August 8 - 21, 2024
50 cents at newsstands Vol. 40, No 2

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Legislature Enacts Massachusetts Parentage Act to Protect Children of LGBTQ Parents

By Dana Rudolph

The Massachusetts Legislature has enacted the Massachusetts Parentage Act, updating state parentage laws to better protect the children of LGBTQ parents, those formed via assisted reproduction, and those with de facto or functional parents.

The Massachusetts Senate voted 40 to 0 on Tuesday, July 30, for an Act to Ensure Legal Parentage Equality (known as the Massachusetts Parentage Act, or MPA), which had passed the House unanimously last month. The bill went back for concurrence and final votes on Wednesday, July 31, and was enacted unanimously in both chambers just before 3 a.m. Thursday, August 1, as legislators worked through the night on the last day of the session. The bill (H.4970) is now on the desk of Governor Maura Healey (D), who has already expressed her support.

Massachusetts had been the only New England state that had not comprehensively reformed its parentage laws to account for the diversity of family forms today—although it has one of the highest rates of births through assisted reproduction in the nation, and was the first in the nation to allow same-sex couples

see **MPA,** *page 5*

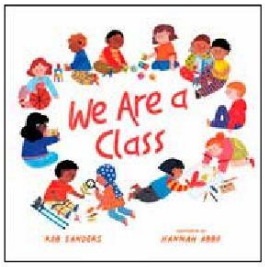
4 New LGBTQ-Inclusive Picture Books for Back to School

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Even as many of us are still enjoying summer, back-to-school time will soon be upon us—so here are three recent and relevant LGBTQ-inclusive picture books about schools, allyship, and community.

"We Are a Class," by Rob Sanders, illustrated by Hannah Abbo (Beaming Books), explores the question of what it means to be part of a diverse and inclusive class, one of "Hes and shes/ And theys and mes," and teachers of all titles, including the nonbinary "Mx."

With a deft use of alliteration and rhyme, the verses share the stories of the students: "We're movers and shakers./ Mammoth change makers./Friends. Learners./ Achievement earners." We see that all are safe here in this space of sharing and openness, and sometimes the class even feels like family.



One page shows a teacher who reads as nonbinary, with a shave-sided haircut and rainbow pin, standing next to a student in overalls. A banner behind them reads "Welcome!" and the verse says, "There's no need to fear./We're glad you are here." The sentiment can apply to anyone, but LGBTQ students should feel particularly acknowledged.

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 7*

A work-in-progress about a work-in-progress

The Queen of Versailles,
pre-Broadway tryout at Emerson Colonial Theatre, through August 25.
www.emersoncolonialtheatre.com

By Jules Becker
Contributing Writer

Kristin Chenoweth and F. Murray Abraham star in "The Queen of Versailles." Courtesy Photo by Emilio Madrid.

Is the new musical "The Queen of Versailles" an ambitious if as yet overlong work-in-progress? Based on the 2012 Lauren Greenfield documentary film of the same and the life stories of Jackie and David Siegel, the Stephen Schwartz (music and lyrics)-Lindsey Ferrentino (book) show looks to focus on the ups and downs of building the title Florida replica of the famed Louis XIV Palace of Versailles.

Notwithstanding Tony Award-winning and nominated talent, this Broadway-bound effort seems as challenged in its own way as the Siegels and their never-completed though very large (85,000 square feet) Orlando outskirts single family home.

Thanks to a lively Schwartz opener "Because We Can," the construction of this visually striking musical promises a high-powered examination of the project and the goals of the Siegels. That promise also informs the work of the strong design team. Here and throughout , scenic and video designer Dane Laffrey captures the busy opulence—

see **WORK-IN-PROGRESS,** *page 4*

Cardinal O'Malley's mixed legacy

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, 80, announced his retirement. He served as the Archbishop of Boston from 2003 to 2024. Catholic Church leaders applauded his tenure because he came to Boston during the wake of the clergy sex abuse scandal, succeeding the disgraced and fallen Cardinal Bernard F. Law.

Dubbed "The Fixer," O'Malley had previously dealt with clergy sexual abuse scandals in Palm Beach and Fall River. Pope Francis appointed O'Malley president of his newly established Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in 2014. However, complaints about O'Malley's leadership and transparency issues resulted in high-profile members leaving, like German Jesuit Fr. Hans Zollner, a renowned psychologist and psychotherapist, and Irish abuse survivor Marie Collins.

Sadly, the problem of clergy sexual abuse scandals persists. In 2023, O'Malley was slapped with a lawsuit by three former students at a Catholic high school.

The question not asked by the church's governing body is why sexual abuse persists as it does among its clerics.

There are two salient causes: a "no-snitch policy" and an unwavering support of church bishops. For example, the church has a "no-snitch" policy when it comes to child sexual abuse. Canon law allows for the pontifical secret of "allegations" as well as proof of predatory priests. This "cover-up" has occurred under six popes' pontificates since 1922.

However, in February 2016, good news came, giving hope that canon law was about to change. O'Malley, then president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, stated that bishops have an ethical and moral obligation to report allegations of clergy sexual misconduct and abuse to civil au-

see **MONROE,** *page 7*

"I'm only trying to make it to vote for Kamala Harris."

—Former President Jimmy Carter explains what makes him want to hang on until after his 100th birthday on October 1st. I smell grounds for a voter fraud investigation.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Public domain photo, via Wikimedia Commons.

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CALENDAR

The 27th Annual LGBTQIA+ Dance on October 26th, 2024

Get ready for an unforgettable night at the 27th Annual Lesbians & Friends LGBTQIA+ Dance! Hosted at the fabulous Club Café, Boston's top venue, this event promises a memorable evening filled with high-energy music by guest DJ Christina from San Francisco, delightful hors d'oeuvres, and a vibrant dance lesson by Liz Nania, founder and director of OUT to Dance. Attendees rave about the incredible atmosphere, the fantastic music, and the joyous sense of community. This is not your typical benefit—it's a lively celebration where you can dance the night away and create lasting memories.

The 27th Annual Lesbians & Friends LGBTQIA+ Dance to benefit Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition (MBCC) will take place in-person and virtually on Saturday, October 26th, 2024 from 6 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. EDT. The in-person Dance will be held at Boston's best venue, Club Café. If you would like to attend this special 27th anniversary virtually, the event will be hosted on Zoom.

There will also be a dance lesson by OUT to Dance's founder and director, Liz Nania, and music throughout the evening provided by Club Café's guest DJ from San Francisco, Christina!

"We are grateful to the many people who have supported the Dance for the past 26 years," said MBCC's Executive Director, Cheryl Osimo. "For the 27th year, we will be honored to acknowledge some of the past and present volunteer MBCC Board Members who have greatly supported MBCC and this special event."

Tickets to attend the in-person event at Club Café in Boston, MA are $40 in advance and $45 at the d oor. Walk-ins are welcome! If you are a student over the age of 21, tickets are $20 in advance and $25 at the door with student ID. To enter Club Café, you must be 21 or older.

Tickets for the virtual event on Zoom are $20. For students, tickets are $10. Virtual tickets are open to all ages. WWW.MBCC.ORG/DANCE

For full event information and to purchase tickets, please visit mbcc.org/dance.

Funds raised from the Lesbians & Friends LGBTQIA+ Dance help support MBCC's education programs designed to provide our communities with vital health information on ways to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals in the products they use and in the environments in which they live, learn, and work. Our mission is to prevent breast cancer.

We look forward to coming together on October 26th to dance the night away in the name of cancer prevention!

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The choice in 2024: building America or tearing it apart

Inclusion only threatens bigots

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

Permit me to begin with some positive messages. The Washington Post reports, "Trump's presidential bid has the support of only half of his Cabinet." A T-shirt reads, "Voting prevents unwanted presidencies." Simone Biles tweets, "I love my black job" after her thrilling Olympic gymnastic comeback.

James Baldwin, whose 100th birthday was August 2, wrote that "ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have." And here we are with an ignoramus seeking to replace the American presidency with a dictatorship, aided by many who should know better but are intoxicated with the prospect of power.

The Trump phenomenon is a blend of know-nothingism, bigoted appeals, and theft. If every news cycle becomes a question of how Democrats will respond to his latest mud-slinging—such as by obligingly refuting his claims about Kamala Harris's birth certificate—we are playing on his ground.

If we let a lying sociopath be the arbiter of authenticity, we are surely lost.

Trump says millions are crossing our southern border in an invasion, when border crossings have actually gone down. But how can there be any illegal border crossings if he built his much-touted wall as he has claimed? And if an invasion is underway (instead of a migration, which is a different thing), why did he kill the border security bill?

It may be a blessing that Trump cannot help blurting out stupid and vicious things that play to his diehard supporters but turn off everyone else.

Democrats have newfound energy and enthusiasm, thanks to a young and gifted candidate who was ready for her moment. Her opponent, meanwhile, appears convinced that people with multiracial backgrounds are a rarity, despite his running mate J.D. Vance having biracial children. Some Trump supporters have reprised his Obama-era birtherism by suggesting Harris is ineligible to run for president because her mother came from India and her father from Jamaica. She, however, was born in Oakland, California, and is every bit as American as Trump.

Director Ryan Coogler is also from Oakland. The final scene in his movie Black Panther is set there, though it was actually shot across the street from Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, whose pastor is Sen. Raphael Warnock.

Life is a series of connections. That scene in Black Panther features King T'Challa, played by the late Chadwick Boseman, who was proud of his fellow Howard University alum Kamala. She is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, founded at Howard in 1908.

Trump, however, thought it was smart to question Harris's blackness in an interview at the convention of the National Association of Black Journalists. His intended audience was doubtless his supporters who love seeing him "stick it to" people they hate.

Vance later called Harris a chameleon, despite having changed his own name three times and reversed his harsh criticism of Trump.

Harris showed leadership last February by holding private meetings with the German Chancellor and the Slovenian Prime Minister at the Munich Security Conference to win their help with the complex prisoner exchange carried out on August 1. By contrast, Trump offers empty boasting. He has no use for diplomacy. He filters everything through his self interest rather than the national interest. His idea of leadership is a plan to fire all federal employees who do not swear loyalty to him instead of the Constitution.

Instead of ignoring Trump or letting him control the debate, Democrats need to make the case for the values and traditions they are defending and upholding. One is the First Amendment "right of the people peaceably to assemble," which Trump would violate by using federal troops to suppress protesters.

We are a diverse people, despite Trump's assumption of whiteness as a standard. Contrary to his portrayal of diversity as a threat, it is a source of enrichment. There are countless examples of contributions made by black people, from doorknobs to inoculations to music. Trump can perhaps be credited with innovations in grifting.

We do not have to accept that for one group to advance, another must suffer. Indeed, the discussion of multiracial families illustrates that there are no firm borders between groups.

Too many people fail to distinguish the ginned-up dramas called "reality TV" from the radical program to reshape our country represented by the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. If we share Lincoln's determination "that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth," we must defeat the real threat to our republic, which is coming from within.

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

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Work-in-progress

Continued from page 1

for example, three exquisite chandeliers and wall-covering framed paintings evoking Versailles era figures— and the scope and size of the replica.

Christian Cowan's vivid costumes range from flashy, often bling-adorned outfits for Jackie to casual wear for her unassuming daughter Victoria and adopted niece Jonquil. Natasha Katz's sharp lighting catches the hyped up grandeur of the replica and the intimacy of some family scenes.

Equally auspicious—under Michael Arden's careful direction—is the presence of celebrated actors as the leads. Opening night theatergoers rightly cheered the first appearances of Kristin Chenoweth and F. Murray Abraham. Chenoweth—a wide ranging actress (seen by this critic in her very deserving Tony Award performance in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" and nominated one in "Wicked") brings commanding authority and charisma to the title role as Jackie moves from being crowned the 1993 Mrs. Florida to marrying Jewish time-share resort firm power David (of Westgate Resorts Ltd. Fame) in 2000 and often appearing to take charge of the palatial project. She brings booming confidence to the hopefulness of "Caviar Dreams" and appealing lightness to an early second act duet with Cassondra Jones as Marie Antoinette.

Abraham (memorable as Shylock in a 2011 tour of a "Merchant of Venice" revival and the second season of "The White Lotus") has the right business savvy as David and deep caring for Jackie. While David is relatively supporting here as in the documentary, Abraham does make the most of his narrative 'singing' in the jaunty country western style "The Ballad of the Time Share King."

While Abraham and especially Chenoweth keep the story going, there are two particularly glaring elements in need of work—Ferrentino's fairly uninvolving book and Lauren Yalango-Grant and Christopher Cree Grant's unsatisfying choreography. Ferrentino needs to make Jackie's rocky relationship with her troubled daughter Victoria more moving.

Many audience members may find that Victoria's death and the Siegel's establishment of the Victoria's Voice Foundation to combat drug overdosing need more emotional power in the musical's book. At the same time, there is very little attention to the couple's other children—for instance, very brief attention to their twins.

While Melody Butiu brings compelling feeling to insightful housekeeper-confidante Sofia, there ought to be an actual number in which she can express her disappointments with Jackie as a frequently absentee parent. Also, Ferrentino's book seems to give short shrift to David's alarming dismissal of virtually his entire timeshare staff during the 2008 Great Recession.

More time should also be given to the musical's choreography. A waltz of the Siegels ends far too soon. A soft shoe stretch for their sweet "Trust Me" should be longer as well. The same can be said for a clever minuet that brings together Louis XIV and Jackie. Here too the sequence ends too abruptly. Compensating at times is Pablo David Laucerica's spirit and flair as the Sun King.

Other compensations in the as yet uneven show include two strong supporting performances—Tatum Grace Hopkins' affecting Jonquil and especially Nina White's arrestingly vulnerable Victoria. Hopkins and White share an appealing duet on "Pavane for a Dead Lizard." White delivers Victoria's touching lament "Pretty Always Wins" and her blunt observations in "The Book of Random" with the kind of power that should bring her Tony nomination attention.

Jackie Siegel speaks of American royalty, an idea that can fit Abraham and Chenoweth. Even so, "Queen of Versailles"—with an overlong first act and a somewhat overbearing title character –has a ways to go to be crowned.

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MPA

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to marry. Its 40-year-old parentage statutes left children vulnerable, as many people testified at a hearing last fall.

"In passing this legislation, we will send a powerful message about the dignity and worth of all Massachusetts families," said Senator Julian Cyr (D), one of the lead Senate sponsors, on the Senate floor Tuesday. He spoke of the many protections that flow from legal parentage, including inheritance, health insurance, custody, Social Security, and more, "Not to mention all of the emotional benefits of being declared your child's legal parent."

For children, Cyr said, legal parentage is "central to their stability, security, and well-being." The bill will have impact beyond Massachusetts, too, he noted, explaining that legal parentage which is recognized in Massachusetts must be granted "full faith and credit" in other states, "regardless of that state's policy."

Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R), also a lead Senate sponsor, spoke on the floor Tuesday about "the urgency and importance of adopting this legislation." He asserted, "No child in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should have to live with the uncertainty that is created when we don't have statutes that are clear and well-defined and responsible.... Every child must have the right to have parentage clearly established, and that is true for parents as well, who may come to this situation from different circumstances, who may have used different technology, but who remain parents, with a parental obligation to the child."

Tarr thanked Cyr, saying, "I am so, so pleased that we've been able to work together to advance this important policy initiative."

And Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), said in a statement: "After more than seven years of advocacy, so many children and families in Massachusetts—and countless future generations—will now have the basic protections that legal parentage provides for children."

Advocacy for the bill was spearheaded by the MPA Coalition, led by GLAD and AllPaths Family Building, along with more than 60 other legal, health care, social service, and LGBTQ organizations.

A version of the MPA had been introduced in the previous session with bipartisan support, but was unable to move forward during a busy legislative season. The MPA was reintroduced in January 2024, again with a show of bipartisanship, by lead House sponsors Rep. Sarah Peake (D) and Rep. Hannah Kane (R) along with Cyr (D) and Tarr (R) in the Senate.

Among other things, the MPA:

- Clearly asserts who can be a parent and the many ways to establish parentage, including by surrogacy and via consent to a spouse or partner's assisted reproduction;
- Adds protections for children born through assisted reproduction, including surrogacy;
- Clarifies that a de facto or functional parent has equal rights and responsibilities to any other type of parent;
- Expands access to Voluntary Acknowledgments of Parentage (VAPs), simple, free forms that can be completed at the hospital immediately after a birth to establish legal parentage. Massachusetts now becomes the 12th state where parents of any gender or marital status can access VAPs.
- Removes gendered language from parentage statutes; and
- Generally clarifies standards and codifies precedents so that courts can have greater consistency and efficiency in establishing parentage claims.

The MPA is based on the 2017 Uniform Parentage Act (UPA), model parentage legislation developed by the non-partisan Uniform Law Commission. Massachusetts is now the 9th state to enact comprehensive legislation based on or substantially similar to the 2017 UPA, following California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Michigan, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. (Additionally, New Hampshire and New York have comprehensive parentage legislation that is not based on the UPA, per the Movement Advancement Project.) Pennsylvania is currently considering a bill to update its parentage legislation; it now sits in the House Judiciary Committee.

LGBTQ parents and others forming families via assisted reproduction elsewhere may find that establishing parentage is still confusing, expensive, humiliating, and lengthy, leaving children vulnerable.

Massachusetts families, however, have a more equitable future on the horizon. Once signed by the governor, the bill would go into effect on January 1, 2025.

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 1,600+ LGBTQ family books.

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billy masters

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By the time you read this, I'll be back from my month abroad. I'm limited from recounting details of my frolicking due to an iron—clad NDA. But I can reveal that the bulk of my time was spent with a limber lad from Slovenia with ties to the US — but I can't say more. Well, I could mention that not only are they quite fetching in Slovenia, but guys and gals in that locale can be had for the price of a ripe cantaloupe! Alas, it's a tragic story right out of a "Bel Ami" video — this boy was born without a vowel! When he introduced himself, I was sure he was coughing up a hairball! And to think I used to make fun of **Steve Kmetko** — at least he has two vowels! This child couldn't even ask **Vanna** to buy one. Still, there's more to life than vowels, as I learned in several languages.

Forget everything you've ever heard about the French. Those Olympians sure know how to make you feel welcomed. On the eve of the Games, three—meter French synchro divers **Jules Bouyer and Alexis Jandard** posted a shot of them standing in the shower in their Speedos with the caption "Welcome to @Paris2024". It got millions of hits in a matter of seconds — I think primarily due to Bouyer's fully—packed package. Then again, Alexis did become something of a social media sensation back in April at the opening of the Olympic Aquatic Center. With the world watching, he put on a less—than—stellar display of his talents when he had a major mishap on the diving board. Shrugging it off, Alexis boldly posted the video online with the caption, "How to Perfectly Mess Up Your Dive". To me, he's already a winner! Catch him in all of his glory on BillyMasters.com.

As to his partner, Jules Bouyer created quite a stir during the Games while sporting a swimsuit that appeared see—through. But, like Alexis, he took it all in stride. "It was rather fun. I prefer people to look at my dives rather than my briefs, but there's nothing to worry about." Trust me, I wasn't worried. I know all about shrinkage.

The divers were trumped by **Anthony Ammirati**, France's best chance at grabbing the gold in pole vaulting. Sadly, his pole got in the way of a clean vault, but whetted the appetite of eagle—eyed viewers around the world who were hungry for more. While the video has been scrubbed from most sites, you can still grab it on BillyMasters.com.

The Games kicked off with controversy when the opening ceremony seemed to mock the Last Supper with drag queens. You'll note that it was mostly conservative Americans who complained. That's because most people in other parts of the world know a thing or two about history and culture. Plus, you don't need to be a Rhodes Scholar to know only 13 people were at the Last Supper! The Olympics were actually paying tribute to the gods on Mount Olympus, immortalized in numerous works of art, including **Jan van Bijlert's** "The Feast of the Gods". At the center was Dionysus, the father of Sequana — Goddess of the River Seine. And where did this "tableaux vivant" take place? Oh, on the banks of the River Seine, naturellement.

With the presidential race heating up, "Saturday Night Live" has come up with an inspired way to recreate the ratings gold that greeted **Tina Fey's** portrayal of **Sarah Palin**. **Lorne Michaels** has secured the services of **Maya Rudolph** through the rest of the year. Obviously, she'll be playing **Kamala Harris** — although I suspect, in a pinch, she could also play **Usha Chilukuri** — AKA **Mrs. J.D. Vance**!

Since we've still got a month left of the summer, I'm trying to squeeze in some time on Cape Cod. While I have friends in Ptown to see (**Miss Richfield** 1981 at the Pilgrim House and **Thirsty Burlington** at the Crown and Anchor to name but two), I may make a pit stop. One rarely talks of Payomet, and that truly saddens me. The Payomet Performing Arts Center is located in Truro — which is kinda Ptown—adjacent. Every once in a while, Payomet gets a big—name performer — I believe **Mickey Dolenz** once headlined a show. **Little Stevie Van Zandt** also appeared there — sans **Bruce** and the gang. This year, a handful of performers caught my eye. **Taylor Mac** performs on August 9th, **Paula Poundstone** on August 10th, **Rosanne Cash** on August 12th and 13th, **Judy Collins** on August 19th, and the legendary **Mavis Staples** hits the stage August 29th. With Ptown being so close, Payomet occasionally rents out Provincetown Hall and calls it "Payomet Road Shows". **John Waters** did an evening at Town Hall under the Payomet banner. And over Labor Day weekend, there will be someone that will appeal to my audience. The hunky and hilarious **Matteo Lane** will hit Town Hall on Friday and Saturday, August 30 and 31. This is a rare opportunity to see a funny gay man in his natural habitat (my performances at the Dick Dock don't count). Grab your tickets at Payomet.org. You don't need a ticket to grab moi. The line forms... well, wherever you'd like.

I also need to see **Jamie Morris'** latest hit, "The Devil Wears Payless", at the Post Office Caf and Cabaret. The timing is fortuitous, because Disney has fast—tracked a sequel script to "The Devil Wears Prada". They're even in talks with director **David Frankel** to return. But what about the stars? A source close to **Meryl Streep** told me that it would be unlikely she'd want to reprise the role, which she felt was perfect the first time around. And **Anne Hathaway** previously said she didn't think there could be a sequel. "I just think that the movie was in a different era. Now everything's gone so digital and that movie is centered around the concept of producing a physical thing and it's just...it's just different." But if they come up with a good premise, who knows? I reserve the right to remain skeptical about all of this until Disney actually makes "Sister Act 3".

I don't know if I've mentioned him before, but where in God's name did ABC's **Whit Johnson** come from? I just saw a newsbreak with him, and my God — he puts Mrs. Muir and Mr. Marciano to shame. That's all.

By the by, CBS reporter **Seth Doane** regularly spends time in Provincetown — when he's not in Italy with his hubby. Who knew we had so much in common? Do you know how many husbands I slept with while I was in Italy?

Norah O'Donnell has just announced that she will be stepping down from anchoring the "CBS Evening News" after the election. Anyone who thinks this is voluntary probably believes **Dan Rather** wanted more time to whittle! The network announced that O'Donnell will be replaced by **John Dickerson and Maurice DuBois** (no relation to Ja'Net). Proof positive that it takes two men to replace one very talented lady. Norah will become "Senior Correspondent".

Cameron Mathison will soon be out on the open market. "After 22 years of marriage, we have made the difficult decision to part ways," Cam says in a joint message with wife **Vanessa**. The shocking part to me is that they've been married for 22 years. "We enter this new chapter with deep love, kindness, and respect for each other." They have a 21—year—old son and 18—year—old daughter. One thing I think we can all agree upon is that Cameron has the furthest thing from a "dad bod" — unless your dad is...well, Cameron Mathison!

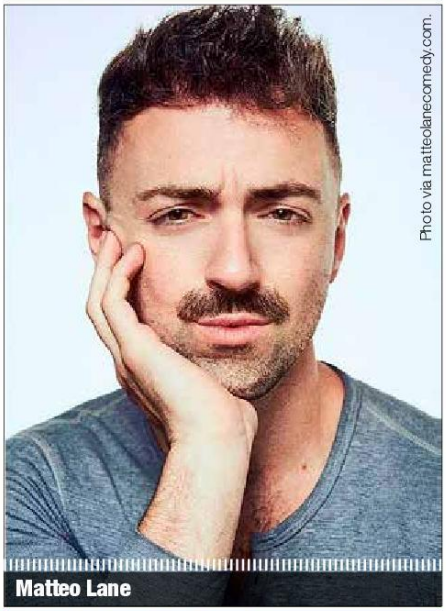
Which is a perfect segue into our "Ask Billy" question. Steven in Colorado writes, *"I just saw some hot photos of **Tom Cruise** on a beach somewhere. What is he up to?"*

Talk about a dad bod — although I'm loath to use that term until I see some proof of genetic testing. The 61-year-old Cruise showed up shirtless on the beach of Pollensa on the island of Mallorca. Given his diminutive stature, his proportions always looks curious in candid shots — versus his larger-than-life perfect presence on screen. As to what he's up to, rumor is he'll turn up at the Closing Ceremonies of the Olympic Games. This isn't a big surprise, since he's gone to a number of events. But given that the 2028 Summer Olympics will take place in Los Angeles, the organizers are looking for a major star to tie it all together. We're told Cruise may drop in — literally.

When we've got a hankering for a baguette with some juicy Polish sausage, it's definitely time to end yet another column. As we went to press, **Zac Efron** was rushed to the hospital after a "minor swimming incident" at an Ibiza pool. I once had an incident at a pool in Ibiza. I don't know how minor it was — I didn't check everyone's IDs! And, once again, I was sure I saw a sign that said clothing optional. On the positive side, it did lead to a memorable weekend with the Spanish water polo team. Some of them still write! For other athletic adventures, check out www.BillyMasters.com — the site that keeps lots of balls in the air. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I'll get back to you before my next trip abroad. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Photo via Alexis Jandard, Instagram.

Jules Bouyer and Alexis Jandard



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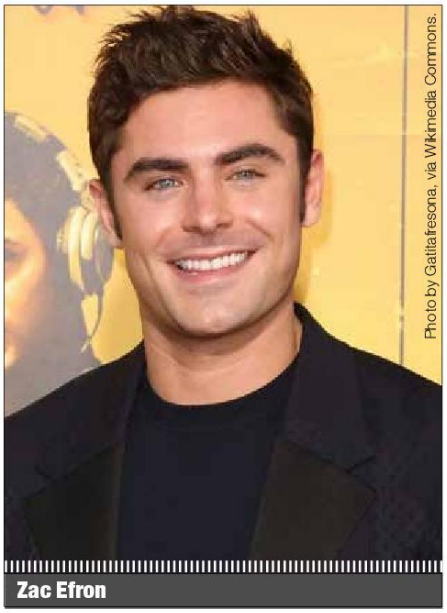
Matteo Lane



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Zac Efron

Mombian

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If every class took this book to heart, our schools—and our children—would be the better for it.

"Rainbow Allies: The True Story of Kids Who Stood against Hate," by Nancy Churnin, illustrated by Izzy Evans (Beaming Books), is based on the true story of a lesbian couple in Natick, Massachusetts. It's a town where "everyone is welcome"—until eggs are thrown onto the walls of their house and their Pride flag is stolen. Three neighborhood kids decide they have to do something. But what? Their solution is a lovely act of allyship and community.

Churnin knows how to pace a tale and balance description and dialog, while Evans's illustrations are warm and evocative. The text never explains what the rainbow flag symbolizes, nor why someone might have taken it; we simply get the women's musings that maybe someone doesn't like the flag or them. A tale like this, however, may be a gentle way to open up conversations about anti-LGBTQ bias and why being an ally is important.

An Author's Note explains more about the real incident behind the story, and about a community in Montana that responded similarly to an act of antisemitism. Additional backmatter offers tips on being an LGBTQ ally. (One quibble: The use of "opposite-sex" in the backmatter would have been better as "different-sex," in order to acknowledge the spectrum of genders.) The publisher is also offering a free, downloadable Teacher's Guide along with student printables on allyship, at beamingbooks.com.

"And Tango Makes Three," by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, illustrated by Henry Cole (Little Simon), is not a new book—but the now-classic 2005 tale of a male penguin couple who raise a chick is being reissued in a School and Library Edition with additional backmatter and special resources for educators.

Tango's story, based on a real-life penguin family, has been one of the most-challenged books in the country since shortly after it was published. ("Challenges" are requests for censorship, such as removing or restricting access to a book.)

The new edition therefore includes a new section on "Your Freedom to Read" and a list of resources for fighting book bans. Also new are an Authors' Note on the importance of books and libraries, an afterword by science journalist Eliot Schrefer on the prevalence of same-sex pairs and parents throughout the natural world, and a Note for Educators about reading the book with children of diverse family types. Publisher Simon & Schuster will also offer a more extensive online Educators' Guide at simonandschuster.net.

The charmingly told and illustrated tale remains a favorite for good reason. The new backmatter should assist educators, parents, and others in helping new generations connect with it as well.

"Jacob's Missing Book," by Sarah and Ian Hoffman, illustrated by Chris Case (Magination Press), is the fourth in the series about the gender-creative Jacob and his friends; the first, "Jacob's New Dress," has been a frequent target of book bans. Now, Jacob is back in a timely story about book censorship, broaching the topic in a relatable, kid-friendly way with plenty of room for discussion.

When Jacob looks for "the penguin book" (an obvious reference to "And Tango Makes Three"), he discovers it's missing from the school library. Then classmate Emily, who has two dads, wants to share it with another classmate so he can see a family like hers. The librarian explains, however, that it has been removed along with other books because "some people" are unhappy with them, and the school must figure things out. Jacob notes that his mom told him some people don't like that the penguins are two dads. Emily wants to know what's wrong with that, and the librarian assures her that nothing is.

Later, on the playground, Jacob and friends happily act out the story, pretending to care for their chicks. That night, Jacob asks his mother if the school can get the book back, and she tells him they can try.

There's a lot to like here: the child's-eye perspective on the impact of book bans; the gentle depiction of why representation is important; and the ending that doesn't offer a saccharine resolution, but leaves room for hope. It's a book that shouldn't be necessary—but given the current climate, it should be a helpful conversation starter for children experiencing book bans and the grown-ups seeking to explain them.

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 1,600+ LGBTQ family books.

Monroe

Continued from page 1

thorities. In December 2016, the commission published its bishop's guidelines; sadly, O'Malley's statement was excluded. Given that O'Malley was the Pope's "go-to guy on this subject," he'll mostly be remembered for his handling of the clergy sexual abuse scandals.

O'Malley came to Boston at a difficult time to fulfill a difficult task. "His main charge has been righting the ship of the archdiocese, culturally, morally, and fiscally, as it continued to be buffeted by the sexual abuse disaster, "the Boston Globe wrote, reflecting on his 20-year tenure.

The exorbitant legal fees, lawsuits, counseling, and medications, all resulting from sexual abuse cases, forced the selling of church property to right the ship. For example, O'Malley sent a letter to parishioners at St. Frances X. Cabrini Church in Scituate informing the parish of the Vatican's ruling to sell and re-use the building. The Archdiocese of Boston closed St. Frances and several parishes throughout the Commonwealth. St. Frances was a thriving church comprised of over 3,000 registered families with no debt and fiscal sound, with a sister church and school in India. It sat on 30.3 acres of prime coastal real estate. Selling off church properties to right the ship in incalculable ways desecrate many of its faithful parishioners' worshiping lives and church homes.

O'Malley was weak in several areas. And on LGBTQ+ issues, O'Malley won't be receiving a gold star from the community. Although O'Malley was not like any of his predecessors by outwardly condemning homosexuality and barking off like a tight-fisted church bureaucrat, he wasn't full-throatedly supporting our issues either.

"Individuals with same-sex attraction are beloved children of God and must have their personal human rights and civil rights recognized and protected by law. However, the legalization of their civil unions, which seek to simulate holy matrimony, is not admissible," O'Malley told Boston.com.

Dudley-Burke chimed in, stating," While he recently said he welcomed the Vatican's allowing priests to bless people in same-sex relationships, he continues to insist same-sex relationships lack the sacredness of marriage." Duddy-Burke is the executive director of DignityUSA, the world's oldest organization of LGBTQ Catholics, which has existed since 1969.

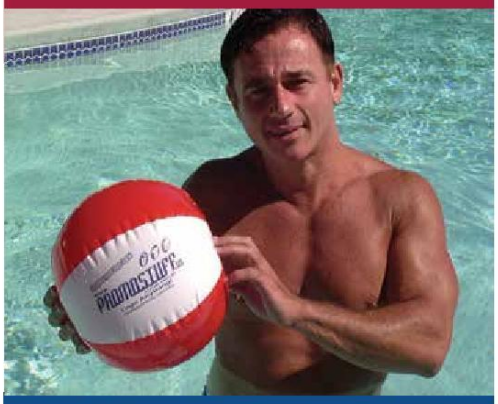
In 2023, O'Malley formed a committee to craft gender-identity guidelines for Catholic schools, K-12. The committee invited Michael Sennett, a transgender Catholic, to share his experience.

"I don't think Cardinal Sean or Bishop O'Connell have this crusade against trans people. They have hard jobs, and I think they are trying to do the right thing. But I wish they'd listen and let us be part of the conversation." Sennett told the Globe.

Dudley-Burke didn't disagree with Sennet but felt more should be done and wrote me, "While [O'Malley] has not instituted the kind of anti-transgender policies many other dioceses have adopted, he has also failed to challenge the religious rhetoric undergirding much of this discrimination and violence."

O'Malley's successor will be Bishop Richard Henning of Rhode Island. O'Malley lauds him as "a joyful pastor who seeks to serve Christ." Dudley-Burke hopes his ministry will be inclusive in words and deeds. "I hope that we who are members of the Boston Catholic community—all of us, including LGBTQ+ people and others who often find ourselves on the church's margins—will indeed find a pastor in Archbishop Henning."

HOT IDEAS



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