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National Park Service awards $749,467 to Arlington Street Church

To help preserve America's LGBTQ rights history

By Bay Windows Staff and National Park Service

The National Park Service awarded $5 million to eight projects in six states as part of the Historic Preservation Fund's History of Equal Rights grant program, which focuses on the preservation of sites directly associated with the struggle for all Americans to gain equal rights.

This year's grants are made to sites significant to the equal rights of women; Hispanic and African Americans; labor-

see **ASC,** *page 7*

A historic moment at the Arlington Street Church, David Wilson and Rob Compton, the first of the seven Goodridge couples to legally tie the knot. Photo by Marilyn Humphries.

Registration Now Open for Boston's LGBTQ+ Pride Parade and Festivals

Boston Pride Parade 2023. Photo by Bay Windows Staff.

Organizers Seek Sponsors for June 8th Celebration

Submitted by BP4TP

Boston Pride For The People (BP4TP) today announced the opening of registration for the 2024 Pride Parade, as well as the festivals to be held on Saturday, June 8th, 2024 on Boston Common and City Hall Plaza.

The parade will start in Copley Square at 11 A.M. and move through the city's South End, finishing at Boston Common where everyone can enjoy the festival that includes performances from local and national entertainers. City Hall Plaza will host a Block Party for those 21+ that begins later in the afternoon. All BP4TP events are free to attend.

see **PRIDE,** *page 7*

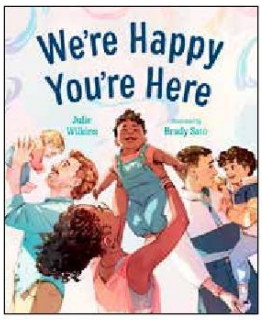
New Books for New or Growing LGBTQ Families

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

As the season turns towards spring and new beginnings, it feels appropriate to highlight five new and upcoming LGBTQ-inclusive picture books about welcoming new children into a family.

Creating an LGBTQ family often requires outside assistance. "We're Happy You're Here," by Julie Wilkins, illustrated by Brady Sato (Orca), is a celebration of all the "Many special people" who "did many special things" for a child to be here today, including not only queer and non-queer couples and solo parents, but also siblings, grandparents, gamete donors, surrogates, and medical, financial, legal, and social service professionals.

This is not a how-to of family creation, but a simple and loving look at diverse families and their helpers as they dream, plan, and hope. Many have queer-coded haircuts, clothing,



or tattoos; others' identities are more ambiguous. A few read as nonbinary, including one who is pregnant. Several of the expressive illustrations show the different people as part of the same city or neighborhood, offering a sense of connection and community. This is

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

Closing the ruthlessness gap

We must defend our progress or lose it

by Richard J. Rosendall | rrosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

It's all coming at us too fast—just as the tech pioneers intended. Journalist Kara Swisher writes in her terrific memoir Burn Book that tech innovators two and three decades ago were not big on safety tools. "They needed to anticipate consequences more. Or at all," she says. Instead, their ethos was expressed on early Facebook office posters: "Move fast and break things." Judging by the current state of social media, they succeeded.

Like many people, I am addicted to the platform once called Twitter, despite Elon Musk turning it into a sewer pipe of hate and disinformation. I follow some smart people there, including Swisher, a witty lesbian who knows all the tech CEOs and talks bluntly to them.

Breaking things is also the evident mission of the Republican Party. Mitch McConnell, stepping down as Senate Minority leader at the end of this year, was successful in packing the Supreme Court with right-wing jus-

see **ROSENDALL,** *page 4*

"A tiger and a little bit of meth I can make MGK gay."

—Joe Exotic posts a photo of Machine Gun Kelly with this inscription. Frankly, I probably wouldn't be trying to turn anyone with a gun!

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo by State of Florida, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Nationalbriefs

Students walk out of Oklahoma high school where nonbinary student was beaten and later died

OWASSO, Okla. (AP) — More than a dozen students walked out of class Monday at an Oklahoma high school where a 16-year-old nonbinary student was beaten inside a restroom earlier this month and died the following day.

Students and LGBTQ+ advocates held signs that read "You Are Loved" and "Protect Queer Kids" as they gathered at an intersection across from Owasso High School.

The students are demanding action against discrimination and bullying of transgender and gender nonconforming students after the death of Nex Benedict, a 16-year-old student at the school who identified as nonbinary and used they/them pronouns. Benedict, who died the day after a fight with three girls inside a high school restroom, had been the target of bullying at the school, their family said.

"Students and families are out in force today having to demand the basics: to be safe from bullying and violence," the LGBTQ advocacy group GLAAD said in a statement. "It is appalling and shameful that Nex Benedict endured a year of anti-LGBTQ harassment, then a brutal beating in the school bathroom."

The state medical examiner's office has not released the cause or manner of Benedict's death, but a police spokesperson has said preliminary results show the death was not the result of injuries suffered in the fight. Police are investigating the teen's death and will forward the findings of their investigation to the district attorney's office to determine what, if any, criminal charges might be filed.

Vigils honoring the teen have been held across Oklahoma and the nation after news of Benedict's death.

LGBTQ+ advocacy group sues Texas AG, says it won't identify transgender families

By Kimberlee Kruesi and Geoff Mulvihill
Associated Press

A national LGBTQ+ advocacy group is suing the Texas Attorney General's office rather than hand over information about its support of transgender children receiving gender-confirming medical care.

According to the lawsuit filed Wednesday in Texas court, PFLAG National says Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton's office is demanding "documents and communications" related to a sworn statement the group's CEO Brian Bond provided to a court last year while opposing the state's transgender youth medical care ban.

Bond's statement at the time detailed how many PFLAG members had set up contingency plans should their child's medical care be cut off, ranging from finding resources to move out of state to finding alternative care inside Texas. Bond's affidavit was submitted shortly after Republican Gov. Greg Abbott signed a sweeping gender-affirming care ban for minors.

The lawsuit alleges that the attorney general is "seeking to determine which Texas families are seeking to access gender-affirming care for their transgender adolescents."

PFLAG is asking the state court to block Paxton's request.

"This mean-spirited demand from the Attorney General's Office is petty and invasive, which is why we want the court to put an end to it," Bond said in a statement.

Texas has a history of battling PFLAG in court. The state in 2022 adopted a policy of investigating families of transgender children who have received gender-affirming care as child abuse cases. Later that year, a judge blocked the investigations against the families and barred any similar investigations against members of PFLAG.

PFLAG says the attorney general is improperly using a state consumer protection law — which does include a provision prohibiting misrepresentation surrounding transgender medical procedures — to justify their information requests, which they claim is wrong because their group does not provide gender-affirming services.

According to the civil investigative demand letter sent to PFLAG on Feb. 9, Paxton's office said "the division believes you are in possession, custody or control of documentary material relevant to the subject matter of an investigation of actual or possible violation" of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices-Consumer Protect Act.

The letter seeks documents dating back to when the state's gender-affirming care ban minors, known as SB 14, went into effect in June 2023.

In a statement, Paxton said PFLAG appears to have "significant information about persons or practitioners" violating the law.

"Texas passed SB 14 to protect children from damaging, unproven medical interventions with catastrophic lifelong consequences for their health," Paxton said. "Any organization seeking to violate this law, commit fraud, or weaponize science and medicine against children will be held accountable."

Currently, Texas is one of at least 23 states that has adopted a ban on gender-affirming care for minors in recent years.

The bans generally mean that people under 18 have to go to another state for puberty blocker or hormone therapy -- or stop treatment. They also ban gender-affirming surgeries for minors, but those are exceptionally rare for those under 18.

The group's lawsuit alleges that Paxton's latest request is a direct response to their continued defense of transgender youth.

"These demands are a clear and unmistakable overreach by the (Office of the Attorney General) in retaliation for PFLAG successfully standing up for its members, who include Texas transgender youth and their families, against the OAG's, the Attorney General's, and the State of Texas's relentless campaign to persecute Texas trans youth and their loving parents," the lawsuit states.

Since last year, Texas has also demanded records from at least two out-of-state health centers that provide gender-affirming care.

Seattle Children's Hospital disclosed in court filings that it received a demand in November.

see **NATIONAL,** *page 5*

Policing abortion in the name of God

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

France has just enshrined abortion rights in its Constitution. What's wrong with the U.S.?

It's its collapse of the church into the affairs of the state. For example, the recent Alabama Supreme Court theology-ridden ruling (LePage v. Mobile Infirmary Clinic, Inc.) conferred personhood status to frozen IVF embryos as doing God's will. Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Parker wrote in the ruling that "human life cannot be wrongfully destroyed without incurring the wrath of a holy God."

With this ruling, reproductive justice is thrown out of the window. Women, girls, and people with the capacity for pregnancy in the state of Alabama have been relegated to human chattel and birthing incubators. And, if you thought Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" was a fictitious dystopian novel, read it now as a survival guide because this ruling will have broader implications in the ongoing anti-abortion war.

"Pro-life" versus "the life of the child"

Women, girls, and people with the capacity to give birth caught up in the pro-life battle need to know their lives don't matter. Neither does that of the child. While Parker's theocratic ruling takes his concepts of "pro-life" to a newer mean-spirited and punitive level, the label "pro-life" has always used religion to cloak the misogyny and transphobia of anti-abortion legislation since Roe v Wade was ratified in 1973. The care for the fetus doesn't extend beyond birth. Former Massachusetts Democratic gay congressman Barney Frank said for pro-lifers, "Life begins at conception and ends at birth." Studies have shown that unwanted children born in states or areas where there are abortion restrictions have much more challenging lives and often live in poverty.

The Trump Effect

The precursor for the recent Alabama decision was the landmark Supreme Court decision passing Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022), overturning Roe v Wade, and Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992). Before Roe was overturned, abortion was a fundamental right under the Constitution. This right afforded women, girls, and people with the capacity for pregnancy under the 14th Amendment full citizenship, the right to privacy, bodily autonomy, and respect for a person's choice without judgment. However, religion drove the Dobbs's decision and was influenced by conservative Catholic thinkers, theologians, and Supreme Court justices.

With the overturning of Roe v Wade, we saw justice wasn't blind but rather biased. This is the effect of Trump's presidency. Trump nominated 274 conservative Republicans to federal benches and three to the Supreme Court- Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett-who all sided in overturning Roe v. Wade. Today, as with the Dobb decision to overturn Roe, the Supreme Court comprises six Catholics, accounting for two-thirds of its total number of justices, of which five are pro-lifers.

Abortion rights are queer rights

Before the Dobbs decision and now Alabama's, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, due to health disparities, access to a safe abortion was primarily out of their reach. Women and girls, however, are not the only ones who need abortion care. Nonbinary people, intersex individuals, gender non-conforming folks, and trans men need abortion care, too!

"I am a transgender man, which means that although I am a man, I was assigned female at birth, which means that I have a uterus, which means that I could get pregnant. Which means that I could need an abortion," Schuyler Bailar, a transgender athlete and activist, told CBSNews.com in 2021. "I am here to remind you to make it absolutely clear that people of all genders can have abortions, and people of all genders should have safe and legal access to abortions."

According to the 2023 Guttmacher Institute's Abortion Patient Survey, 16 percent of U.S. abortion patients do not identify as heterosexual women. And according to the 2020 sur-

see **MONROE,** *page 7*

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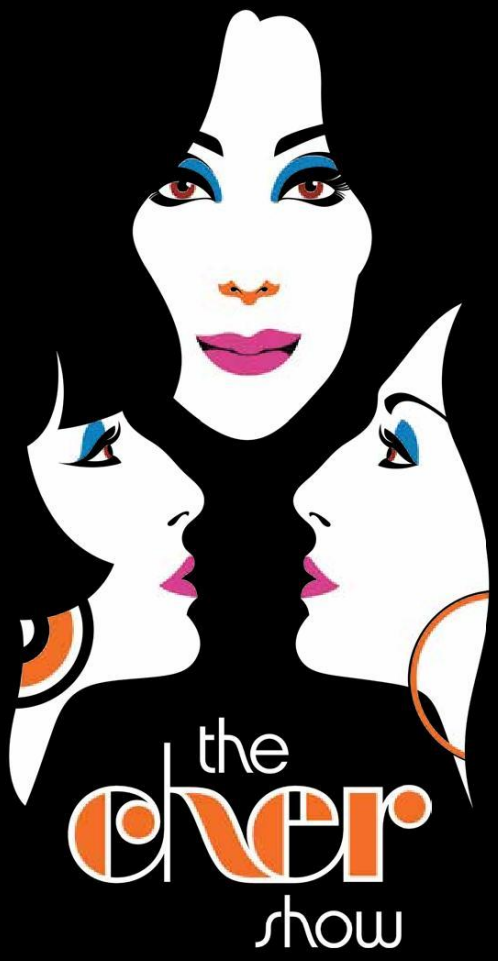

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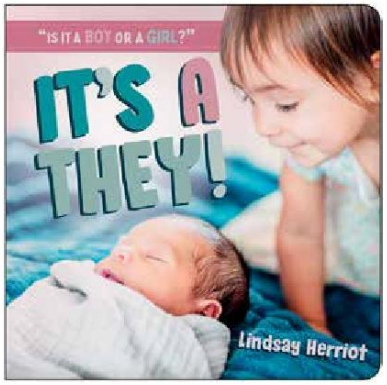
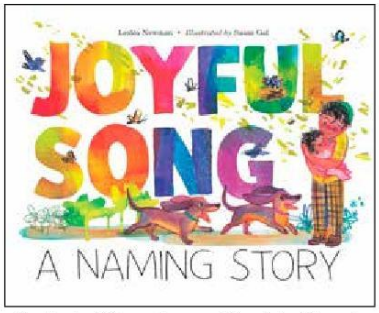
bound to become a go-to gift book for LGBTQ families, though it really works for almost any kind of family, and that's the beauty of it.

"It's a They!" by Lindsay Herriot (Orca), is a charming board book that welcomes a new baby without applying gender labels. The adorable photos show various babies and siblings playing and cuddling as the rhyming text provides commentary from the siblings' perspectives. The new baby is small, soft, and fun to snuggle, we read. When asked if the baby is a brother or sister, "They're our sibling," is the reply. On one page, the sibling ponders what pronouns the baby will use, and leaves the question unanswered. And when people ask if the baby is a girl or a boy, the sibling responds, "We aren't sure of their gender yet—and they bring us so much joy." The family will "love them just as they are" no matter who they become.

The three books below help fill a gap in picture-book representation of human children with LGBTQ parents welcoming a new sibling. There have been surprisingly few previous ones that haven't used anthropomorphic animals or analogies with pets.

In "Harper Becomes a Big Sister," by Seamus Kirst, illustrated by Karen Bunting (Magination), Harper is excited when her dads tell her they're adopting a baby boy. She imagines him joining in all their family activities.





Reality is different, however. New baby Wyatt just sleeps, eats, and needs his diaper changed. Harper's dads are too tired or too busy with him to spend much time with her. "Everything is about the baby!" she yells, storming off to her room.

Her dads follow, and she explains why she's mad; they promise to be better about finding time for her. Dad plays hide-and-seek with her while Daddy holds Wyatt, and we know that this family is going to work things out.

As in his previous books about two-dad families, Kirst thoughtfully explores a challenging situation and models useful ways for children to work through their emotions. The book has the same protagonist family as Kirst's "Dad and Daddy's Big Big Family" (about extended family), although each can be read separately. In both, Bunting's illustrations bring a warm charm to the characters and their world.

In "All Our Love," by Kari-Lynn Winters, illustrated by Scot Ritchie (North Winds Press), life has been "just right" for Sofia and her two dads—but when they they say she will soon have a new brother, Sofia has lots of questions: Will her dads like the new child better? Does the new child even want a sister?

While she waits, she writes her sibling a welcome letter about life in their family, what each dad likes to do, and what they (and she) are good at. "You might get asked," she also notes, "why we have ... a Dad and a Daddy. We're just lucky, I guess." Her parents love her, Sofia concludes, but they'll also love you. Now, their family will again be "just right."

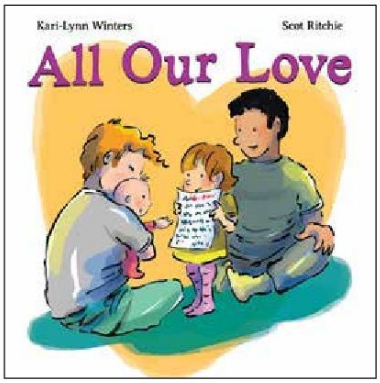
Much of the text plays out as the illustrations show Sofia being picked up at school by one dad and rushing to the hospital to meet the other in the birthing ward, a lovely way of combining action and reflection. The sweet and gently humorous story does not indicate whether the family was formed via surrogacy or adoption, making it broadly applicable.

"Joyful Song: A Naming Story," by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Susan Gal (Levine Querido), is the tale of a Jewish boy and his two moms heading to the naming ceremony for his new baby sister. Along the way, several neighbors of various racial and ethnic identities want to know the baby's name, and Zachary can hardly keep from spilling the secret. His moms interrupt with nicknames ("Little Babka" is my favorite), and invite the neighbors to join them for the big reveal. At the ceremony, with the rabbi (notably a woman) next to them, Zachary happily announces his sister's real name. The family, neighbors, and congregation then have lunch together, part of a diverse community whose members honor each other's traditions.

Newman, acclaimed author of "Heather Has Two Mommies" and more than 80 other books, has here crafted a story both lyrical and delightful, while Gal's lush watercolor illustrations befit the vibrant community.

Whether you are growing your own family or helping to celebrate another, I hope that one or more of these books brings joy to you and the children in your life.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1,500+ LGBTQ family books.



Rosendall

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tices and destroying the comity of the Senate in service of raw power. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a creepy theocrat who aided Trump's January 6 insurrection and whose razor-thin majority is hostage to its most extreme members, will only take action on the floor if someone forces him.

American politics is epitomized by Trump's recent visit to the Texas border where he baselessly claimed that countries like "the Congo" are emptying their jails and "insane asylums" and dumping the inmates here. Trump spoke of a "migrant crime wave," despite the fact that immigrants to America commit crimes at a lower rate than people born here.

Trump and his mob are the crime wave, eagerly spreading an epidemic of meanness and ignorance.

There is increasing talk of a "ruthlessness gap" between Republicans and Democrats. As Churchill said, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on."

Republicans pretend they can save in-vitro fertilization while giving frozen embryos the same legal standing as children. They can't. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), in blocking a bill to protect IVF, claimed it would lead to human-animal hybrids. It's time for politicians to stop dabbling in science and medicine, and for voters to stop being so easily manipulated. Considering the number of email scams we all receive, we should have learned greater skepticism by now.

Progress is always followed by setbacks. Swisher quotes French philosopher Paul Virilio: "When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when you invent the plane, you also invent the plane crash; and when you invent electricity, you invent electrocution." Similarly, when you invent democracy, you invent demagogues.

"The only thing standing between freedom and the TOTAL OBLITERATION of our country is your endless gullibility," Trump wrote to his supporters. "From the bottom of my heart, I'm asking for you to stand with me just one more time."

Oh, pardon me. He said "support," not "endless gullibility."

Freedom is an empty word if it only means the freedom of a vindictive, cognitively declining sociopath to be above the law. It also means freedom from harm by the rich and powerful. Many business advocates don't just want fewer regulatory guardrails, they want none at all.

An Alabama roofing company was recently fined $117,175 for violating federal child labor laws when a 15-year-old it hired fell 50 feet to his death on his first day. He died in 2019.

It is sad beyond words: a child's entire future was stolen, and those responsible will pay a modest fine and move on. At his age I was an avid science fiction reader. When children die from others' greed and recklessness, we might fitly pause to think of the futures that will never be.

It is not only guns that kill people. When you hear Republicans attack "job-killing regulation," think of child-killing labor practices. Think of their opposition to environmental regulations, building codes, and life-saving surgery for women with ectopic pregnancies. If being "pro-life" is more to you than a slogan for gaining power, remember that the Democrats are the party with a real track record of protecting lives. Do not be deceived by culture-war rhetoric into going against your own best interests.

The civil marriage equality I helped win in DC has only been on the books for 14 years. The Obergefell ruling making our marriage rights nationwide was only nine years ago. If we value the progress that we and those who came before us have made, we must stand clearly and firmly against those who would see it undone.

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

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The Washington state attorney general's office has intervened, invoking for the first time a 2023 law that blocks people in Washington from cooperating with criminal or civil investigations by officials in other states related to gender-affirming care or abortion.

QueerMed, a Georgia-based online telemedicine provider of gender-affirming care, has said it too received a request and would not comply. The organization says it does not treat patients in Texas.

West Virginia House OKs bill doctors say would eliminate care for most at-risk transgender youth

By Leah Willingham
Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia's Republican-controlled House of Delegates passed a bill on Wednesday that doctors treating transgender youth in the state say would prevent the prescription of certain medical interventions like hormone therapy to patients at risk for self-harm or suicide.

The proposal, which now heads to the Senate, was greenlit after more than 500 medical professionals and students signed a letter opposing it, expressing concern it would cause young patients preventable harm and put their lives at risk.

House Republicans said such fears are overblown and that the bill is less restrictive than current law. But the state's only LGBTQ+ advocacy organization and doctors treating transgender youth in West Virginia said that's not true.

"If this bill becomes law, it will take away the only treatment that has been shown to help a small, but very vulnerable group of children," said Dr. Kate Waldeck, a pediatric critical care physician at Hoops Family Children's Hospital in the state's second-largest city of Huntington. Waldeck runs a monthly clinic for transgender youth — one of only a few existing care options in the state.

She said the law as it stands enables transgender adolescents to get the medical and psychiatric evaluations they need while still allowing doctors "to provide what is truly life-saving medical care."

"That's what it comes down to — gender-affirming care keeps these children out of my PICU. It saves lives," she said. "And the new bill would strip parents of the right to obtain this potentially life-saving care for their children."

On the House floor, Lead Sponsor Republican Del. Geoff Foster said he doesn't believe treatments like puberty blockers help reduce suicide rates, despite research showing otherwise.

He said the bill is "pointing doctors in the direction of actually treating the issue of the suicidality problem and the depression rather than moving to a solution that's not working."

Republicans in the House of Delegates — who occupy 89 out of 100 seats — voted last year to eliminate transgender minors' access to hormone therapy and puberty blockers. The bill was altered in the Senate by Majority Leader Tom Takubo, a physician who expressed concern about the high suicide rate for transgender youth.

The 2023 law allows the prescription of medical interventions but requires parental consent and a diagnosis of severe gender dysphoria from two medical professionals, both of whom must provide written testimony that medical interventions are necessary to prevent or limit possible or actual self-harm.

It says any use of the medication must be the lowest possible necessary "to treat the psychiatric condition and not for purposes of gender transition."

Takubo, a physician, cited more than a dozen peer-reviewed studies showing a decrease in rates of suicide ideation and attempts among youth with severe gender dysphoria who had access to medication therapy. Gender dysphoria is defined by medical professionals as severe psychological distress experienced by those whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.

The law also prohibits kids from accessing gender-affirming surgery, which physicians said wasn't happening in West Virginia anyway.

House Health and Human Resources Chair Amy Summers, a Republican and registered nurse, said this year's bill wouldn't prevent adolescents from getting hormone therapy treatment for psychiatric conditions like gender dysphoria as long as the dose was not supraphysiologic, or high enough that it "actually assisted that child in transitioning."

"What has been expressed to me by physicians

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This column almost opened with a quote from **Oklahoma State Senator Tom Woods**—who, needless to say, is a Republican. Last week, at a public forum, he was asked something which deserves to be quoted in its entirety: "Is there a reason why you won't answer about the 50 bills targeting the LGBTQ community in the state of Oklahoma? If you are ashamed of those bills, they shouldn't be there?" Senator Woods said, "We are a religious state and we are going to fight it to keep that filth out of the state of Oklahoma because we are a Christian state—we are a moral state." I must have dozed off at some point because I do not recall anything religious when I saw "Oklahoma!". And I'm not entirely sure some states are religious and others are atheist. But, loyal fans know that when this column began over a quarter of a century ago, it was called "Filth". So thank you, Mr. Woods, for the shoutout! But, it should be noted, he is correct—my column never appeared in print in Oklahoma.

History was made at Mar-a-Lago last week—it hosted a gay wedding! Now, I don't know if this was the first gay wedding at the venue—but I'm fairly certain **Marjorie Merriweather Post** knew her share of gays! We're told that **Donald Trump** gave his personal approval for the ceremony to take place. That's probably because the guys getting hitched were **Dan Medora and John Sullivan**. Sullivan happens to be the vice chairman and treasurer of the Log Cabin Republicans of Tennessee, and posted the following: "Huge thank you to Donald Trump for giving us the green light to have our wedding at the beautiful Mar-a-Lago club." While Trump has been known to pop in unexpectedly on private events at the club, he skipped this one. He probably was worried he'd catch the bouquet!

This reminds me of a story we had to cut a few weeks ago due to space limitations. A man who is a devotee of our former president decided to get a tattoo of Trump on his arm. Except after posting it, most people pointed out that it looks more like **Ross Mathews**. Oh, the irony!

Don Lemon just hit the jackpot. According to reports, CNN must pay him an early termination fee in the amount of $24.5 million! Is it just me, or is he suddenly looking more attractive? The payoff is based on the time he had remaining on his contract. Still, I'd bet he'd rather not have the money and be on CNN instead of heading to X/Twitter!

Eagle-eyed **Madonna** fans noted a minor change in her show. During "Live To Tell", she has a photographic montage of people who have succumbed to HIV-related illnesses. Recently that montage was suddenly missing singer **Luther Vandross**. When asked, Madonna's camp confirmed the change, saying that representatives from the Vandross estate objected to his being included. It should be noted that Vandross never confirmed he was gay or HIV-positive.

Someone who is certainly out is **Andy Cohen**. The Bravo honcho is still reeling from **Brandi Glanville's** suit which we discussed last week (look it up on BillyMasters.com). This week, he's being attacked by **Leah McSweeney**—who, I must say, I've never heard of. Apparently she's a former "Real Housewife of New York City", and she's filed a suit against Cohen. In it, she calls Bravo "a rotted workplace culture that uniquely depended on pressuring its employees to consume alcohol." Hard to argue with that. She then specifically targets Andy by saying that he "engaged in cocaine use with 'Housewives' and other Bravolebrities that he employs." Well, I'm SHOCKED. Shocked that any legal document includes the word "Bravolebrities"! She goes on to say that although the defendants knew she had an alcohol problem, they "colluded with her colleagues to pressure Ms. McSweeney to drink, retaliated against her when she wanted to stay sober, and intentionally failed to provide reasonable accommodations that would aid her efforts to stay sober and able to perform." Here's my problem with that—if I tell you to jump off a bridge and you do it, is that my fault? You have free will. OK, I probably wouldn't say it to someone with diminished cognitive issues. And if I'm not mistaken, that's a prerequisite for Bravolebrities!

I recently told you that **Jinkx Monsoon** would reprise her history-making portrayal of Matron "Mama" Morton in the Broadway production of "Chicago" this June. But she's got another high-profile gig coming up before that. Starting on April 2nd, she'll be playing Audrey in the off-Broadway production of "Little Shop of Horrors". While certainly a plum assignment, this one is not completely unprecedented. Back in 2019, the then-billed **Mj Rodriguez** played the role of Audrey at the Pasadena Playhouse. OK, perhaps that was even more eventful—a trans woman of color. But good for you, Jinkx.

The Elton John musical version of "The Devil Wears Prada" has undergone many rewrites since its lackluster debut in Chicago back in 2022. For the oft-delayed London premiere this fall, producers have enlisted the aid of a real diva—**Vanessa Williams**. It's perhaps a bit on-the-nose. After all, Wilhelmina Slater on "Ugly Betty" was basically a rip-off of Miranda Priestly in "Prada". But at least we know Vanessa can play the role. More than a few critics have noted that in Chicago, the role of Andy was played by a black woman. This led to many reviews focusing on Miranda being mean to a black underling—thus injecting a racial undertone. Now that we have a Miranda of color, what will that dynamic be like? Or will Andy now be Caucasian? And what would that mean? Frankly, it's all too exhausting.

Another person headed to the British stage is **Todrick Hall**. He'll be starring in a new musical based on the tepidly received **Cher** flick, "Burlesque". He'll be playing the role of Sean—which was played onscreen by **Stanley Tucci**. Both **Steve Antin** (director and writer of the film) and **Christina Aguilera** (film co-star) are producers of this new incarnation, which will have its world premiere at the Manchester Opera House in June. We're also told that the show will feature several songs by Todrick, Aguilera, **Sia, Diane Warren**, and others.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Henry in Chicago: *"What will happen to 'Queer Eye' now that **Bobby Berk** has left? Will there only be a Fab Four?"*

Have no fear—he's already been replaced. And, one could argue, Netflix has traded up. Joining the cast for season 9 is **Jeremy Johnson**, who you probably know as **Jeremiah Brent**. When and why he changed his birth name is one of those unknown mysteries—like the purpose of the Sphinx. Aside from being quite a looker, the only thing I know him from is being **Mr. Nate Berkus**...and, frankly, how long or thick a resume do you think that requires? Don't answer that! Come to think of it, this is not his first replacement gig (well, second if you count his personal life). Jeremy/Jeremiah was previously hired by Bravo to replace **Brad Goreski** when he left "The Rachel Zoe Project". That was a somewhat ignoble experience. He lasted eight episodes, during which he was hired, fired, and rehired—only to not return the following season. Which begs the question—do these reality show experts actually know anything? Or are they simply people who are cast based on their looks? While researching Johnson/Brent, I see these two jobs, and then see a list of magazine covers he's graced. Is he good at anything other than looking good? Trust me, I don't say that as if it isn't a full-time job. But, you know, some of us read! If you wanna read and look at a bunch of pretty pictures, go to BillyMasters.com.

When Jeremiah Brent has a real name and a stage name, we've definitely got something to look into as we end yet another column. You know who else has two names? Porn stars and escorts. You don't think...nah, probably not. But I'll look into it while you check out www.BillyMasters.com, the site that uncovers the most interesting things. If you have a question or wanna just slip me a tip, dash a note off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Jeremy/Jeremiah replaces ME...or I replace him! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Photo via Ross Matthews, Facebook.

Ross Matthews

Photo via jinkxmonsoon.com.

Jinkx Monsoon

Photo via IMDb.

Bobby Berk

Pride

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Last year, more than 1 million people attended Pride, the region's largest LGBTQ+ event.

Parade + Festival Registration will be completed online via Eventbrite, where interested parties will reserve their place in the parade and/or space at the festivals. Registration fees and payment options are outlined at https://www.bostonprideforthepeople.org/

Several hundred community groups, businesses, schools, government agencies, employee resource groups, elected officials, and others are expected to march in the parade. Organizers estimate that the number of booths available for vendors at the festivals will be 250 and are likely to sell out.

Sponsorship Opportunities are available, at levels ranging from $5,000 to $50,000. The cost of producing the parade and festivals is estimated at nearly $1 million. In addition to registration fees, contributions from community and businesses are an essential source of financing the events.

A Partnership Package is available for corporations and non-profit organizations interested in supporting this year's Pride. It includes the dates for informational sessions for interested sponsors and can be found on the BP4TP website: www.bostonprideforthepeople.org

Boston Pride For The People (BP4TP) is the volunteer and community-run non-profit organization working to empower, celebrate, commemorate, and educate in partnership with Boston's LGBTQ+ communities. In 2023 BP4TP hosted and managed Boston's first Pride parade and festivals in more than three years, bringing New England's largest Pride parade back to its home in Boston. For more information visit: bostonprideforthepeople.org

ASC

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ers; and the LGBTQ+ community.

"In our American experiment to create a more perfect union, we've struggled to meet our core principle of equal rights for all, but we continue moving forward in order to achieve a better future," said National Park Service Director Chuck Sams.

"The National Park Service is proud to help States, Tribes, local governments, and nonprofit organizations invest in locally-led preservation of historic structures which tell hidden stories of our nation's history."

Included in this year's grants is support for the preservation of the Arlington Street Church (ASC) in Boston.

ASC was built in 1861 and displays grand 16th-century Italian Renaissance and 18th-century English architecture primarily created in New Jersey brownstone ashlar. The building and congregation have hosted LGBTQ+ rights organizations and LGBTQ+ cultural events such as the Boston chapter of DignityUSA since 1977, and the nation's first LGBTQ youth prom in 1981 as organized by the Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth (BAGLY). This grant will restore the missing South Stairs and provide other accessibility improvements.

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is that they are receiving lower doses of a hormone, and that tends to help with their anxiety and depression," she said. "But it's not doses that transition that individual."

Republican Del. JB Akers said he's received emails from "people who I think simply attacked this body for going after kids and going after doctors," and that people upset about the bill don't fully understand it. Current law already prevents prescribing medication to assist minors with a gender transition, he said: "Whether you like it or not — that's what the law is."

"We have affirmation that this medication can still be provided for psychiatric treatment, which is my main concern. And that's not changed," he said. "And no one in this body is against the physicians or health care providers who provide this care."

But Waldeck, the doctor who treats transgender kids in West Virginia, said in a phone interview Wednesday that it doesn't feel that way to her.

"If you're saying you can't do it for gender transition, well, what is the normal physiologic level, then?" she said. "In terms of what doctors are legally going to be able to do, in reality, there's not going to be a normal quote unquote physiologic level for a biological female who is getting testosterone for their gender dysphoria and suicidality."

She said if signed into law, the proposal would restrict her ability to help her most at-risk patients: "In reality, it is still an effective treatment ban."

Before voting for the bill, lawmakers rejected two amendments from Democratic Del. Mike Pushkin. One would have allowed kids already receiving treatment to continue care. The other would have allowed treatment if an attending physician provides a written opinion that it's "medically necessary to treat the minor's psychiatric symptoms that makes the minor a danger to commit suicide without such treatment."

Every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association, supports gender-affirming care for youths.

Lawmakers in West Virginia and other states advancing bans on transgender health care for youth and young adults often characterize gender-affirming treatments as medically unproven, potentially dangerous and a symptom of "woke" culture.

Andrew Schneider, Executive Director of Fairness West Virginia, said delegates are sending a message to parents with transgender teens who are at serious risk of self-harm or suicide that they can't get their kid the help that doctors say they need in West Virginia.

"I don't understand how anyone could look at these families and tell them their child's life doesn't matter, but that's what they did today with this vote," he said.

Monroe

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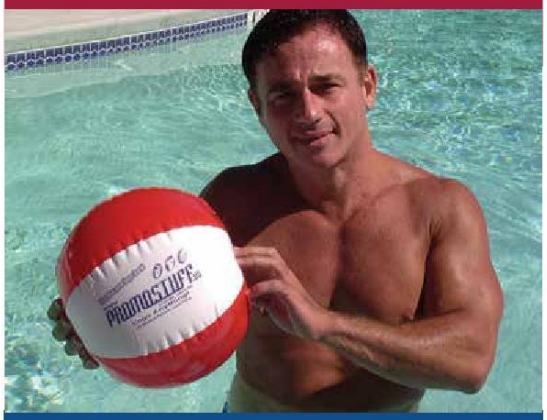
vey, 149,000 respondents who do not identify as either straight or cisgendered obtained abortions compared to the total number of abortions that year.

Using religion to codify discrimination against LGBTQ+ Americans began with the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) in 1993 under the guise of religious freedom. In 2018, SCOTUS ruled in "Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission" in favor of the baker who refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple on the grounds of religious freedom. Moreover, anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ legislation go hand in hand because they both are done in the name of God.

Reproductive justice, however, is essential to a person's right to choose when and whether to have an abortion. SCOTUS shouldn't decide, and neither should the church. Perhaps the U. S. needs to take a page from France's Constitution.

HOT IDEAS



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