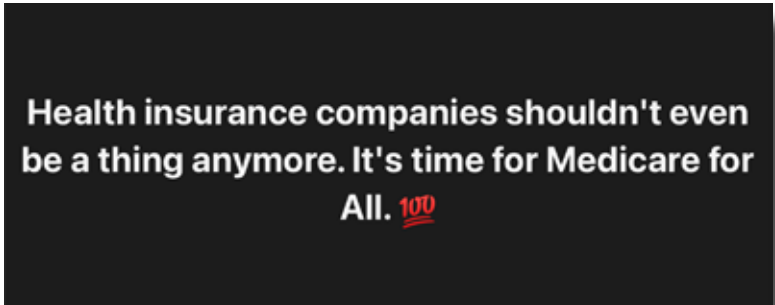
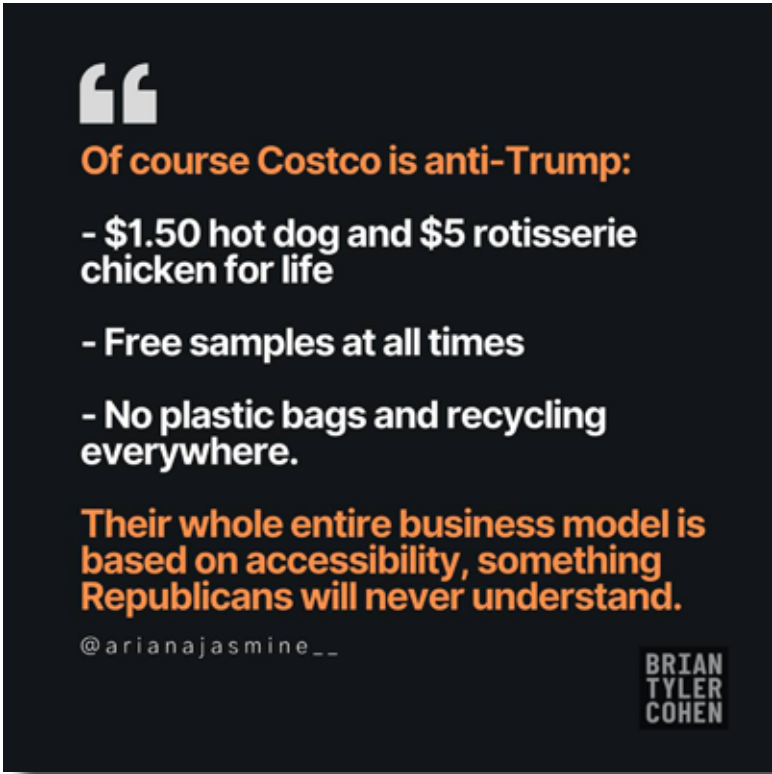
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*A Memoir of Surviving Abuse
and Fighting for Justice*

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Slip something powerful into that stocking. *Nobody's Girl: A Memoir of Surviving Abuse and Fighting for Justice* by Virginia Roberts Giuffre is a searing, unforgettable look at how an ordinary teen was pulled into Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell's world—and how she fought her way out to become a leading voice for survivors. Published posthumously, the book preserves Giuffre's own words and courage, shining a light on trafficking, power, and what it really takes to push back against people who think they're untouchable. This isn't a "cozy by the fire" read, but for the true-crime and social-justice lover on your list, it's the kind of gift that lingers long after the wrapping paper is gone.

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BroadwaySacramento.com

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mondaviarts.org

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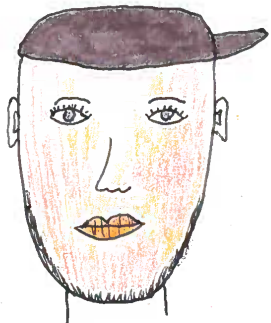
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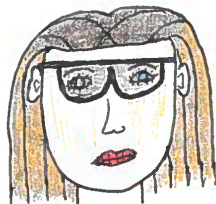
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