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Biden signs gay marriage law, calls it 'a blow against hate'

By Chris Megerian
Associated Press

President Joe Biden signs the Respect for Marriage Act, Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2022, on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

WASHINGTON (AP) — A celebratory crowd of thousands bundled up on a chilly Tuesday afternoon to watch President Joe Biden sign gay marriage legislation into law, a joyful ceremony that was tempered by the backdrop of an ongoing conservative backlash over gender issues.

"This law and the love it defends strike a blow against hate in all its forms," Biden said on the South Lawn of the White House. "And that's why this law matters to every single American."

Singers Sam Smith and Cyndi Lauper performed. Vice President Kamala Harris recalled officiating at a lesbian wedding in San Francisco. And the White House played a recording of Biden's television interview from a decade ago, when he caused a political furor by unexpectedly disclosing his support for gay marriage. Biden was vice president at the time, and President Barack Obama had not yet endorsed the idea.

"I got in trouble," Biden joked of that moment. Three days later, Obama himself publicly endorsed gay marriage.

Lawmakers from both parties attended Tuesday's ceremony, reflecting the growing acceptance of same-sex unions, once among the country's most contentious issues.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., wore the same purple tie to the ceremony that he wore to his daughter Alison's wedding. She and her wife are expecting their first child in the spring.

"Thanks to the millions out there who spent years pushing for change, and thanks to the dogged work of my colleagues, my grandchild will get to live in a world that respects and honors their mothers' marriage," he said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told the crowd that "inside maneuvering only takes us so far," and she thanked activists adding impetus with "your impatience, your persistence and your patriotism."

Despite Tuesday's excitement, there

see **RESPECT,** *page 7*

Torch burns bright

Peter Mill as Arnold and Bobbie Steinbach as Ma in the Moonbox Production of "Torch Song"; Photographer-Nikolai Alexander/F Point Productions

Torch Song, Moonbox Productions, Roberts Theatre, Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts, through December 23. Tickets: https://bit.ly/TorchSng or 617-933-8600 (Pay-What-You-Can tickets are available at the box office; every ticket benefits Greater Boston PFLAG).

By Jules Becker
Contributing Writer

Harvey Fierstein was pioneering respect and understanding for gays and same-sex relationships years before Tony Kushner ("Angels in America") and Richard Greenberg ("Take Me Out"). Even before he authored the book for "La Cage Aux Folles" (1983), he performed in his own play "Torch Song" (1981, 1982-Broadway)—win-

see **TORCH,** *page 5*

Bashing Brittney's loyalty, and other acts of valor

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

The GOP's Putin fans decry anti-Americanism

I find myself pausing amid the festivity of the season to marvel at the MAGAsphere's miasma of viciousness, dishonesty, double standards, and derangement.

On one hand, it is salutary for democracy and egalitarianism that election deniers lost key races in November; that Democrats retained control of the Senate; and that last week saw passage of the Respect for Marriage Act and the release of Brittney Griner from a Russian labor camp. On the other hand, the pathological nar-

see **ROSENDALL,** *page 4*

A 2022 Year in Review for LGBTQ Families

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

"Exceptionally Challenging"

What were the major advances—and setbacks—for LGBTQ families in 2022? I asked several leading experts to share their thoughts, and all agreed there had been many obstacles—but also reasons for hope.

"This year has been exceptionally challenging for LGBTQ parents and their children," said Sarah-Kate Ellis, president and CEO of LGBTQ media organization GLAAD, noting "the introduction of over 300 anti-LGBTQ bills, many of which target queer and trans youth. States like Texas introduced directives for families to be investigated by child services for offering their kids trans-affirming healthcare." And in Florida, "conversations about LGBTQ identities and

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 4*

"And haters, if you're watching this —because I know you are – you work hard, but I work harder!"

—Todrick Hall's message to critics. BTW, he's back on the air —with HGTV's "Battle of the Bling" with Kim Myles.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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Supreme Court Analysis

303 Creative argument

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

There were times during the U.S. Supreme Court's oral argument in this session's highly significant LGBTQ case when some listeners might have thought they were hearing a modern day dramatic interpretation of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Consider one exchange between Justice Neil Gorsuch and U.S. Deputy Solicitor General Brian Fletcher. Keep in mind that Justice Gorsuch, just two years ago, led a majority to say that the federal civil rights act protects employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. He was drinking a different tea December 5, when discussing whether a business could discriminate based on sexual orientation. The case, 303 Creative v. Colorado, challenges Colorado's public accommodations law by seeking to allow a web designer to refuse to create wedding sites for same-sex couples. Here's how the discussion went:

Gorsuch: We also have stipulations from Colorado that the [web designer] is willing to work with all people, regardless of classifications such as race, creed, sexual orientation, and gender, right? ["Stipulations" are facts that both sides have agreed to be true.]

Fletcher: In some respects, yes but not –

Gorsuch: No, that is the [stipulation]-- I just read it. Do you disagree with that? It's a stipulated fact in this case.

Fletcher: That is stipulated, but it's also clear that [the web designer] will not provide any wedding website for a same-sex couple.

Gorsuch: Well, for a same-sex wedding --

Fletcher: For a same-sex wedding, yes.

Gorsuch: And she wouldn't provide it to a heterosexual couple either, right?

The contorted supposition –that a heterosexual couple might want to buy a same-sex marriage wedding website—was probably concocted by Justice Gorsuch to illustrate his position. That is, he thinks the discrimination in this controversy is based on message (the web designer's religious beliefs) versus status (the sexual orientation of the couples whom the web designer excludes). He later stated that "what would be impermissible is discrimination on the basis of status, but what would be permissible is refusing service because of a disagreement about views."

Setting aside for the moment that there has never been a clamor by heterosexual couples to buy same-sex wedding websites, one has to wonder: What happened to the Justice Gorsuch who wrote, in the Title VII case Bostock v. Clayton County: "Judges are not free to overlook plain statutory commands on the strength of nothing more than suppositions about intentions or guesswork about expectations"? Gorsuch was not the only guest at the tea party.

Consider the claims made by the attorney Kristen Waggoner, representing web designer Lorie Smith: Waggoner claimed that the U.S. Supreme Court has already "held" that views opposing same-sex marriages are "honorable and decent" (it has not said that as a matter of law) and that the court made "promises" in Obergefell v. Hodges "to protect those who would believe marriage is between a man and a woman from having to express a view that violates their conscience."

Waggoner, head of the Alliance Defending Freedom which organized the initial lawsuit, was referring to the 2015 landmark Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges. Written by then Justice Anthony Kennedy, Obergefell struck down state bans on same-sex marriage. In his majority opinion, Kennedy included a sentence that said he thought there could be "decent and honorable religious or philosophical" reasons for opposing same-sex marriage. When Waggoner and others quote Kennedy to support discrimination against same-sex couples, they omit significant content and characterize the non-binding observation as a "promise." It is worth revisiting what Kennedy actually wrote:

"Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here. But when that sincere, personal opposition becomes enacted law and public policy, the necessary consequence is to put the imprimatur of the State itself on an exclusion that soon demeans or stigmatizes those whose own liberty is then denied. Under the Constitution, same-sex couples seek in marriage the same legal treatment as opposite-sex couples, and it would disparage their choices and diminish their personhood to deny them this right."

Taken in full, Kennedy's statement does not seem to support the idea that a web designer in the public marketplace can treat same-sex couples differently than male-female couples. In fact, the text of the recently passed federal Respect for Marriage Act, which says no state may deny recognition of a same-sex or interracial marriage licensed in another state, echoes Kennedy's "decent and honorable" statement, too. It states that diverse beliefs about marriage are held by "sincere people based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises and that "Congress affirms that such people and their diverse beliefs are due proper respect."

But right-wing groups have clipped out the "decent and honorable" quote to imply that the majority in Obergefell was suggesting there was legal basis on which to discriminate against LGBTQ people. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito gave prominence to the clip in 2020 when they issued a dissent to the court's refusal to take up an appeal from a Kentucky county clerk who refused to issue marriages licenses to same-sex couples. In their dissent, Thomas and Alito misquoted the majority in Obergefell, saying it "briefly acknowledged that those with sincerely held religious objections to same-sex marriage are often "decent and honorable." [The Obergefell majority said that people who oppose same-sex marriage often due so "based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises."]

In her remarks before the Supreme Court, ADF leader Waggoner repeatedly asserted that web designer Smith "believes that same-sex weddings contradict scripture" and that creating a wedding website for a same-sex couple would be "announcing a concept of marriage that she believes to be false." The assertion reflected the fact that the court was not considering whether the web designer could refuse same-sex wedding sites on religious grounds but on any Free Speech grounds.

"I think what's important is that the [web designer's] objection is to the message she's being asked to create," said Waggoner. "And so, if she believes she's being asked to create a message that violates her convictions, whether those convictions are based on a moral reason or a religious reason, it would be protected."

see **SCOTUS,** *page 7*

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Mombian

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families are being barred from classrooms via DeSantis' 'Don't Say Gay' bill."

She added, "Unfortunately, no matter the lifespan of anti-LGBTQ legislation, the damage is already done simply by their introduction. When lawmakers keep trans kids from participating in school athletics, or ban books on what it means to be nonbinary, they are effectively telling LGBTQ kids and their families that they are not interested in their safety, health, or wellbeing."

The anti-LGBTQ bills also brought "a resurgence of dangerous anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that attempts to cast LGBTQ+ people and anyone who supports us as 'groomers' or 'pedophiles,'" said Shelbi Day, chief policy officer at Family Equality. "We cannot stand for this hateful, fear-based rhetoric and must call it out for what it is—unacceptable, harmful, discriminatory fearmongering that has no basis in reality and no place in our society."

Jordan Budd, executive director of COLAGE, the national organization for people with LGBTQ parents, also noted the attacks on LGBTQ families and stated, "Young people with LGBTQ+ parents in states with new Don't Say Gay/Trans bills especially need our support more than ever."

Although southern states felt the brunt of these attacks, other regions were not immune. Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at LGBTQ legal organization GLAD, said GLAD hears from people throughout New England, "where they're facing local school committee actions or local community members who want to pull back on transgender inclusion policies, to ban particular books, to not allow for the use of affirming pronouns without written parental permission." She pointed out a pending Massachusetts case in which parents are suing the school district for using their transgender children's requested names and pronouns. The parents claimed this "violated their constitutional right to parent their child." As Crozier sees it, the school was "abiding by Massachusetts non-discrimination laws and creating an affirming environment, because that's what every kid needs." GLAD filed an amicus brief in the case. More broadly, Crozier noted, "Threats to school committees and anti-CRT [critical race theory] bans have been a real setback, because they create a climate of fear in schools."

Another big setback, Budd observed, was "the inability or unwillingness to pass parentage reform laws across the country, eve n in states like Massachusetts!" The Massachusetts Parentage Act, which would have comprehensively protected children regardless of the circumstances of their birth or the gender of their parents, failed to come up for a vote in the full legislature last session.

Additionally, everyone I spoke with agreed that the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs, which overturned abortion rights, was a setback for LGBTQ families. Stacey Stevenson, CEO of Family Equality, explained, "LGBTQ+ equality and abortion rights are inextricably linked—and overturning Roe is a direct attack on our rights. We know that LGBTQ+ people assigned female at birth are just as likely as non-LGBTQ+ people assigned female at birth to seek abortion care."

She asserted, "The Court's willingness to overturn such precedent is truly alarming, and the language signals looming threats to other freedoms that are fundamental to our families—and, frankly, to everyone."

Day did note, however, "We by no means think that it's a given" that the Court will overturn its Obergefell marriage equality ruling, but warned, "We will likely see attacks on marriage equality, and our families and interracial couples deserve the safety and security of knowing that our marriages are recognized under federal law and have to be given full faith and credit by all states—if the unthinkable were to happen."

Crozier acknowledged, too, the concerns that Dobbs could lead to overturning marriage equality or bans on accessing in vitro fertilization. "I think some of that is just fear," she said, but cautioned, "We have to be very careful to do everything we can at the state and federal level to guard against those." Both Crozier and Day agreed that the Respect for Marriage Act, which passed Congress on December 8, is an important step towards that goal.

And a "silver lining to this year," Budd pointed out, was that Dobbs "really woke people up to the fact that our rights are not as secure as we once thought."

Dobbs has also helped spur "an advocacy community of real greater urgency to intersectional work," Crozier said. She noted bills she has collaborated on in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and California, which protect those providing or accessing reproductive and gender affirming health care and "make sure people coming from other states have access to care in our states so that we can be a beacon of hope and safety." LGBTQ families, she said, need reproductive health care, abortion care, and pregnancy loss care, and "need to be working in community with others to secure access to those fundamental rights for everyone."

The Biden administration also showed support for LGBTQ+ families this year, Day added, noting the "Executive Order Advancing Equality for LGBTQI+ Individuals," plus two proposed rules: the first to confirm that Title IX's anti-discrimination protections cover LGBTQ+ students and families, and the second to strengthen anti-discrimination protections of the Affordable Care Act, "providing critical protections for LGBTQ+ people and families."

And in another sign of progress, Stevenson said, "A record-breaking 340 openly LGBTQ+ candidates won their elections, including the first two lesbian governors elected to office" (in Oregon and Massachusetts).

Although the setbacks may seem daunting, Budd nevertheless observed, "We have seen renewed dedication to the fight for our families and we must keep that energy for the coming year." In my next column, I'll share what these advocates think our priorities should be in that 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, music, and more.

Rosendall

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cissist who preceded Joe Biden in the White House keeps pouring gasoline on the culture-war fires, and his mounting legal problems have not quelled his enraged rabble.

Republicans did not so much as pause to celebrate Griner's release. Dinesh D'Souza tweeted, "Don't expect #BrittneyGriner to start singing the national anthem. Her refusal to do so—indeed her anti-American stance in general—is why Biden picked her over the Marine to bring home. Biden, like Obama, values anti-Americanism over traditional American patriotism."

That is an awfully brazen assertion by D'Souza, considering Vladimir Putin's popularity among Republicans. Dissent is a fundamental American freedom. Treating it with contempt while inventing base motives for rescuing an American hostage is at least an order of magnitude worse than declining the ritual singing of "the rocket's red glare" prior to a sporting event.

Even the brother of Paul Whelan, the Russian-held former Marine invoked by D'Souza, praised the Biden administration for accepting the only deal Russia was willing to make. Biden made it clear that efforts to release Whelan and other Americans unjustly imprisoned by despotic regimes will continue.

If Republicans were acting in good faith, they would criticize Trump for failing to help Whelan after he was taken prisoner in 2018. But it is easier for them to inflame the MAGA hordes by claiming baselessly that Biden "chose" Griner over Whelan because she was a black lesbian. They miss no opportunity to stoke animosity by inventing grievances.

Speaking of stirring displays, Republican Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler of Missouri wept in Congress as she urged her colleagues to vote against the marriage bill. She claimed, as the bullies always do, that it is Christians, not LGBTQ people, who are under threat. She added the self-refuting declaration that Christian voices are being silenced.

Marriage equality activists have stressed from the outset that we are talking about civil marriage, not religious marriage. We have not sought to force members of any faith to give us their blessing. That the theocrats persist in their incitements makes them partly responsible for the increase in hate crimes.

The bipartisan marriage bill passed despite Hartzler's weeping. Her gay nephew Andrew Hartzler went viral with a rebuke of his aunt in which he emphasized the importance of coexistence.

The Proud Boys, who admittedly are not called the Bright Boys, should figure out already that coexistence is not replacement. Drag queen reading time does not turn children queer any more than drag performances by servicemembers eighty years ago (see *South Pacific*) set us back in World War II. Media mavens wedded to both-sidesism ought to be reminded that it was not "radical socialists" nor Antifa nor the Squad who tried to overthrow the American government.

The constant injection of poison into our public discourse by autocratic know-nothings will not be defeated by deleting our Twitter accounts. Nor will the grace and class of Cherelle Griner speaking in the White House stop domestic terrorists from attacking our power grid, any more than President Obama's self-assured stroll across the South Lawn to Marine One ended racism.

But here we are. With diversity not a mere political agenda but a societal reality, our goal cannot be unanimity—we are not North Korea—but rather the restraint required to coexist across ethnicities, faiths, and cultural traditions.

We can argue over public policy without destroying civility and mutual respect. We must, however, be honest: There was no respect for African Americans in the recruitment of Herschel Walker as a Senate candidate against a man as learned and eloquent as Rev. Raphael Warnock. Lindsey Graham's claim that electing Walker to the Senate would prove Republicans are not racist was his own minstrel show.

Happily, a few weeks before the takeover of the House by Republican nihilists, I was invited to attend the Respect for Marriage Act signing at the White House. The law represents a compromise, not the end of our journey. Nonetheless, for all the attendant crying, catcalls, and calumny, it reminds us that we continue to create our country.

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Torch

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ning Tonys for best play and lead actor.

This insightful drama resonates now more than ever with its timeless message of love in the face of hate and prejudice.. The Moonbox Productions revival at the Calderwood Pavilion—under the inspired direction of company associate artistic director and founding partner Allison Choat—beautifully captures the play's emotional richness and impact in what is arguably the finest staging of 2022.

In her director's notes, Choat speaks of the play as "a love letter—a complex, vibrant and relentless love letter to relationships in all their dysfunction and glory, to every shade and shape and sense of love." Her description is both accurate and insightful—particularly for gay Jewish protagonist Arnold Beckoff. Fierstein, who once worked as a drag queen in Greenwich Village clubs, has described his stage counterpart as a "kvetch of great wit and want." Beckoff seems to defend himself from rejection and disappointment with witty kvetching yet never really gives up searching for his ideal man

That search for not only love and a family with a partner but also acceptance by his judgmental widowed mother—here identified simply as Ma—ties together the parts of this trilogy (originally entitled "Torch Song Trilogy"). In the opening "The International Stud (June 1974)" Arnold—whose performer names include Virginia Hamm and Kitty Litter-- wants a real lasting relationship and love with a caring mate—not brief, loveless backroom encounters.

A Brooklyn man named Ed could be the one, but the closeted bisexual teacher admits to being confused about his identity. The middle "Fugue in a Nursery (Summer 1975)" finds Ed's thoughtful but uncertain wife Laurel inviting Arnold and young boyfriend Alan to the couple's farm in what becomes a revealing relationship test—sharply paced by Choat and smartly played out in Cameron McEachern's smartly spare set design.

Fierstein brings Arnold to a pivotal moment of truth about his own identity in the final act "Widows and Children First (June 1980)" after five idyllic years with Alan, the victim of a deadly gay-bashing. Wills Arnold –now adopting a gay former foster child and high schooler named David—embrace returning Ed as a partner and co-parent? Will grieving Arnold be able to find empathy from his mother—who has previously opposed same-sex relationships?

The third act is alternately explosive and reflective moments bring Fierstein's highly personal yet strikingly universal examination of love, relationships and family to a powerful close.

One of the year's finest casts makes that examination both heartfelt and haunting. Peter Mill is commandingly moving and impassioned as Arnold—particularly in his initial dressing room soliloquy and his eventual declaration of self-respect in heated exchanges with Ma. Bobbie Steinbach is forceful as earnest if very blunt Ma. Mill and Steinbach's escalating confrontation as Arnold and Ma face off is the kind of fully realized acting that theater students should study.

Cristhian Mancinas-Garcia captures Ed's emotional conflict and sexual confusion as well as his essentially loving concern for Arnold. Janis Hudson makes Laurel properly grounded and tenacious yet fair. Jack Manning catches Alan's exuberance and vulnerability. Jack Mullen has all of David's appealing energy and striking outspokenness, though he may look older than his 16 year old character to some theatergoers.

Songs by such seminal artists as Billie Holiday, Blossom Dearie and Dinah Washington—with thematically connected lyrics—effectively punctuate scene changes.

Moonbox's vibrant "Torch Song" has the kind of fearless and loving delivery that makes it a must-hear for all audiences.

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billy masters

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And now, time for a holiday recipe. I usually don't share my culinary secrets, but this one came to me when I was at a particularly festive soirée. The host had hired a barista to make hot holiday beverages. I got a cappuccino with eggnog foam topped with some crushed-up candy canes, and that's when inspiration struck. This is not so much cooking as arranging, or as they say on those food shows, "plating". First, buy a box of limited edition seasonal Pepperidge Farm Peppermint Milano Slices. You should also pick up a canister of peppermint whipped cream. Take one Milano slice, top it off with a generous amount of peppermint whipped cream, and lightly sprinkle with some crushed candy canes. And, voila, you'll see GOD! My name is Billy Masters, and I'm a peppermint-o-holic.

Brendan Fraser has received universal acclaim for his portrayal of "The Whale". Although he's a contender for a Golden Globe, he is still angry at how the Hollywood Foreign Press Association handled an incident in 2003. He claims that **Philip Berk**, the organization's head at the time, got a bit "handsy" with his posterior. "His left hand reaches around, grabs my ass cheek, and one of his fingers touches me in the taint. And he starts moving it around." I presume he means moving his finger around, because most taints are stationary. Fraser says, "I felt ill. I felt like a little kid. I felt like there was a ball in my throat." Wait, did he say he had a ball in his throat? The HFPA did an internal investigation and ruled that Berk did indeed "inappropriately touch" Fraser...but it "was intended to be taken as a joke and not as a sexual advance." This is why Brendan will not attend the awards. "I have more history with the Hollywood Foreign Press Association than I have respect for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. No, I will not participate. It's because of the history that I have with them. And my mother didn't raise a hypocrite. You can call me a lot of things, but not that."

The Globes have always had a checkered history in Hollywood. From being a trifle, to being a joke, to being a harbinger of the Oscars, to being tossed off network TV. They are currently attempting to rise from the ashes and return to the airwaves. Yes, NBC will once again air the event formerly owned by **Dick Clark** (oh, the humanity). As if to conclusively prove that the HFPA is embracing diversity, the show will be hosted by **Jerrod Carmichael** —who is both black and gay! It's like a twofer —a two-for-one! Nominations will be announced later this week.

For months, all we heard about **Anthony Rapp** was that tawdry tale about that tawdry man. I'm delighted to report some good news. Anthony just became a father. He and fiancé **Ken Ithiphol** had a son via surrogate. **Rai Larson** (the middle name should be self-explanatory) was born on December 2nd. Congrats!

Another family is in the news —the Carters. Not Jimmy and Rosalynn. Our first story is about **Aaron Carter**. **Lance Bass** is joining forces with Aaron's twin sister Angel in "Songs for Tomorrow" at Bass' West Hollywood nightclub, Heart (formerly known as Rage), on January 18th. All of the proceeds will go to "On Our Sleeves", a charity focused on the mental health of young people.

And that leads to a story about Aaron's brother. Nick and his boys filmed "A Very Backstreet Holiday", a holiday special which was slated to air on ABC on December 14th. The network quietly dropped the show from its schedule while rape allegations continue to swirl around Nick. The incident in question happened in 2001 after a concert in Tacoma —and I think it goes without saying that nothing good happens after a concert in Tacoma. Allegedly, Nick invited Shannon "Shay" Ruth (who was 17 at the time) onto the band's tour bus, gave her an alcoholic beverage he called "VIP Juice", and sexually assaulted her. While it's easy to scoff at an allegation coming to light two decades later, three other anonymous women reported similar experiences with Carter between 2003-2006.

It's been a busy few weeks for "Billy Masters LIVE". I previously announced that **Christine Ebersole** would appear sometime in December. Sometime unexpectedly came last week! She had a break in her "Bob Hearts Abishola" schedule, so she joined me for an in-depth look at her career —and what a career she's had. When I asked what her big break was, Christine's first thought was to say "Grey Gardens"! We went back and learned that shortly after arriving in NYC, she was asked to learn the role of Guinevere in three days and star in a national tour of "Camelot" opposite **Richard Burton**! Another break was getting cast on "Saturday Night Live" —without an audition! Then there was the time she beat out opera great **Dame Kiri Te Kanawa** for "Amadeus". We also talk about her current CD, "After the Ball", and her upcoming New Year's Eve concert in Provincetown (details at Ptown.org). Definitely check it out on our YouTube channel, Billy Masters TV, or on BillyMasters.com/TV.

I don't like to play favorites with my guests, but this week I'll be joined by a member of my family. **Jenifer Lewis** is more than "the mother of black Hollywood" (also the title of her first memoir). She's also my Play Mama. The life she's led, the stories she shares, the lessons she's learned —well, it'll all be part of a special "Billy Masters LIVE". Join in the fun with us on Wednesday, December 14th at 7PM Eastern / 4PM Pacific on our YouTube channel, Billy Masters TV. By the way, that's where you can see all of the episodes from our three seasons.

And now, time for more of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions". With Jenifer Lewis on our show, it reminds me that her new book, "Walking in My Joy", would make a fantastic addition to everybody's library. And you know what's even better than reading about Jenifer's life? Hearing her tell the stories herself. Oh, it's a hoot! You can get the audio book on Amazon, on Audible, or wherever you buy audio books.

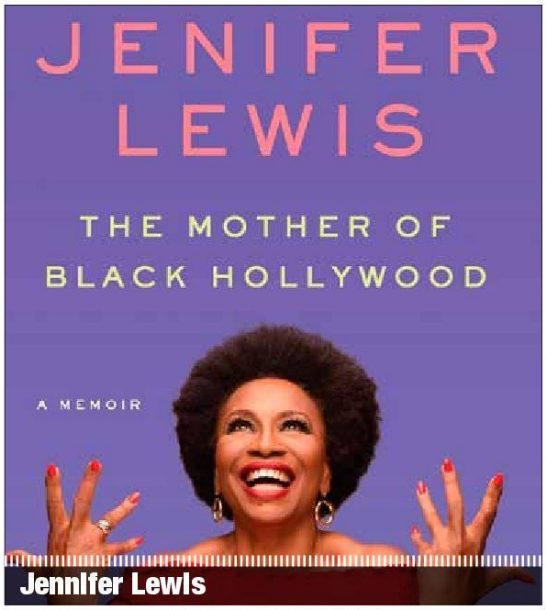
Do you have someone on your naughty (or nice) list who is crafty? Sexy diver **Tom Daley** is taking his knitting habit even further with his latest book —"Made With Love" —which is subtitled "Get hooked with 30 knitting and crochet patterns". Yes, Tom will show you how to knit or crochet 30 fantastic items. True, some of his creations —like that crocheted Speedo —might not be for everyone. But you'll definitely enjoy looking at the pictures.

Our "Ask Billy" question is a throwback. Karl in Baltimore writes, *"I just read an interview with [director] **Kay Cannon**. She talked about doing a film with **Gary Cole** where he walked around naked. What was the film?"*

Kay was talking about "Blockers" —the otherwise forgettable **John Cena** comedy. During the scene in question, Cole and his wife (the always appealing Gina Gershon) are engaging in some sexual roleplaying. He is walking around naked and blindfolded. "Gary Cole, God bless him, he was game. He thought it was so funny and I was happy that he was so willing to do it." Co-star **Leslie Mann** chimed in, "You made him a prosthetic and he didn't want to wear it. He wanted the real thing." If you wanna see the real thing, check out BillyMasters.com.

When Tom Daley's a hooker, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. If you prefer people's privates made public, check out www.BillyMasters.com —the site that never blocks cocks...or anything else. If you have a question that requires my personal touch, send it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Tom knits something for Gary's nether regions! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Brendan Fraser



Jennifer Lewis

Gary Cole

SCOTUS

Continued from page 3

If Waggoner's reasoning were accepted by the Supreme Court, then most public accommodations laws would be gutted: A business could simply claim that it "believes" it is being asked to violate its "convictions" in order to refuse service to a customer for any reason.

Because public accommodations laws typically prohibit discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and other categories, it seems unlikely all six conservatives on this court are ready to gut all such laws that dramatically. But the dialogue and the math do not look good for LGBTQ citizens who rely on public accommodations laws.

Comments, questions, and the records of the six conservative justices suggest they are not looking for a way to strengthen public accommodations laws to protect LGBTQ people. Chief Justice John Roberts indicated he saw this case as "not simply just restricting speech but actually compelling an individual to engage in speech contrary to her beliefs." Justice Brett Kavanaugh suggested that, if the Colorado law prevails, states could expand the reach of such laws to force speech writers to produce messages they disagree with. Justice Amy Coney Barrett posed a hypothetical, asking Waggoner whether the web designer would refuse a wedding website to a male-female couple who were getting married after divorcing their previous spouses. Waggoner said no.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor warned during oral argument, "This would be first time in court's history that that it would say that ...a commercial business open to the public, serving the public, that it could refuse to serve a customer based on race, sex, religion, or sexual orientation...."

Despite the enormity of the case's eventual outcome, news reports on 303 Creative were fewer than usual for an LGBTQ-related argument. That may be because the court heard arguments two days later in what has been described as "the most important case for American democracy" in U.S. history. That case, Moore v. Harper, was argued December 7 and is set to determine whether state legislatures can create district maps and organize federal elections in each state in a way that gives a lopsided advantage to the political party in the majority –and do so without review by the courts to determine whether the maps and rules violate the state constitution.

The outcome of the Moore case out of North Carolina could have profound impact on the outcomes of presidential and Congressional elections. It could determine whether a legislature could choose a state's presidential electors, and it could undermine the U.S. democratic system of checks and balances on the wielding of power in government. Most reporting and analysis on the Moore argument said the court seemed split into three groups: one against, one for, and one seeking a moderate compromise. As with the 303 Creative decision, the decision in Moore is not likely to be released until June 2023.

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Respect

Continued from page 1

was concern about the nationwide proliferation of conservative policies on gender issues at the state level.

Biden criticized the "callous, cynical laws introduced in the states targeting transgender children, terrifying families and criminalizing doctors who give children the care they need."

"Racism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, they're all connected," Biden said. "But the antidote to hate is love."

Among the attendees were the owner of Club Q, a gay nightclub in Colorado where five people were killed in a shooting last month, and two survivors of the attack. The suspect has been charged with hate crimes.

"It's not lost on me that our struggle for freedom hasn't been achieved," said Kelley Robinson, president of the Human Rights Campaign. "But this is a huge step forward, and we have to celebrate the victories we achieve and use that to fuel the future of the fight."

Robinson attended the ceremony with her wife and 1-year-old child.

"Our kids are watching this moment," she said. "It's very special to have them here and show them that we're on the right side of history."

The new law is intended to safeguard gay marriages if the U.S. Supreme Court ever reverses Obergefell v. Hodges, its 2015 decision legalizing same-sex unions nationwide. The new law also protects interracial marriages. In 1967, the Supreme Court in Loving v. Virginia struck down laws in 16 states barring interracial marriage.

The signing marks the culmination of a monthslong bipartisan effort sparked by the Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that made abortion available across the country.

In a concurring opinion in the case that overturned Roe, Justice Clarence Thomas suggested revisiting other decisions, including the legalization of gay marriage, generating fear that more rights could be imperiled by the court's conservative majority. Thomas did not reference interracial marriage with the other cases he said should be reconsidered.

Lawmakers crafted a compromise that was intended to assuage conservative concerns about religious liberty, such as ensuring churches could still refuse to perform gay marriages.

In addition, states would not be required to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples if the court overturns its 2015 ruling. But they will be required to recognize marriages conducted elsewhere in the country.

A majority of Republicans in Congress still voted against the legislation. However, enough supported it to sidestep a filibuster in the Senate and ensure its passage.

Tuesday's ceremony marks another chapter in Biden's legacy on gay rights, which includes his surprise endorsement of marriage equality in 2012.

"What this is all about is a simple proposition: Who do you love?" Biden said then on NBC's "Meet the Press." "Who do you love and will you be loyal to the person you love? And that is what people are finding out is what all marriages at their root are about."

A Gallup poll showed only 27% of U.S. adults supported same-sex unions in 1996, when President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which said the federal government would only recognize heterosexual marriages. Biden voted for the legislation.

By the time of Biden's 2012 interview, gay marriage remained controversial, but support had expanded to roughly half of U.S. adults, according to Gallup. Earlier this year, 71% said same-sex unions should be recognized by law.

Biden has pushed to expand LGBT rights since taking office. He reversed President Donald Trump's efforts to strip transgender people of anti-discrimination protections. His administration includes the first openly gay Cabinet member, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, and the first transgender person to receive Senate confirmation, Assistant Secretary for Health Rachel Levine.

Associated Press writer Seung Min Kim contributed to this report.

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