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Advocates Praise State Action to Remove Barriers, Increase Security in Name Change Process

Submitted by GLAD Law

Massachusetts State Legislature includes commonsense and timely reforms to remove barriers and safety risks for transgender and nonbinary people, survivors of domestic violence, and other individuals seeking legal name changes. Reforms effective immediately with the November 25 signature from Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey.

Today, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey signed an end-of-year Fiscal Year 2025 supplemental budget that included an amendment championed by advocates for LGBTQ+ people and other vulnerable communities that removes barriers and safety risks for Massachusetts residents legally changing their names. The new law takes immediate effect.

Originally introduced by Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton), House Chair Jack Patrick Lewis (D-

see **NAME,** *page 4*

Court's ruling against same-sex marriage sets up a Japan Supreme Court decision

By Mari Yamaguchi
Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A court found Japan's refusal to legalize same-sex marriage was constitutional Friday in the last of six cases that are expected to be brought to the Supreme Court for a final and definitive ruling, possibly next year.

The Tokyo High Court said marriage under the law is largely expected to be a union between men and women in a decision that reversed a lower court ruling last year and was the first loss at high courts in the six cases brought by those seeking equal marriage rights.

Judge Ayumi Higashi said a legal definition of a family as a unit between a couple and their children is rational and that exclusion of same-sex marriage is valid. The court also dismissed damages of 1 million yen ($6,400) each sought by eight sexual minorities seeking equal marital rights.

Plaintiffs and their lawyers said the decision was unjust but they were de-

see **JAPAN,** *page 2*

A Holiday Gift Guide to 2025's LGBTQ Middle Grade Books

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

The LGBTQ+-inclusive middle grade novels of 2025 bring tales of adventure, magic, friendship, family, and personal growth. Here are some that stand out.

(Author(s) and illustrator (if different) follow each title.) Let's start with my three personal favorites, showcasing exceptional storytelling, worldbuilding, and characters: "A World Worth Saving," a finalist for the National Book Award in Children's Literature, about a Jewish, transgender boy trying to save the world from anti-trans demons (Kyle Lukoff); "Scarlet Morning," a post-apocalyptic, queer-inclusive, pirate adventure (ND Stevenson); and "The Ink Witch," a hilarious tale evocative of Roald Dahl, about a trans girl who discovers she's a witch (Steph Cherrywell).

Also excellent are the sword-swinging medieval fantasies "Sir Callie and the Final Stand," a fitting end to the series (Esme Symes-Smith); and "Splinter & Ash: City of Secrets" (Marieke Nijkamp), the second in its series. Both have nonbinary co-protagonists and other queer representation.

Warm, enchanting fantasy graphic novels include "A Song for You and I," with nonbinary and gender creative leads

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 5*

Support LGBTQ+ Nonprofits This Holiday Season

Give back to the organizations serving Massachusetts LGBTQ+ communities year-round. Here are nonprofits addressing critical needs from legal advocacy to youth services to emergency support:

Statewide/Legal Advocacy:

GLAD (GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders) - Legal rights organization serving New England. Donate at gladlaw.org/get-involved/ways-to-give

MassEquality - Statewide advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and policy. Donate at secure.everyaction.com/gXit6E9i10SzDK-M0w85YA2

Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) - Trans advocacy and direct assistance. Donate at secure.givelively.org/donate/mtpc

see **NONPROFITS,** *page 3*

Strong Cast Elevates "Fun Home" at Huntington Theatre

Fun Home, Huntington Theatre Company, presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals, Huntington Mainstage, through December 14. 617-266-0080 or Huntingtontheatre.org

Sushma Saha, Maya Jacobson in Fun Home, directed by Logan Ellis. Photo by Marc J Franklin.

By Jules Becker
Contributing Writer

Alison Bechdel turned her memories of family life in rural Pennsylvania into a provocative 2006 graphic novel entitled "Fun Home." The acclaimed memoir focused on her own development from child to college student to fully adult woman and her evolving relationship with her complicated father. In 2013, composer Jeanine Tesori (of "Caroline, or Change" fame) and author-lyricist Lisa Kron ("2-½ Miles") brought her graphic novel narrative to rich theatrical life Off-Broadway and eventually took their Obie Award musical to Broadway—where it won well deserved 2015 Tony Awards for the show as well as

see **FUN HOME,** *page 7*

"If I can't beat out Jimmy Kimmel in terms of talent, then I don't think I should be president."

- President Donald Trump's opinion prior to hosting the Kennedy Center Honors. Finally, something we agree on. And I'd like to hold him to that.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo by Erin Scott, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Trump Administration Changes Name on Admiral Rachel Levine's Official Portrait

By Bay Windows Staff

The Department of Health and Human Services has altered the official portrait of Admiral Rachel Levine, replacing her legal name with her previous name in what critics are calling an unprecedented act of institutional erasure.

The change was made during the recent federal shutdown to the portrait that hangs in a seventh-floor hallway of the Humphrey Building in Washington, D.C., alongside photographs of other officials who have led the Public Health Corps. Levine's is the only portrait of a transgender person in the gallery.

Adrian Shanker, who served as deputy assistant secretary for health policy under Levine and now acts as her spokesperson, confirmed the nameplate was swapped out to display her previous name. "During the federal shutdown, the current leadership of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health changed Admiral Levine's photo to remove her current legal name and use a prior name," Shanker said, calling it "an act of bigotry."

Levine made history in 2021 when she became the first openly transgender person to win Senate confirmation for a federal position and the first openly transgender four-star officer in any U.S. uniformed service. She served as President Biden's assistant secretary for health, leading the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service and working on pandemic response, HIV/AIDS policy, and opioid initiatives.

When asked about the alteration, Levine told NPR it was "an honor to serve the American people as the assistant secretary for health" and she wouldn't "comment on this type of petty action."

An HHS spokesperson defended the change, saying the department's priority is "ensuring that the information presented internally and externally by HHS reflects gold standard science" and committing to "reversing harmful policies enacted by Levine and ensuring that biological reality guides our approach to public health."

The portrait modification raises procedural questions about work conducted during a government shutdown, when federal employees are typically restricted to duties related to public safety or health emergencies. Changing a portrait nameplate would not appear to fall under those categories.

Shanker called the action unprecedented, noting that official portraits traditionally remain unchanged as historical records of service regardless of subsequent political shifts. An anonymous HHS staffer described the change as "disrespectful" and emblematic of "the erasure of transgender individuals by this administration."

The portrait alteration follows a series of executive orders from President Trump targeting transgender Americans, including banning transgender people from military service, barring trans women from women's sports, and declaring federal policy would only recognize two biological sexes.

This story was first reported by NPR.

Japan

Continued from page 1

termined to keep fighting through the Supreme Court.

"I'm so disappointed," plaintiff Hiromi Hatogai told reporters outside the court. "Rather than sorrow, I'm outraged and appalled by the decision. Were the judges listening to us?"

"We only want to be able to marry and be happy, just like anyone else," said another plaintiff, Rie Fukuda. "I believe the society is changing. We won't give up."

With all six high court cases done, the Supreme Court is expected to handle all appeals and make a decision.

Though discrimination still exists at school, work and elsewhere, public backing for legalizing same-sex marriage and support in the business community have rapidly increased in recent years.

Japan is the only member of the Group of Seven industrialized countries that does not recognize same-sex marriage or provide any other form of legally binding protection for LGBTQ+ couples.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi 's conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party is the main opponent of same-sex marital rights in Japan. The government has argued that marriage under civil law does not cover same-sex couples and places importance on natural reproduction.

More than 30 plaintiffs have joined the lawsuits on marriage equality filed across Japan since 2019. They argue that civil law provisions barring same-sex marriage violate the Constitutional right to equality and freedom of marriage.

Friday's ruling was only the second that found the current government policy constitutional after the 2022 Osaka District Court decision.

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HOLIDAY CALENDAR

Holly Folly Now-21, Provincetown For the first time ever, Provincetown's annual holiday weekend is expanding over the course of December. Head down for the multi-day holiday market, dance parties, drag brunches, and even a Santa Speedo Run to benefit local organizations. Innkeepers will break out their fiercest and most festive winter holiday decorations. A fantastic way to get into the spirit and score some truly unique gifts from P-town boutiques.

Boston Gay Men's Chorus: 'Holigays' December 6 (Provincetown Town Hall); December 12-14 (Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston); December 21 (Groton Hill Music Center, Groton) The 300-voices-strong chorus brings festive cheer with its signature mix of heartfelt harmonies and campy flair. This year's program blends classics like "Mary Did You Know?" with playful takes including a perfectly pink Mrs. Claus, promising what the chorus calls "a glittery invasion of the holiday spirit—uniquely, joyfully queer."

Seattle's World Cup 'Pride Match' to Feature Egypt and Iran

By Bay Windows Staff

A designated LGBTQ+ "Pride Match" at the 2026 World Cup in Seattle will feature Egypt and Iran, two countries where homosexuality is illegal, according to reporting by BBC Sport.

The match at Seattle's Lumen Field on June 26 was planned by local organizers before the World Cup draw determined which teams would play. Following Friday's draw and Saturday's fixture allocation, the Group G match between Egypt and Iran was assigned to that date. The BBC reports that in Iran, homosexual relations carry a maximum punishment of death, while Egypt uses morality laws to suppress LGBTQ+ rights and relationships.

The event, organized by Seattle's local committee and not affiliated with FIFA, coincides with the city's official Pride weekend. According to the BBC, artists in Washington state have been invited to submit artwork celebrating LGBTQ+ people for display around the game and throughout the city.

Despite the controversial pairing, the Seattle Pride Match Advisory Committee told LGBT news outlet Outsports that the game will proceed as planned. A spokesperson said, according to the BBC, that "Soccer has a unique power to unite people across borders, cultures, and beliefs," adding "This match reflects our ongoing commitment to respect, dignity, and unity for all."

The situation echoes problems from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where FIFA threatened yellow cards for players wearing OneLove armbands supporting LGBTQ+ people. England and Wales were among teams that abandoned those plans following FIFA's ruling, the BBC reported.

BBC Sport has reached out to FIFA, the Seattle organizing committee, and the Egyptian and Iranian Football Associations for comment.

Nonprofits

Continued from page 1

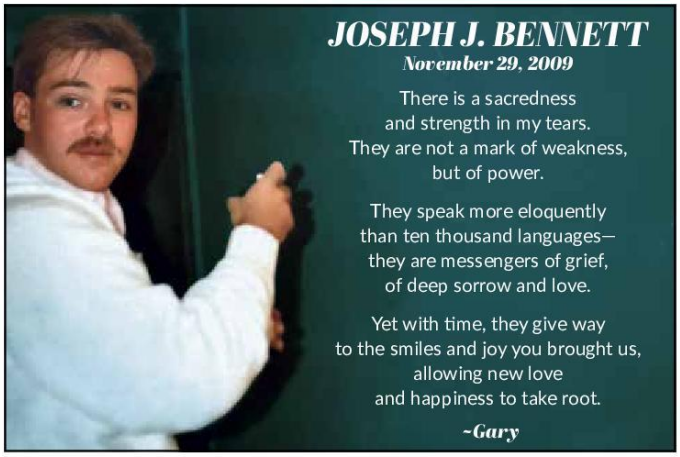
Health & Safety:

Fenway Health - Comprehensive LGBTQ+ health care (Boston & Worcester) Donate at support.fenwayhealth.org/page/15608/donate/1

The Network/La Red - Partner abuse support for LGBTQ+ communities. Donate at tnlr.org/en/donate

Youth Services:

BAGLY (Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth) - Youth-led social support and services. Donate at bagly.org/donate



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Pandering to a tyrant

We are still creating America

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

The awarding of the FIFA Peace Prize to Donald Trump by the international federation for what Americans call soccer suggests that pandering to our wannabe dictator has officially jumped the shark.

Where's the ref with a red card? The creation of such a prize by a notoriously corrupt sports federation is way outside its lane and should embarrass anyone still capable of embarrassment.

No decent person could seriously consider giving a peace prize to a man who is murdering people in small boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific while gunning for war against Venezuela. Not only has he provided no evidence of drugs aboard those boats which were far from American shores, he hypocritically pardoned one of the greatest cocaine traffickers, former Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernández.

For a while I have toyed with a possible column titled, "We deserve a better class of mobster." Perhaps I should change it to, "We deserve a better class of monarch." King Charles, for example, has a much cleaner mouth than King Donald.

America has had racist and corrupt presidents, but never before have I heard a president call entire populations of people garbage as he did to Somali Americans.

Every insult Trump hurls is a confession. He is not the king of the United States, but is definitely the king of projection.

The greater question is not why so many Americans enjoy his bigoted appeals—though it is sickening to watch—but what we who embrace the reality of diversity will do to escape the gutter into which he has dragged our national discourse.

Let us be clear: "All men are created equal" is part of our national creed. The question for white supremacists and religious bullies is this: How many people are they prepared to slaughter or place in prison camps to set that aside and erase all the social progress we have made? Because we will not stand for the betrayal of our nation's fundamental principles.

Senator Mark Kelly of Arizona set the right tone by refusing to be intimidated by Trump's threats to prosecute and execute the former Navy combat pilot and astronaut for daring to point out that military service members are legally forbidden to obey unlawful orders. Kelly aptly says that so-called Secretary of War Pete Hegseth acts "like he's a 12-year-old playing army."

It is time for grown-ups to take charge. Trump doesn't care about the Constitution any more than he cares about human lives. He simply assumes that his every addlepated impulse magically becomes law. He is getting so out of control that even some Republicans are overcoming their fear of crossing him.

The speed with which the foundations of our constitutional republic have been undermined, led by the Heritage Foundation and their allies who drafted Project 2025, is frightening. It should serve as a reminder never to underestimate the persistence of racism, xenophobia, and hostility toward democracy, intellectual freedom, and the scientific method.

Let's recall some history. The successful codebreaking of the German Enigma device by computer pioneer Alan Turing in World War II played a crucial role in defeating the Nazis. Afterward, he was forced to take chemical castration because he was gay, and committed suicide. He was pardoned decades later. Now he is featured on the British Fifty Pound note.

Gay rights pioneer Frank Kameny had to lie about his sexuality in order to fight the Nazis in WWII. My father also fought the Nazis, as did many of my readers' parents and grandparents. Yet some of the January 6 insurrectionists incited by Trump into storming the US Capitol carried swastika flags. As recently as October, Politico ran a story with the headline, "Capitol Police called to investigate swastika in GOP congressional office."

In the eighty years since WWII, many of us fought peacefully here on the home front to make our country live up to its creed of freedom and equality. That we made significant progress is shown by the eagerness of the MAGA horde to erase our work.

The gap between our highest aspirations and the often grim reality around us need not cause us despair. It can remind us that we are still creating our country. The alternative to embracing equality is a dark amalgam of becoming Nazis ourselves and resurrecting the Confederacy.

For Frank Kameny, Alan Turing, and all our ancestors who fought the Axis powers in World War II, we must redouble our efforts to defeat the modern-day villains who betray our beloved country while posing as patriots.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rrosendall@me.com. Copyright © 2025 by Richard J. Rosendall. All rights reserved.

Name

Continued from page 1

Framingham), and House Vice Chair Lindsay N. Sabadosa (D-Northampton) as Senate Bill 1045 and House Bill 1673 "An Act protecting personal security," the law updates the process for individuals seeking to legally change their name by:

Removing the requirement for public notice of a name change, allowing it only when a court can show good cause; and,

Ensuring name change records be kept confidential.

These reforms increase efficiency in name change and alleviate barriers and safety risks for transgender people and other vulnerable individuals, such as survivors of domestic violence, who seek a legal name change. House and Senate leaders worked closely together to ensure this important policy change became law.

"We're grateful to the State Legislature and Governor Healey for quickly acting to update Massachusetts' name change process so that it's more accessible to vulnerable residents, including survivors of domestic violence and our transgender family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers," said Polly Crozier, attorney at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law) "A legal name change makes it possible for transgender people's identity documents to reflect who they are, enabling them to live more safely and freely and reducing barriers in important activities like applying for a job, making purchases, or opening a bank account. This policy change was urgent and badly needed given the unrelenting attacks on the transgender community by the federal government. We're so thankful for the bold leadership and tenacity of our legislative allies including House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz, Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell, and our sponsors, Senator Comerford, Chair Lewis, and Vice Chair Sabadosa, who, together and with their colleagues, got this timely reform passed into law."

"Now more than ever, it's important for legal name changes to be easily accessible for transgender and nonbinary people," said Finn Gardiner, advocacy and organizing manager of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC). "We are under relentless attack by the federal government, and the old requirements simply added to that risk. This new legislation will allow trans and nonbinary people to legally change their names without spending a fortune or outing themselves via a public notice. It's a relief to know that people will be safer from harassment, discrimination, and forced outing when they are especially vulnerable."

"This law removes obstacles and relieves anxiety for people who want to do a legal name change, which is particularly important for the safety and security of transgender people as they go about their daily lives," said House Ways and Means Chair Michlewitz (D-Boston). "As extremist forces work to negate the existence of our transgender family, friends, and neighbors, it's crucial that we provide strong and comprehensive protections for them at the state level."

"Changing one's name should never put someone at personal risk," said Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton). "For transgender and gender-nonconforming people, for survivors of domestic violence, and for anyone seeking safety or a fresh start, removing public notice requirements and prohibitive fees is a meaningful step forward. I am grateful for the advocacy of MTPC and GLAD Law, whose persistence made clear the urgency of this reform. These commonsense administrative changes will make a real and positive difference in people's lives across Massachusetts."

"This law makes the name change process safer and more efficient for everyone in the Commonwealth. Just as important, in the midst of a national campaign to harm and bully the transgender community, it sends a powerful message that Massachusetts remains a beacon of inclusion and protection for all," said House Chair Lewis (D-Framingham). "These updates provide safety and privacy for transgender people and others who might otherwise face real harm if forced to publicly broadcast their proposed name change."

"Eliminating prohibitive costs and intrusive disclosure requirements brings compassion and common sense to a process that many people find daunting," said House Vice Chair Sabadosa (D-Northampton). "At a time when the federal government is targeting transgender communities, Massachusetts is taking a clear stand for dignity, autonomy, and the right of every person to live authentically and safely."

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(K. O'Neill); "Lu and Ren's Guide to Geozoology," which includes queer elders (Angela Hsieh); "Atana and the Jade Mermaid," the sequel to "Atana and the Firebird," set in a queer-normative world (Vivian Zhou); and "Goat Magic," where a girl goatherd and a princess fall in love (Kate Wheeler). On the spooky-but-fun side, "Beetle & the Chimera Carnival," is the graphic novel sequel to Stonewall Award honoree "Beetle & the Hollowbones," with two queer girl leads (Aliza Layne).

For mythology come to life, try "The Court of the Dead: A Nico di Angelo Adventure," which continues the story of boyfriends Nico and Will in the second volume of this spin-off from the bestselling Percy Jackson series (Rick Riordan and Mark Oshiro); and "Lulu Sinagtala and the Battle for the Realms," the second volume of a series based on Tagalog mythology, with a bisexual protagonist (Gail D. Villanueva)

Magic schools form the settings for "The Incorruptibles," a post-apocalyptic fantasy with a queer protagonist and other significant queer characters (Lauren Magaziner); "Ice Apprentices," set on a harsh ice world, with a trans boy protagonist (Jacob North); and "Vanya and the Wild Hunt," with a neurodiverse, British-Indian protagonist and her queer, chosen-family uncles (Sangu Mandanna).

For magical realism, try "A Little Too Haunted," a paranormal romp starring a girl with two moms (Justine Pucella Winans); "Ghost Scout's Honor," with ghost-busting action and social challenges for its queer girl lead (Carey Blankenship-Kramer); "Adorable Empire," a graphic novel where a queer, goth middle school girl is beset by cute, mischievous (and maybe helpful) creatures (Laura Terry); and "First Kiss With Fangs," a charming graphic novel about a queer, vegan, vampire boy (Marker Snyder).

Drag takes center stage in books by renowned drag queens, all starring queer boys: "Jackson Bright in the Spotlight" (Eureka O'Hara; Dan Poblocki); "The Queen Bees of Tybee County" (Kyle Casey Chu); and "Donutella Hamachi and the Library Avengers" (Kim Chi and Stephan Lee; Utomaru).

A gay boy is also one of three sibling protagonists in the graphic novel "Outsider Kids," the sequel to "Parachute Kids," about siblings from Taiwan living on their own in 1980s America (Betty C. Tang).

Sports and queer girls shine in "It's All or Nothing, Vale," a novel in verse about a young fencer struggling to return from injury (Andrea Beatriz Arango; also available in Spanish as "Todo o nada, Valentina"); and "Bea Mullins Takes a Shot," starring a Canadian tween on a youth hockey team (Emily Deibert).

Queer girls also star in "Pasta Girls" (Taylor Tracy), a reimagining of Romeo and Juliet with queer, neurodiverse leads (and a less tragic ending); "Mountain Upside Down," a tale of family change (Sara Ryan); "Carousel Summer," a graphic novel about a first crush and coming out (Kathleen Gros), "Rabbit Rabbit," about family secrets and social justice (Dori Hillestad Butler and Sunshine Bacon); "Vote for the G.O.A.T.," an entertaining caper with themes of bodily autonomy, activism, and friendship (Ali Terese); "13 Ways to Say Goodbye," a novel in verse on moving through grief (Kate Fussner); and "The Brightest Star," a novel-in-verse sequel to "The Deepest Breath," with a queer girl and a queer boy peer navigating friendship and self-understanding (Megan Grehan).

Additionally, several novels feature youth who use she/her pronouns but are exploring their identities: "Fresh Start," about an anime-loving Thai American tween (Gale Galligan); "North of Tomboy," where a tween in 1970s rural Michigan tries to express her gender (Julie A. Swanson), and "Unboxing Libby," whose android protagonist uncovers secrets about herself and her corporate creators (Steph Cherrywell).

Nonbinary protagonists or co-protagonists star in "Going Overboard," where a tween and zir prospective step-brother try to break up their two moms (Caroline Huntoon); "Ollie In Between," an introspective look at a youth's journey to self-acceptance (Jess Callans); "Halfway to Somewhere," a graphic novel about an immigrant, Mexican American tween (Jose Pimienta); and "The Cartoonists Club," a graphic novel where four tweens learn to make comics (Raina Telgemeier; Scott McCloud).

Protagonists with queer moms star in "Chris Makes a Friend," a perceptive look at family and friendship (Alex Gino); and "The Doughnut Club," where a girl discovers she has donor siblings—one of whom might be her nemesis (Kristina Rahim).

Finally, community and connection form the focus for "Family Week," set at the world's largest (real) gathering of LGBTQ+ families (Sarah Moon); "Rainbow Fair," about youth standing up for their intersectional identities (Diana Ma) and "Maeve Mulvaney Has Had Enough" (Kelly Mangan), where a bisexual girl works to address her school's sexism, queerphobia, and fatphobia.

For nonfiction and other titles I didn't have room for here, visit my Database of LGBTQ+ Family Books (mombian.com/database).

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents, plus a searchable database of 1,900+ LGBTQ+ family books.

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billy masters

For the past three weeks, I've been addicted to the UK's "I'm a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!" I was drawn in by the promise of viewing **Ruby Wax** braving the Australian jungle. But these shows have an insidious way of making you care about the most unlikely people—whether it's a plus-sized soap opera queen, a young tattooed rapper, or **Jack Osbourne**! Like Ruby, I also fell under the spell of dashing dandy, Tom Read Wilson. But for the most part, this season has been devoid of hunky men. Happily, some previous participants popped up on the wrap-up show—Sam Thompson springs to mind. Given the dearth of testosterone, I even found myself ogling **Kelly Brook**. But that's because I was picturing her straddling her Italian fitness model husband **Jeremy Parisi**.

How do you define a tryst? According to Merriam-Webster (whoever she is), it's "a private romantic rendezvous between lovers." Needless to say, "trysting" is a big part of Provincetown's charm. Now it will be happening on a formal basis through **Tristan Schukraft**—which I know sounds like the name of an extra in "Nuremberg". He is the latest owner of West Hollywood institution "The Abbey". He also owns properties in Fire Island, Puerto Vallarta, and now, Provincetown. When he purchased The Crown & Anchor, his plans included changing the name of the hotel to The Tryst Provincetown. "The Crown & Anchor is at the heart of that story; it's been the stage, the dance floor, and Provincetown's unofficial town square. Our goal is to honor that legacy while evolving it for the future, ensuring it remains a vibrant, inclusive home for generations to come." While that's a lovely sentiment, what one sees less and less at The Abbey is gay men. That's primarily because West Hollywood has become less and less gay due to the price of real estate. Ptown is in a similar situation. But I'm remaining optimistic.

Last week, something very queer happened only a few miles from West Hollywood. At 6533 Hollywood Boulevard, **Sarah Paulson** received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Her partner, the formidable **Holland Taylor**, was by her side, as was **Ryan Murphy**, who has long considered Paulson one of his creative muses (fun fact—Murphy also has a place in Ptown). Spotted at the festivities were **Niecy Nash** and her wife **Jessica Betts**. You'll recall that Niecy recently asked Sarah if she might be up for some wife swapping. What better way to celebrate the occasion? If the boulevard is a-rockin', don't come a-knockin'.

What do all the successful film franchises have in common? Apparently, they all have roles perfect for **Scarlett Johansson**. Somehow she is credited with the success of the "Jurassic" series reboot. Silly me, I thought it was the dinosaurs. In the past week, Mrs. Jost's presence has been requested for two additional staples in the cinema. She'll headline the next "Exorcist" film, and is in talks to appear in the latest "Batman".

Our own **Andrew Scott** (the hot priest from "Fleabag") has joined the cast of **Lisa Kudrow's** occasional series, "The Comeback"—which comes around every decade or so. We don't know much about his involvement, except he will be playing "a very important character". Since the death of **Robert Michael Morris** (who played Val's devoted Mickey), she's definitely in need of an ally...perhaps a gay one.

It's just been announced that **Nathan Lane** will helm a Broadway revival of "Death of a Salesman". He'll be joined by **Laurie Metcalf** as his devoted wife Linda. I guess the real news is that the producing team of this revival will be **Barry Diller and Scott Rudin**! The casting of Lane in a quintessentially heterosexual role belies the argument that gays can only play gay. Note his most recent effort was Hulu's "Mid-Century Modern". Surely, two roles couldn't be more different. But Lane, one of our greatest actors, effortlessly transcends pigeonholing.

This issue came up again with HBO's new series "Heated Rivalry". Given the subject matter, I'm surprised more of you haven't written in. Surely my mentioning it will translate into tens of more viewers and an inevitable ratings spike. The show centers around two closeted hockey players in their mid-20s. Since it's a "rivalry", you won't be surprised to learn one of the players is Canadian, while the other is Russian. And the "heated" part—well, I suppose that's self-explanatory. CNN said it best in the headline for their review: "'Heated Rivalry' is everything you love about rom-coms but with less pants". Believe it or not, that didn't even come from **Anderson Cooper**!

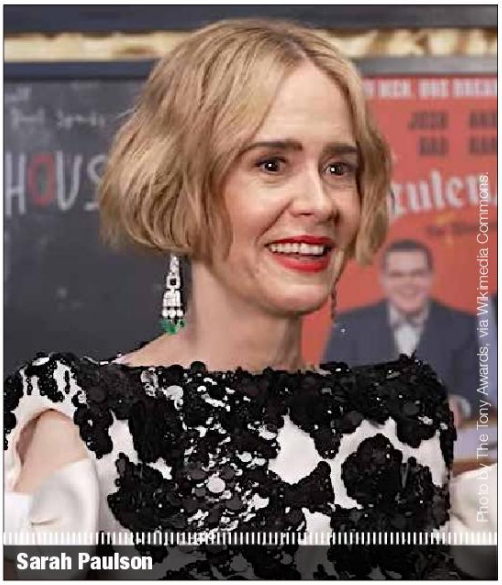
While nobody has sent in a question, series creator **Jacob Tierney** was asked about the sexuality of his leads, **Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie**. So I guess this week it's an "Ask Jacob" question. And this is how he answered: "I don't think there's any reason to get into that stuff. I'll tell you something about the casting of both of these roles. You can't ask questions like that when you're casting, right? It's actually against the law. So what you have to gauge is somebody's enthusiasm and willingness to do the work." Clearly he found two people who did just that—enough so that people are speculating about their sexuality. "That's what's so impressive about both of these guys is they came into this being like, 'Yeah, we're here to do this, and we are here to make this story feel authentic and to be as real as possible.' And they fucking hit it out of the park." And isn't that the point? I don't believe Nathan Lane was ever a travelling salesman...or married to a woman! But if he can make me believe that, then he's done his job. If you believe you have a shot with either of these hockey players, they've done their job. And speaking of jobs, there's quite a few "jobs" the boys perform on each other, which you can see on BillyMasters.com.

Some people believe certain things should remain private. Obviously some people ain't me. Last week, **Matt Rogers** was on "Elle" magazine's "Phoning It In". If, like me, you have no idea what this is, the guest makes prank calls to friends and tries to rile them up with an outrageous lie. For instance, Matt called **Bowen Yang** to accuse him of sexting with his "Below Deck" beau, Fraser Olender. Obviously a lie. However, things got dicey when Matt called the aforementioned Olender to say he's been asked to do a full-frontal nude scene in a film. Fraser's response? "Absolutely not. I really don't think that's a good idea." Rogers doubled down, saying the film starred **Jessica Chastain** and had Oscar buzz—clearly only a foreigner would believe that! Fraser stuck to his guns: "Absolutely not. I mean, listen, you do you. I'll support you 100%. Some things are not necessarily meant to be televised. That could be the British in me." When Matt got home, perhaps the British was in him!

And like a flare-up of herpes, we're back with "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions". But, have no fear—the worst injury you'll receive from these gifts is a paper cut. Because this week, we're bringing you books. The first one comes from **Carol Leifer**—the legendary scribe who has written for everyone, from Letterman to Seinfeld. So needless to say, her book "How to Write a Funny Speech" really delivers. And it just went into its third printing. Carol is selling copies of her book in a fascinating way. If you need to buy a perfect gift for someone under $25, you can buy the book directly from her. She'll inscribe it anyway you'd like, she'll mail it out, and she'll only charge you $20! DM her on social media and tell her Billy sent you.

Next up is our pal **Judy Gold**. Back in 2019, she wrote "Yes I Can Say That—When They Come For The Comedians, We're All In Trouble". It's like she was psychic! It made our list that year. And here it is, in another printing due to the timeliness of the issue. "No one makes me laugh harder than Judy Gold. If I had to pick one comedian to write a book about free speech, it would be Judy." You know who said that? **Amy Schumer**. Who am I to argue with her? If you know someone who needs a laugh that will also make them think, this is perfect.

When we don't have room for an "Ask Billy" question because we had an "Ask Jacob" question, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. And let me thank Jacob for not answering the question about the actors playing gay hockey players. Frankly, I'd rather fantasize about them pucking! And you can check them out on www.BillyMasters.com—the site that always lets you score. Should you have a question for me (or Jacob), send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Fraser exclaims, "The British are cumming!" Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.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Judy Gold

Fun Home

Continued from page 1

its collaborators. Now Huntington Theatre is doing full justice to Bechdel's insightful memoir and this very thoughtful show in a fresh and forceful staging by Logan Ellis.

Undaunted by the musical's challenging division of the focal memoirist into three roles—namely Small Alison, Medium Alison and (fully grown up) Alison, Ellis artfully moves the narrating adult Alison in and around the ample Huntington stage so that her on-going presence never seems distracting. In fact, as the show begins with the cartoon artist's work desk at center stage, Alison—played with convincing candor and warmth by Sarah Bockel—immediately establishes this distinctive work as a musical memoir that chronicles both her happy and dark days. Bockel's remarkable performance includes strong attention to the very different experiences of Small Alison and Medium Alison. While the musical finale bears the striking title "Flying Away," early on Alison recalls the childhood fun of having her father Bruce lift and balance her on his feet as if on an airplane.

Throughout the no-intermission musical (100 minutes in length), narrator Alison makes a rivetingly earnest effort to understand her father as well as herself. On the one hand, Bruce is a multi-talent—a high school English teacher, a restorer of furniture and a funeral home director—the last the source of the musical's seemingly quirky title. At the same time, her closeted father attempts to deal with a disturbing need to meet up with various young men—including a yard worker named Roy—with regular therapy. As a college student at Oberlin, Medium Alison finally comes to the realization that she is a lesbian—one who will both continue to love her father and confront his identity crisis. Although Alison reveals at an early moment that her father has committed suicide, the power of Lisa Kron's book and the poignancy of the Kron – Tesori score should make audience members feel as though they are joining Alison in her difficult but rewarding search for individual and family truths.

Under Logan Ellis' sharp direction, a first-rate cast makes "Fun Home" as moving in its own way as the original production that this critic saw at New York's Circle in the Square in 2015. Nick Duckart captures Bruce's conflicted emotions and motivations with arresting pathos—much as Michael Cerveris did in his brilliant Tony Award performance. In addition to Bockel's touching work as Alison, Lyla Randall as Small Alison and Maya Jacobson as Medium Alison are equally persuasive. Budding talent Randall may have theatergoers on the verge of tears during her standout delivery of a vivid number entitled "Ring of Keys"—in which she fondly remembers a butch delivery woman. Jacobson brings compelling naivete to Medium Alison as she opens herself up to an adventurous relationship with a very personable fellow student named Joan—played with winning directness by Sushma Saha.

In what is arguably the musical's finest number "Days and Days," Jennifer Ellis deeply explores the frustrations of Bruce's understandably needy wife Helen. Wyatt Anton provides distinct characterizations as Roy and the other men that Bruce encounters. Hearty praise goes to Taavon Gamble for properly high energy and wide-ranging choreography, Jessie Rosso for spirited musical direction and Tanya Orellana for a bold scenic design in which Bruce's library bookcase virtually reaches the Huntington's rafters.

Fun Home proved to be a breakthrough study of family dynamics and individual orientation in 2015. Huntington's heartfelt staging brings welcome resonance to Alison Bechdel's singular memoir and the musical's enduring impact.

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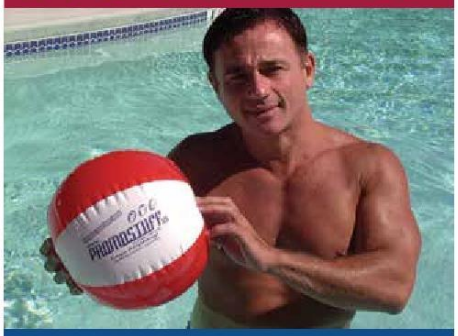

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