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Jason Collins: I Didn't Set Out to Be the First



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BY ADVOCATE.COM EDITORS APRIL 17 2013 4:00 AM ET

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Andrew Maxin & Mark Waier
33 & 31 / Los Angeles
Fashion Designer, Model Turned Attorney

Andrew Maxin is no stranger to innovation. His family (Maxin has a gay twin) became the first practitioners of the garment repair process known as “invisible mending” in British Columbia after emigrating from South Vietnam in the early 1980s. After coming out and attending design school in Vancouver, Maxin moved to Los Angeles, where he gained experience designing creative campaigns for icons such as Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald.

“When I moved to L.A., I promised myself I would never hide who I was and always be true to myself,” he says. “I believe recognizing the beauty in our differences can be a powerful thing.” Maxin’s desire to embrace and find strength in his differences is shared by his partner, former Ford model Mark Waier, who left the runway behind to attend law school.

“When I was modeling, nobody cared about what I had to say. They just wanted me to stand in front of the camera and be quiet,” Waier says. “That’s part of the reason I retired from the industry, because of how models are treated and perceived. But just because you’re a model doesn’t mean you can’t be smart.” Seeing a general lack of fun and innovation in the industry, the couple last year founded the swimwear and underwear company Vanwolff, whose target market is men who desire to be different. “That’s what Vanwolff as a brand is about, following your instinct, embracing the wolf within, and being true to who you are,” says Maxin. [@vanwolff](#)



Jeffrey Jordan
28 / San Diego
Founder and President, Rescue Social Change Group

Even for a 28-year-old wunderkind who started his own marketing company at 17, snagging a \$152 million contract from the Food and Drug Administration is a huge deal. Jeffrey Jordan’s Rescue Social Change Group did just that late last year, when the FDA contracted its services for a new effort to combat youth

smoking.

Jordan started Rescue Social Change, a company focused on using highly tailored behavior patterns to encourage people to exercise more, eat better, and never pick up a cigarette.

“We can’t have clean-cut, preppy-looking teens talking about being tobacco-free,” Jordan says. “We need this message to come from alternative, punk, goth, hip-hop, and LGBT teens who don’t look like the mainstream.”

Part of the FDA contract will battle tobacco use among LGBT youth, who smoke at estimated 40%–70% higher rates than their straight peers.

“Alternative rock teens smoke significantly more than preppy teens, and alternative rock teens are more likely to be accepting of LGBT teens,” he says. “Many LGBT role models glamorize smoking. Lady Gaga’s alter ego, Madonna in her ‘Girl Gone Wild’ video. As a community, we constantly encourage LGBT youth to start smoking without even knowing it.” [facebook.com/rescuescg](#)



Kortney Ryan Ziegler
32 / Oakland, Calif.
Social Entrepreneur

Kortney Ryan Ziegler created the definitive doc on the black trans experience, *Still Black: A Portrait of Black Transmen*; his website, *Blac(k)ademic*, is up for a GLAAD Award; and now he’s starting *Who We Know*, a six-month “incubator where trans people of color will come together and create products and solutions to fight unemployment for trans people

of color.” The transgender population has a “ridiculous” unemployment rate, says Ziegler, who hopes to teach others that transgender people “are just like everyone else. We learn, we breathe, we love, we have families. I want to remove this stigma around transsexuality.” [@fakerrapper](#)



Justin Chenette
22 / Saco, Maine
State Representative

To Justin Chenette, the youngest state representative in Maine and the youngest openly gay one in the nation, there’s no time like the present to act on your beliefs.

“I didn’t want to wait 30 years and be told I couldn’t change the system,” says Chenette, who was elected to the Maine legislature last November.

Chenette, who this year was named Maine state director for the Young Elected Officials Network, is also happy to be a positive example for LGBT youth. Some vestiges of prejudice remain even in his largely liberal state, he notes, but they’re eroding. “One day, being different won’t be a headline,” he says. [@justinchenette](#)



Jordan Bach
26 / New York
Writer and Speaker

It’s rare that a high-schooler counts spirituality as an after-school activity, but that’s exactly what Jordan Bach was doing a decade ago, teaching his fellow students about God. Since coming out at 12, Bach has been speaking about religion. “When you bring forward who you really are, you begin to heal your life. That’s true at any age.”

Now he reaches thousands through radio, social media, [TheBachBook.com](#), and his viral “God Loves Gays” video. “My intention is to give real gay men practical tools to live more... meaningful lives. There’s no more powerful gift you can give someone than to say, ‘I see you, and you’re enough just the way you are.’” [@jordanbach](#)

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Raymond Buckley · Democratic National Committee
Next year you should include NH Executive Councilor Chris Pappas. The youngest and first gay person to be elected to the NH Executive Council. [http://pappasnh.com/](#)
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Raymond Buckley · Democratic National Committee
(But congrats to the Speaker, the Mayor and the state representative and the others!)
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Richard Kleinberger · Top Commenter
What about the out boxer Orlando Cruz (age 31)? I think he is quite significant in his achievements as a out sports figure. Big fall Advocate!
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Matthew Breen · Top Commenter · 506 subscribers
He was on the cover a few issues ago with an exclusive interview. [http://www.advocate.com/print-issue/current-issue/2013/01/25/orlando-cruz-his-biggest-fight-yet](#)
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Penny Perrault Duff · Top Commenter · Works at I have engaged in many activities to help my fellow lesbians and gays.
Eleven women out of 40. Oh, gee. This is the kind of imbalance that the Advocate has displayed throughout most of its existence. That bias is reinforced by a mag that insists on sending an unwanted rag along with every copy of the Advocate—Out magazine is a second-rate publication aimed at young gay men and really pretty disgusting if you’re a lesbian. When, oh when, are you going to realize there are many women (like 50%) in the LGBT community?
Reply · 1 · Like · April 19 at 5:33am

Albert Ogle · President at Saint Paul’s Foundation for International Reconciliation
I know what the Advocate is trying to do but leaving out international LGBT young leaders who sacrifice their lives daily for this movement and also young faith leaders who are changing hearts and minds in the places where our love is still an abomination...this is CHANGING THE WORLD. THIS IS THE 21st CENTURY and our movement is no longer confined to the USA.
Reply · 1 · Like · April 19 at 9:43am

Eight Centimeters '8Cm' Photography & Design
sweet :)
Reply · Like · April 24 at 9:45am

Shelly Shuch · CCNY
Jordan Ruth who has had a major impact on the arts.
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Aaron West · Michigan State University
Cute
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