

# ACLU Gives Voice

“Everything in the world is about sex except sex. Sex is about power.”

- Oscar Wilde



I've arrived early on a Saturday night for this evening's event: an ACLU fundraiser. I'm shivering, standing next to what I'm told is the "Pencil of Doom" sculpture just outside what appears to be a castle. I'm also told it's not a castle. It's the *Courthouse Center for the Arts* in West Kingston. Too late, my mind branded it a castle.

Two beautiful, enviably glamorous women strut by, clear heels clicking, very much belonging in a castle like this one. Tonight's queens, Haley Star and LaDiva Jonz — the featured performers of the ACLU event - move through the castle like royalty. (Someone tells me they're also the stars of Drag Queen Bingo, which I'm instantly dying to experience.) I'm fascinated by the power these queens exude.

And then, it hits me: That's the point. For some reason, sex and gender have a certain power over us that's inescapable, yet difficult to unpack. For some people, it's even harder when they find themselves in a position that doesn't fit within traditional "boxes." Not tonight.

Tonight's event has been billed as a "Raunchy, Raucous, and Romantic Performance." Boy, is that the truth! This castle has seen all sorts of performances, though most of the performances were of the judge-and-bailiff variety. This one will be something different.

The castle — I mean Arts Center — used to be a courthouse, with more or less systemic justice dealt and delivered to those within its walls. Both the powerful and powerless were heard and judged — some fairly, others, not so much. Tonight's event will entertain the people to raise funds for the ACLU to ensure the voiceless have their chance to be heard, regardless of their gender, sex or power status.

I've never been to a drag show, but *La Cage Aux Folles* is one of my favorite movies of all time and I cannot wait for the show to begin. At this point, the room lights go down, the stage lights come up and the queens take the stage. I'm impressed by their stage presence, confidence and complete mastery of the room.

Haley Star and LaDiva had us laughing so hard that I chanted to myself, "Don't fall in love...don't fall in love...you can't have them...don't fall in love..." Not that she'd care, but then again, a Queen cannot have too many adoring fans.

If you've never been to a drag show, it turns out they lip-sync the songs - to their own voices, even. And that's the beauty of it tonight. The Queens killed with no live voice, and then the band reigned supreme with theirs.

The band, *Jennifer Minuto and the Better Angels* performed a two-part set that rocked the castle. The singers, Jen and Casey, are married to each other, and have recently recorded a teaser album - a precursor to the full album they expect to release soon. Their harmonies and band performance still resonate in my memory, and I'm looking forward to catching another performance.

Maybe someday, LaDiva and Haley Star will dress me up like a boy, take me by the hand, and let me play boy-diva with them on the royal stage of life. And maybe, hopefully, others will find their inner diva or boy diva in their mind castle, and give that diva a voice. Thanks to organizations like the ACLU, Courthouse Center for Arts, and JM & the Better Angels, we're all one clear-heeled step closer.

If you get the chance to see either of these sets of performers, take it. You'll be entertained, and might even fall in love. At worst, you'll expand your mind to life's possibilities and you'll help a very worthy cause.