July 14 - 20, 2022
50 cents at newsstands Vol. 38, No 52

BAY WINDOWS

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LGBTQ-friendly senior housing project targeted by vandals

By Mark Pratt
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Signs around a construction site for what's been called the first LGBTQ-friendly senior affordable housing project in New England were vandalized with threatening graffiti over the weekend, drawing quick condemnation from civic leaders.

The messages in black spray paint were left on signs on the security fence around the former school in Boston's Hyde Park neighborhood, according to LGBTQ Senior Housing Inc., the nonprofit behind the 74-unit complex known as The Pryde. The project that broke ground last month is expected to welcome its first residents in late 2023.

Gretchen Van Ness, executive di-

see **VANDAL,** *page 3*

A Revolutionary *1776*

By Jules Becker
Contributing Writer

1776, revival co-presented by American Repertory Theatre and Roundabout Theatre Company at Loeb Drama Center, through July 24. 617-547-8300 or amrep.org. (RTC run at American Airlines Theatre, Broadway, September)

Many years before the 1619 Project, composer Sherman Edwards and book author Peter Stone depicted the Continental Congress debate about condemning slavery in the Declaration of Independence in their groundbreaking musical "1776." Edwards and Stone extensively researched the meetings that led to that historic if compromised document for their 1969 Tony Award winner. Now co-directors Jeffrey L. Page and Diane Paulus are bringing new and very timely attention to the Declaration in a powerfully staged revival at the Loeb Drama Center co-presented by American Repertory Theatre and Roundabout Theatre Company.

In a Pirandellian effect, the actors playing the representatives of the 13 original colonies put on period coats, remove their own shoes and don Colonial era ones and pull up their white

see **1776,** *page 9*

Sushma Saha, Sara Porkalob, Mehry Eslaminia, Gisela Adisa, Crystal Lucas-Perry, Elizabeth A. Davis, Becca Ayers, Brooke Simpson, and Oneika Phillips in 1776. Photo: Evan Zimmerman for Murphy Made

How LGBTQ Parents Can Protect Their Families After Dobbs

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Since the U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned abortion rights, "people are panicking" about its potential impact on LGBTQ families, said Polly Crozier, senior staff attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD). How justified are the fears, and how can we best protect LGBTQ families after Dobbs? Crozier and Julie Gonen, federal policy director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), shared their thoughts with me.

Many are concerned that the court's June 24th decision in Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health could also be used to overturn other fundamental rights. Gonen said that while Justice Clarence Thomas, in his concurrence, was the only justice to explicitly say this should happen, the majority's reasoning "could easily be applied in a future case about sexual intimacy or marriage equality. And we are already seeing officials in some states openly saying they do want to return to a time when LGBTQ people were criminalized and barred from marriage."

For the moment, though, marriage equality "is the law of the land and we're not going to yield an inch," Crozier emphasized. "I feel like there's a renewed strength and vigor to hold the line."

Gonen said it was "very unlikely" that a challenge to these other rights would come before the court in its next term, because it would first need to move through the lower courts. Nevertheless, "We must take the threat seriously and be prepared to move aggressively in states that attempt to take us backwards."

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

NEW ENGLAND PRIDE EVENTS

VERMONT

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION WRJ PRIDE FEST
JULY 30
10am-6pm, Main Street Museum, White River Junction, VT
www.pridecentervt.org/events

BURLINGTON PRIDE
SEPTEMBER 9-18
12n-5pm, Waterfront Park, 20 Lake St., Burlington, VT
www.pridecentervt.org/pride/

"Wait a minute. Okay. Hold on a second here. You complain about me. I'm too weird. I'm too dark, and then you put nipples on the costume? Go f@$k yourself!"

—Tim Burton explains how he dealt with the "Batman" franchise. Oh, like there's something wrong with nipples on a latex bodysuit! If you're into that, you could buy the infamous costume when it goes on the auction block at Heritage Auction —with an opening bid of $40K. Holy Nipples, Batman!

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Urvashi Vaid Added To The "Wall Of Honor" At The Stonewall Inn

Along with James Hormel, Stephen Sondheim, Tyler Clementi, Dolores Alexander

On June 23, 2022, five LGBTQ icons were added to the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. The honor wall was inaugurated in 2019 in a partnership between the Imperial Court and the National LGBTQ Task Force. That year, 50 names were added to the wall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising.

This year, the following individuals were added to the wall:

• James Hormel, a philanthropist and the first openly LGBT person to represent the United States as an ambassador, died August 13 at the age of 88. He served as the ambassador to Luxembourg from 1999 to 2001 under former President Bill Clinton.

• Pioneering Indian American LGBTQ leader, attorney, and author Urvashi Vaid, a lifelong advocate for LGBTQ rights, women's rights, anti-war efforts, immigration justice and many other social causes. She was the Executive Director of the National LGBTQ Task Force from 1989 to 1992 and cofounded the organization's annual Creating Change conference. She was the author of the influential "Virtual Equality," found many organizations including LPAC, the first lesbian Super PAC. Prior to that, Vaid held positions on the boards at the Ford Foundation, The Arcus Foundation (where she served as Executive Director from 2005 to 2010), and the Gill Foundation. She was a leader in the development of the currently ongoing National LGBTQ women's community survey.

• Stephen Sondheim, the openly gay composer and lyricist who died November 26 at the age of 91. composer, songwriter and lyricist. He was of the most important figures in twentieth-century musical theater, credited for having "reinvented the American musical" with shows including West Side Story, Gypsy , A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Company Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street and many others. Sondheim' was the recipient of eight Tony Awards, an Academy Award, eight Grammys, a Pulitzer Prize, a Kennedy Center Honor, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

• Tyler Clementi, a gay 18-year-old Rutgers University student suicide following relentless bullying and cyberbullying captured worldwide media attention and moved his family to create the Tyler Clementi Foundation, dedicated to creating a safe environment for all individuals to thrive.

• Lesbian reporter and feminist Dolores Alexander, who died on May 13, 2008 at the age of 76. In 1969 she was named the first executive director of the National Organization for Women but resigned a year later after experiencing homophobia from the larger feminist movement.

Murray Ramirez, as the Queen Mother I of the Americas for the International Imperial Courts of the USA, Canada, and Mexico, oversees the selection of the quintet of LGBTQ people posthumously honored each year.

Murray Ramirez said: "Our goal with the Wall of Honor wall is to ensure the inductees are remembered. There are great LGBTQ individuals who have contributed to our movement, our culture and our world. We should never forget them and it is our responsibility to create a space to honor their lives and their legacies. My hope is that anyone who see the wall and does not know who these individuals are take the time to learn about the pioneers and icons on whose shoulders we stand."

Kierra Johnson, Executive Director of the National LGBTQ Task Force said: "The Task Force is humbled and moved to partner with the Imperial Court and recognize the extraordinary contributions of this year's inductees, including our own Urvashi Vaid, whose brilliance shaped our organization and the queer movement. As we fight back against attempts to erase the contributions of LGBTQ people in schools and elsewhere, a partnership like this can help ensure the world never forgets the contributions of these individuals."

Urvashi Vaid. Photo via LinkedIn.

Fenway Health Encourages Patients Presenting With Monkeypox Symptoms To Be Evaluated

Submitted by Fenway Health

As new cases of monkeypox – a rare viral disease similar to smallpox – make headlines locally and globally, Fenway Health would like to strongly encourage any patient presenting with potential symptoms to schedule an appointment with their PCP.

According to the CDC, monkeypox symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches and backache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appears on the face, inside the mouth, and on other parts of the body, like the hands, feet, chest, genitals, or anus.

Media coverage of the outbreak has tied the majority of cases to gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (MSM). While this outbreak may have began at an event attended by mostly MSM, we would like to emphasize that monkeypox is NOT an STD or a "gay disease;" it is spread through close bodily contact and can infect anyone.

We recognize that right now, there is a lot of anxiety and fear around monkeypox in our local LGBTQIA+ community. It is critical that we treat this as a public health issue that affects everyone, and not allow it to become a source of stigma or shame.

If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms or believe you may have been exposed to monkeypox, please make an appointment to be evaluated as soon as possible. As always, we take utmost concern for your privacy and hope that all patients who need evaluation do choose to get in touch with their providers.

Vandal

Continued from page 1

rector of LGBTQ Senior Housing Inc., doesn't live far from the construction site and said she started getting emails about the vandalism from neighbors out walking their dogs at about 8:30 a.m. Sunday.

"We've received such widespread support in the neighborhood and we've really been welcomed," she said. "This is not how the majority of people in Hyde Park feel."

The vandalism was reported to Boston police just before 11 a.m. Sunday, a department spokesperson said Monday. The matter was referred to the department's civil rights unit, Officer Andre Watson said. There had been no arrests as of Monday morning.

In response to the graffiti, about 100 people, including Mayor Michelle Wu, attended an afternoon rally at which the vandalism was covered by signs of support, including one that read "Being Gay isn't a Choice. Hate is."

Wu called the vandalism "pathetic."

"Hate & acts of vandalism will not be tolerated at the Pryde — or anywhere in Boston," she tweeted.

Suffolk District Attorney Kevin Hayden promised to hold the perpetrator accountable.

"This cannot stand. My office will prosecute threats to the LGBTQ+ community wherever and whenever they occur."

Van Ness was heartened by the show of support.

"You have to stand up to bullies, and you have to stand up to these cowards," she said. "You cannot let them have the last word. We feel anger and we feel despair, but to have people stand with us and say they feel anger and they feel despair makes the burden so much lighter."

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CROSSING GUARDS

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Qualifications: Ability to perform under varying weather conditions. Ability to supervise children and follow safety policies.

For a more complete list of employment opportunities and job descriptions, and to apply for any of the above positions, applicants should visit: www.governmentjobs.com/careers/andoverma

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The Extreme Court's virtual sacking of Washington

As the left fights over seating arrangements in Utopia

by Richard J. Rosendall | rrosendall@starpower.net

contributing writer

Hearing the booms from the Independence Day fireworks on the National Mall, I imagine our capital city being under bombardment. I was born in the now-vanished Doctors Hospital halfway between where the fuses are being lit and where I am writing.

"The ditch is nearer," wrote poet Robert Lowell six decades ago during the civil rights era, looking back to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and his 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, the black Civil War unit portrayed in the movie "Glory." The closest the war came to where I am, other than the presidential box at Ford's Theatre, was the Battle of Fort Stevens in the north of the city in 1864.

More violence has been directed from the District of Columbia than towards it; exceptions include the burning of Washington by the British in 1814, the riots following Dr. King's death in 1968, and the storming of the Capitol in 2021. Our long-nurtured sense of immunity from sacking now seems quaint as the threat unleashed by Trump lingers, less from his mob than from the three justices he nominated to our high court.

Elie Mystal of The Nation describes how Republican justices on what he dubs the Extreme Court ignore reality: "In Shinn v. Ramirez, the conservatives ignored a man's proof of his innocence and sentenced him to die just the same. In Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, they simply made up a set of facts in order to defend a high school football coach who was functionally pressuring public school students into Christian prayer. And in New York State Rifle & Pistol Association Inc. v. Bruen, they argued that actual statistics about gun violence are irrelevant to whether a state is allowed to issue gun permits."

Affirmative action will likely be the next to go, LGBTQ rights not long thereafter. Yet instead of fighting back, some among us obsess over pronouns and attack Bette Midler of all people for wanting to be able to say "women" without adding obligatory boilerplate including every variant to avoid accusations of murderous indifference. Instead of advancing the cause of inclusion, this surrender to the professionally outraged—like the embrace of the wildly unhelpful slogan "defund the police" in 2020—makes us look obtusely overzealous.

We cannot fight the far right effectively when we are too busy fighting among ourselves over seating arrangements in Utopia, nor when anyone who strays from the latest doctrinal formulation is accused of throwing people under the bus.

When dissent is demonized, the resulting silence is not agreement. Treating any variation from the rigid gender roles we challenged for half a century as necessarily nonbinary is not science but fashion. Liberation for all requires mutual tolerance and understanding, not imposing.

Gender diversity is not gender abolition. Those of us whose gender and birth sex are the same are increasingly treated as threats to a new genderless reality that radicals are willing into existence.

But that is not reality. The reality is that we are on the verge of losing rights for which generations fought. Meanwhile, trans friends of mine complain that their movement has been hijacked by people who are not transgender at all.

I wrote recently about the importance of channeling anger productively. Sadly, some view rage as a governing philosophy. It's like Mao's Permanent Revolution if it targeted Pride parades. The self-styled revolutionaries in this case, while they alarm the town criers at Fox News, are mainly assailing us with language policing, protesting Brett Kavanaugh's dinner at Morton's, and mulling over which affinity group requires a new stripe on the rainbow flag.

The entire point of the rainbow was that it is a metaphor for the whole spectrum of us. It is inherently all-inclusive. But it is metaphorical, not representational. As with the controversy over the Vietnam Veterans Memorial decades ago, some people prefer pounding differences to working together. Meanwhile, Christian nationalists work to suppress and nullify our votes. Our pulling apart helps them.

Progressive maximalists act vindicated when Democrats they deem imperfect lose elections. But all-or-nothing stances leave us with nothing. And the stakes have been raised. If Republicans retake Congress this November and the White House in 2024, we will likely lose all of our gains since Stonewall. We need the grace to temper our passions and address our abiding differences with respect, hope, and constructive commitment.

The July 4 fireworks have stopped, but a virtual bombardment is escalating. The black-robed enemy is already upon us.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist at rrosendall@me.com.

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Mombian

Continued from page 1

Right now, she asserted, "The most important thing LGBTQ parents can do to protect their families is to get a court order of adoption or parentage [for the nonbiological/nongestational parent]. That is essential, even for parents who are married and even for parents listed on a child's birth certificate." A birth certificate is not a court order and does not confer parentage, but merely records it, as LGBTQ legal organizations have long explained. "In some states," Gonen continued, "LGBTQ parents can use voluntary acknowledgements of parentage (VAPs), which have the same legal effect as a court order." VAPs are free forms that can be completed immediately after a child's birth. Gonen cautioned, however, "It is important to consult an experienced, knowledgeable LGBTQ family law attorney to make sure you are eligible to use a VAP."

Getting these protections is something that LGBTQ couples "should have been doing all along," Crozier said. She warned, though, that "there's still a lot of misinformation out there." with some lawyers and states telling people they don't need such court orders. If a court says that you don't need one, Crozier recommends asking a local attorney to file a motion to reconsider. You can also ask the lawyer to work with the local adoption bar to educate the court more systemically.

If you need a knowledgeable attorney, Crozier recommends searching the LGBTQ+ Bar Association's Family Law Attorney Directory or reaching out to GLAD or NCLR for names. She said some lawyers are even willing to do "low bono" or pro bono work, adding, "I think the legal community is here to help people."

You should also protect your family through estate planning documents like wills, powers of attorney, and health care proxies. While these can sometimes be expensive, "some of them can be very easy," Crozier said. In many states, a health care proxy is a form that can be printed out and executed. These documents will protect couples of any genders or marital status.

"People need to be using those tools" for parentage and estate planning, she insisted. "You never have been able to rely on marriage."

Another fear is whether Dobbs will impact assisted reproductive technology (ART). The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), in a recent report, said that Dobbs "does not necessarily restrict access" to ART, but "overly broad statutory language and definitions could, intentionally or not, implicate and even ban such procedures."

Gonen agreed that some state abortion bans may "[call] into question certain methods of assisted reproduction," but said, "Right now, LGBTQ people who are using ART to conceive should continue to do so, while keeping an eye on any potential legal obstacles. We will do our best to keep families informed, and we will certainly act to protect this essential means of creating families."

Crozier agreed, "We aren't seeing those curtailments on any assisted reproduction now and we will fight back really hard." Such a fight would involve "a big coalition of people," LGBTQ and not, because "so many people use assisted reproduction to build their families." Fertility advocacy groups like ASRM and RESOLVE are working "to make sure that any restrictions on abortion care aren't implicating access to fertility care and that we're all in this one movement together."

Whatever may transpire later, Dobbs is already restricting access to abortion in some states. And while many LGBTQ people get pregnant with planning worthy of chess masters, academic studies show that LGBTQ people who have been pregnant are also more likely than cisgender heterosexual women to have had unwanted or mistimed pregnancies and to need abortion services, according to a fact sheet released in June from HRC. Additionally, it said, LGBTQ+ people "may be at increased risk of a pregnancy resulting from a non-consensual encounter."

Currently, abortion remains legal in most states, note NCLR, GLAD, Family Equality, and COLAGE in "What LGBTQ+ Families Need to Know," a guide they released July 1. The guide, available free at any of the organizations' websites, also offers suggestions for finding LGBTQ-inclusive abortion care in your state or another, and goes into further detail about many of the topics above.

What more can we do? Crozier said, "There are ongoing efforts in the states to expand parentage protections and it's a great kind of practical, nuts-and-bolts, child-centered way to secure not only LGBTQ families but all children." She explained, "There's so much common ground" between LGBTQ people and others who want to build their families through ART. "We want all of those people to have paths to parentage."

"I don't think people still fully appreciate what it means for so many children to live in a system that is completely unequal," Crozier said. She encouraged people to get involved with their state efforts to update parentage laws.

Additionally, she said, "It's so powerful for people to share the stories of their families.... For people who can be out, be out, be joyful, and show the world how great your family is and that we are neighbors just like everybody."

"We're going to figure this out," she asserted. "The only way is to fight."

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books, media, and more.

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Worldbriefs

Caribbean court finds anti-sodomy law unconstitutional

By DANICA COTO, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—A Caribbean court ruled Tuesday that a law in Antigua and Barbuda that criminalizes gay sex is unconstitutional.

The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court found that "the selection of an intimate partner is a private and a personal choice."

The ruling also said the twin-island nation's 1995 Sexual Offenses Act "offends the right to liberty, protection of the law, freedom of expression, protection of personal privacy and protection from discrimination on the basis of sex."

The ruling comes after a gay man who works at Antigua's Ministry of Health and a local group called Women Against Rape Inc. asked that the law be found unconstitutional.

The rarely used law states in part that two consenting adults found guilty of having anal sex would face 15 years in prison. If found guilty of serious indecency, they would face five years in prison.

The gay man testified that he has been persecuted and assaulted, a common complaint across the largely conservative Caribbean region, where many homosexuals fear for their lives. The man also said that patients have refused treatment from him because of his sexual orientation, according to the ruling.

Meanwhile, the anti-rape group said that concern over breaches of confidentiality has prevented those in the LGBTQ community from seeking AIDS testing or treatment and that they receive hostile treatment by health care providers.

Such laws used to be common in former British colonies across the Caribbean but have been challenged in recent years. Courts in Belize and Trinidad & Tobago have found such laws unconstitutional, while other cases in the region are pending.

The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality welcomed Tuesday's outcome, which came in litigation that began in 2020 to challenge what it called "invasive and unconstitutional remnants of colonial law."

The group's executive director, Kenita Placide, said such laws "legitimize hate speech, discrimination and violence and tears at the fabric of our society."

The group said same-sex consensual intimacy is still criminalized in seven Caribbean countries, adding that while sentences are rarely imposed, penalties range from 10 years to life imprisonment.

It said constitutional challenges are pending in Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Kitts and Nevis.

In her ruling, High Court Judge Marissa Robertson said that "the Constitution is often described as a living instrument which gives significant room for the realization and enjoyment of individuals' human rights. The very rights that the document espouses and protects are capable of evolution since concepts, attitudes and the understanding of human rights and dignity evolve over time."

It wasn't immediately clear if the attorney general for Antigua and Barbuda planned to appeal the decision. Government officials couldn't be immediately reached for comment.

Slovenia: Court strikes bans on same-sex marriages, adoption

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia (AP)—A top court in Slovenia ruled that bans on same-sex couples getting marrying and adopting children are unconstitutional in the small European country and ordered its parliament to amend the law within six months to guarantee they can.

Constitutional Court judges ruled 6-3 on both issues Friday, saying that Slovenia's laws allowing only opposite-sex marriages and adoptions violated a constitutional prohibition against discrimination.

Discrimination against same-sex couples "cannot be justified with the traditional meaning of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, nor with special protection of family," according to the ruling carried by the Slovenian Press Agency.

The ruling, which the court said has immediate effect, breaks ground for LGBTQ rights in Central and Eastern Europe, where several countries have constitutional bans on same-sex marriage and none before now has allowed couples of the same sex to wed.

The government of Estonia came the closest in 2016 by agreeing to recognize same-sex unions created in other countries. Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Montenegro have laws establishing same-sex civil partnerships.

The court decision in Slovenia, which was a Socialist republic under communist rule as part of the former Yugoslavia before it became an independent country in 1991, came just weeks after a liberal national government took office, replacing one led by right-wing conservatives.

While the court gave the legislators six months to amend existing laws to conform with the ruling, the required changes would be ready in a week or two, Luka Mesec, the minister of labor, family, social affairs and equal opportunities, said.

"The Constitutional Court has ordered us to do it, and we will do it with the greatest pleasure," Mesec said.

The court took up the issue following complaints by two same-sex couples who could not get married or qualify to adopt children.

The decision "does not diminish the importance of traditional marriage as a union of a man and a woman, nor does it change conditions under which persons of the opposite sex marry," the judges said. "All it means is that same-sex partners can now marry just like heterosexual partners can."

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billy masters

Continued from page 1

I survived July 4th in Provincetown. But a handful of people I know went home with a little someone we call the Coronavirus. I have always been lucky when it comes to picking things up, but somehow I avoided that little critter. While those around me had mild symptoms, we don't know the lasting effect of this disease. So be careful out there. And, whatever you do, stay away from the monkeys!

I managed to see a number of shows. The incomparable **Judy Gold** is at the Ptown Art House and in rare form. **Randy Roberts** knocks 'em dead at the Post Office Café. **Ryan Landry's** "Showgirls" is outrageous fun at the Crown and Anchor. **Varla Jean Merman** defies gravity and at least three laws of physics in "Ready To Blow" also at the Crown. And, at the same venue, **Thirsty Burlington** turns back time and is **Cher** perfection (circa 1975).

Perhaps you are more of a Fire Island boy. While **Joel Kim Booster** (star of "Fire Island") is currently coupled, he has some advice for those of you who might be a bit more gregarious. "It was a lot more fun being the guest star in a threesome than it was logistically planning it as a couple. It's a logistical nightmare. Before it was just sort of, you come in and you get the spotlight and then you leave." Let me add my two cents —keep an eye on your socks. I can't tell you how many parties I've come home from sockless.

Could it be that I was basking on the beach while **Armie Hammer** was hopping to bells in the Caymans? A Twitter post showed the disgraced actor working as a concierge at Morritt's Resort in Grand Cayman. While he is, in fact, living at the resort, he is not on the payroll. He's friends with some of the staff, one of whom doctored up the photo which circulated as a flier! With friends like that...

Hours before this column was filed, I attended the opening night of "A Beautiful Noise" —a Broadway-bound musical about (and featuring the music of) **Neil Diamond**. It stars the fantastic **Will Swenson** as Neil, which makes as much sense as **Hugh Jackman** playing **Peter Allen**. Each of those legends would give their left testicle for the chance to look like their matinee idol equivalents. But in this case, it works —largely due to Swenson's eerie approximation of Diamond's somewhat whining vocal quality (would that he'd trust his voice enough let it open up and bloom to its full potential). Whether Neil was a cross between **Elvis, Johnny Cash and Liberace** is an argument I'll leave to others. I'll simply say that the show has a long way to go before it's ready for Broadway. It's short on exposition and jumps right into the singer's story —which gives the audience hope that there's an eventful life ahead. Alas, the show (and perhaps Neil's life) has no second act. The musical cannily approximates a Vegas-style concert to kick off the second half. Had that continued, it might have appealed to diehard fans. Instead, it meanders down a road that goes nowhere (the scene contrived to set up "You Don't Bring Me Flowers" is perhaps one of the most painful things I've ever seen). One cannot say enough about Swenson —I just wish he had material that equaled his talent. The rest of the cast is commendable —except for one person who must be recast immediately. Let me single out the dynamic Tatiana Lofton, who steals virtually every scene she appears in (she stood next to Swenson for the curtain call), and **Makai Hernandez**, whose ass should get special billing in those tight checked pants! It is at the Emerson Colonial Theatre in Boston until August 7th. As of now, the show begins previews on Broadway November 2nd. You can get more details at ABeautifulNoiseTheMusical.com.

While I was in the theatre, another Broadway show made a shocking announcement. **Beanie Feldstein**, who has helmed the "Funny Girl" revival and was scheduled to leave in September, has announced that her last show will be July 31st. She gives a curious reason for her premature evacuation: "Once the production decided to take the show in a different direction, I made the extremely difficult decision to step away sooner than anticipated." She does not say what this "different direction" is —except perhaps the desire to make audiences happy. Stay tuned.

Did you know that **Nick Lachey** almost appeared on Broadway in "The Book of Mormon"? **Josh Gad** revealed that when he auditioned for the musical, Lachey was a finalist for the role of Elder Price. While the part ultimately went to **Andrew Rannells**, Gad says Lachey "was really amazing and sang his face off". And yet, this was not Gad's only encounter with the "98 Degrees" heartthrob. When he first moved to LA, he had an audition for a film in which he'd play a quarterback, and the person he was up against was...Nick Lachey! 'Cause they're so similar!

Since I'm on the East Coast, I will miss **Jenifer Lewis** getting a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Naturally, the ceremony takes place on July 15th —which all devotees know is **Jackie Washington Day** (from her classic flick, "Jackie's Back!"). One thing about Miss Lewis —she always uses her platform to speak out. She wants to galvanize everyone to protest the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Her plan is for women around the country to lie down on freeways! "I don't care if it's 500 or 1000 women, where we lay down on every freeway and block them all in every major city at rush hour." If you're driving along and see something in the road, for the love of God, STOP!

Someone you may encounter lying on the road is **Wendy Williams**. As you know, her eponymous chat show went off the air without Wendy anywhere in sight. Within moments of the finale, the show's entire YouTube channel disappeared! But you didn't think Wendy would go quietly, did you? Days later, she turned up on TMZ to say she was bored with television and didn't need the money. She now wants to get into podcasting, where she claims she can make even more money (I beg to differ). However, the strangest part was when she lifted up her foot to head level to show the effects of lymphedema. While it looks staggeringly uncomfortable, I have to admit I was impressed she could get her leg up that high! She also revealed that **Kathy Bates** suffers from the same malady. "She has lymphedema entirely —except her boobs and her ass...and her face." That's a whole lotta lymphedema! Throughout the chat, Wendy rambled and seemed somewhat disoriented. I just hope she gets the help she needs.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Jasper in Las Vegas: *"I heard that 'The Boys' had a gay orgy scene. True? Who participated?"*

Well, one man's orgy is another man's...well, we're getting ahead of ourselves —which you never wanna do at an orgy. While "The Boys" has more than its share of hot men, tales (or tails) of a gay orgy have been grossly exaggerated. When **Jensen Ackles** filmed his first scene, he had to walk out of a cryogenic capsule completely naked (you can see all on BillyMasters.com). "What better way to bring a new guy onto the set than make him take all his clothes off?" said Jensen. "So, yeah, it was a nice intro for me into a completely foreign space with nothing on but a sock."

When anyone is wearing a sock to a gay orgy, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Obviously it wasn't moi! To paraphrase someone famous —I've known orgies, and that's no orgy. But you can find more than your fill at www.BillyMasters.com —the site that's like a virtual orgy —but you won't lose your socks! If you have a gap that only I can fill, send specifics (and photos) to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before someone invites Jared Padalecki to an orgy! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Varla Jean Merman

Wendy WIIIams

Jensen Ackles

Nationalbriefs

Texas judge blocks investigations of two trans youth families

By ANDREW DeMILLO, Associated Press

A Texas judge issued an order Friday to continue blocking the state from investigating two families of transgender youth who have received gender affirming medical care and said she was considering whether to prevent additional investigations.

The ruling extends in part a temporary order issued last month blocking investigations against three families who sued and preventing any similar investigations against members of the LGBTQ advocacy group PFLAG Inc. The group has more than 600 members in Texas.

In her order Friday, Judge Amy Clark Meachum said she was still weighing whether to issue a similar order prohibiting similar investigations against the third family and PFLAG members. An order preventing those investigations had been set to expire Friday. An attorney last month said the third family of a transgender minor had learned after the lawsuit's filing that the state had dropped its investigation into them.

The two families to whom Friday's order applies would "suffer probable, imminent, and irreparable injury in the interim" without the order, Meachum wrote.

The ruling was the latest against the state's efforts to label gender affirming care as child abuse.

The Texas Supreme Court in May allowed the state to investigate parents of transgender youth for child abuse while also ruling in favor of one family that was among the first contacted by child welfare officials following order by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

The latest challenge was brought by Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of the families of three teenage boys—two 16-year-olds and a 14-year-old—and PFLAG.

"The Court recognized yet again that being subjected to an unlawful and unwarranted investigation causes irreparable harm for these families who are doing nothing more than caring for and affirming their children and seeking the best course of care for them in consultation with their medical providers," the groups said in a statement.

The families had talked in court filings about the anxiety that the investigations created for them and their children. The mother of one of the teens said her son attempted suicide and was hospitalized the day Abbott issued his directive. The outpatient psychiatric facility where the teen was referred reported the family for child abuse after learning he had been prescribed hormone therapy, she said in a court filing.

A judge in March put Abbott's order on hold after a lawsuit was brought on behalf of a 16-year-old girl whose family said it was under investigation. The Texas Supreme Court in May ruled that the lower court overstepped its authority by blocking all investigations going forward.

The lawsuit that prompted that ruling marked the first report of parents being investigated following Abbott's directive and an earlier nonbinding legal opinion by Paxton labeling certain gender-confirming treatments as "child abuse." The Texas Department of Family and Protective Service has said it opened nine investigations following the directive and opinion.

Abbott's directive and the attorney general's opinion go against the nation's largest medical groups, including the American Medical Association, which have opposed Republican-backed restrictions filed in statehouses nationwide.

Arkansas last year became the first state to pass a law prohibiting gender-confirming treatments for minors, and Tennessee approved a similar measure. Judges have blocked laws in Arkansas and Alabama, and both of those states are appealing.

Meachum set a Dec. 5 trial on whether to permanently block Texas' investigations into the families.

Wolf vetoes bills on poll watchers, transgender athletes

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP)—Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf on Friday rejected three bills passed by the Republican majority Legislature, vetoing measures regarding transgender athletes in school sports and poll watchers.

He also struck down the Human Services Code, blowing a hole in the state budget as lawmakers were trying to finish the annual flurry of votes that accompany the annual spending plan.

Wolf had previously warned he would strike down the bill to prohibit transgender athletes from playing sports that align with their gender identity. In his veto message, he said the bill would have "a devastating impact on a vulnerable population already at greater risk of bullying and depression."

He also vetoed a bill—sponsored by Franklin County Sen. Doug Mastriano, the GOP's nominee for governor—to let all registered voters of Pennsylvania serve as poll watchers in any precinct in the state.

"This bill does nothing to increase access to voting," he wrote. "Instead, this bill undermines the integrity of our election process and encourages voter intimidation."

Wolf's third veto was based on a provision in the Human Service Code that would have prohibited a state agency from contracting with a vendor of financial management services.

"These self-directed services allow participants to make choices about their own care, with this model supporting both participants and direct care workers," he wrote in his veto message.

Vetoing the legislation created a $1.8 billion gap in the budget, Wolf said, but after the veto lawmakers put language from the Human Services Code into a different bill and passed it.

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1776

Continued from page 1

socks to become the characters about to create a free country. Provocatively, the diversity-embracing cast of the A.R.T.-RTC revival includes female, non-binary and trans actors. If the casting calls to mind the inclusion of African-American and Hispanic actors in the landmark Tony-winner "Hamilton," it also should serve as a timely reminder that the actual "all men are created equal" Declaration excluded women, African-Americans and LGBT Americans.

As always, a strong production of "1776" depends upon commanding work by the performers playing the lead Continental Congress figures. The very good news is that Crystal Lucas- Perry has all of John Adams' passion for independence and obstinacy in dealing with fellow Congressmen. Lucas-Perry also brings satisfying tenderness to the Massachusetts legislator's letter-driven "Til Then" duets with Allyson Kaye-Daniel as his understanding wife Abigail. Elizabeth A. Davis captures the reserve of Thomas Jefferson in dealing with outspoken Adams and compromising with Southern leaders who demand the deletion of the condemnation of slavery. Patrena Murray makes the most of Benjamin Franklin's humorous quips and iconoclastic demeanor as he strongly endorses the establishment of a "new nationality, a new nation."

Equally impressive are the cast members playing the more conservative speakers. Joanna Glushak is a standout as Pennsylvania gadfly John Dickinson—whether facing off with Adams, cozying up to Southern counterparts or refusing to sign the Declaration while promising to fight with the Continental army. Director Page—doubling as choreographer—gives Glushak and the other cast members playing the property-driven conservatives a sharp minuet that reflects their grandiosity. By contrast, Adams, Franklin and Jefferson have well-danced soft shoe moments. Sara Porkalob catches South Carolina legislator Edward Rutledge's ferocious defense of slavery in "Molasses to Rum," the musical's best and most disturbing number—in which the complicity of Northern States is highlighted. Rum barrels—prominent here—become even more conspicuous symbols of an imperfect nation as they literally rise to the theater's rafters at the close.

Standouts in support are Eryn LeCroy as Martha Jefferson and Salome Smith as Courier. LeCroy combines an opera-worthy delivery and notable mischievousness on the suggestive number "He Plays the Violin." Salome Smith brings heartbreaking angst to the war grieving of "Mama Look Sharp."

Very early on, the chorus-like legislators call on Adams to open up a window at their hot Philadelphia meeting. Page and Paulus bring timely fresh air to Edwards and Stone's valuable on-going history lesson.

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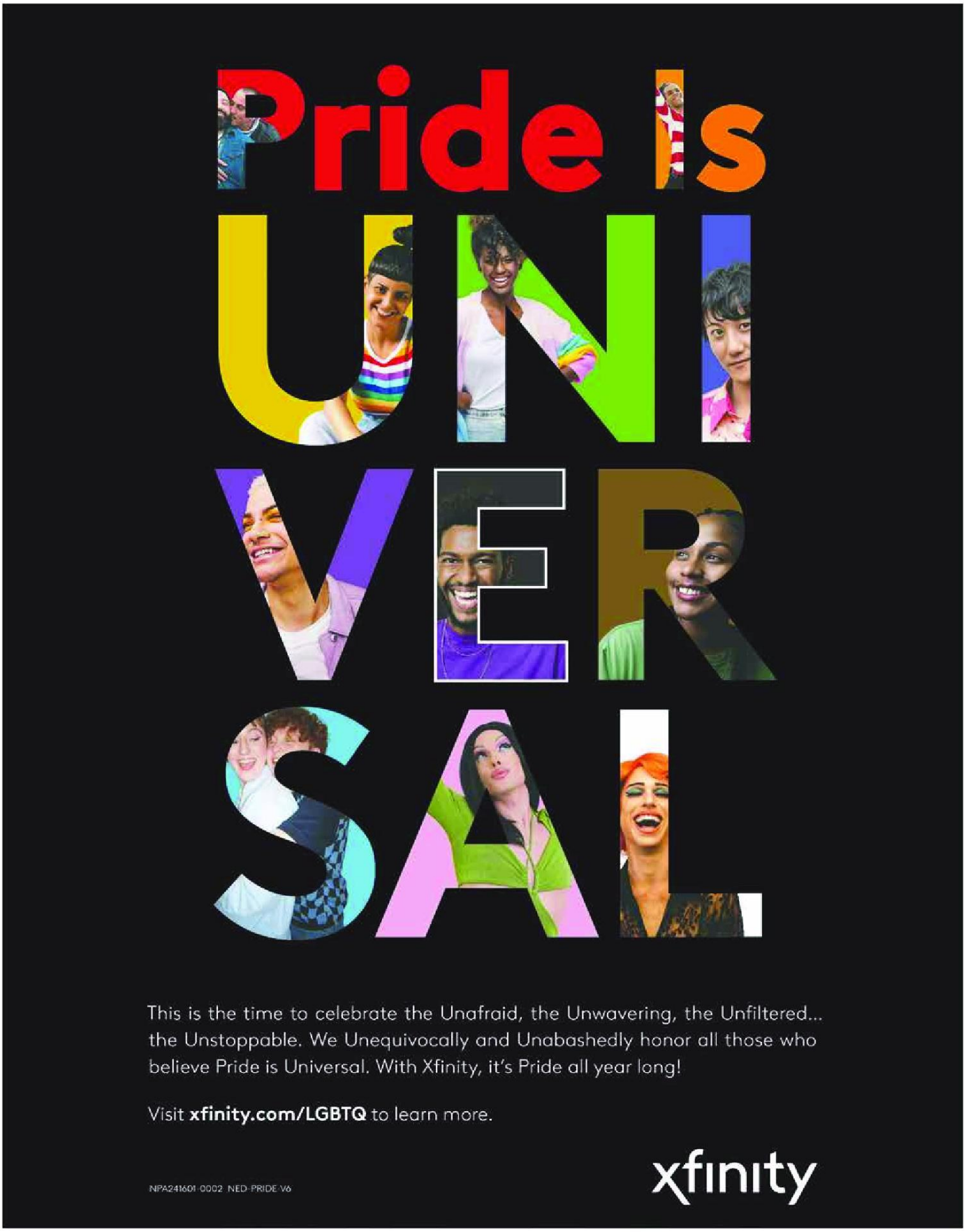

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