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Thousands celebrate Boston Pride

Three arrests at Parade

By Bay Windows Staff

Over 1 million people visited Boston for the Pride celebrations, which featured a parade, a festival on Boston Common, and a block party at City Hall Plaza, according to Boston Pride for the People (BP4TP) organizers. The festival on the Common boasted an entertainment stage and more than 200 vendors.

This year's theme is "Still Here." From Boylston Street to Boston Common, pride flags were everywhere, supporting the parade and festival, which is the larg-



see **PRIDE**, page 7 Photo by Bay Windows Staff.

Maura Healey, America's first lesbian governor, oversees raising of Pride flag at Statehouse

By Steve LeBlanc
Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey joined lawmakers and members of the LGBTQ+ community Wednesday, June 5 to mark Pride Month.

Healey, America's first lesbian governor, oversaw the raising of the Pride flag on the Statehouse lawn. The ceremony also marked the 20th anniversary of the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, the first state to allow the unions.

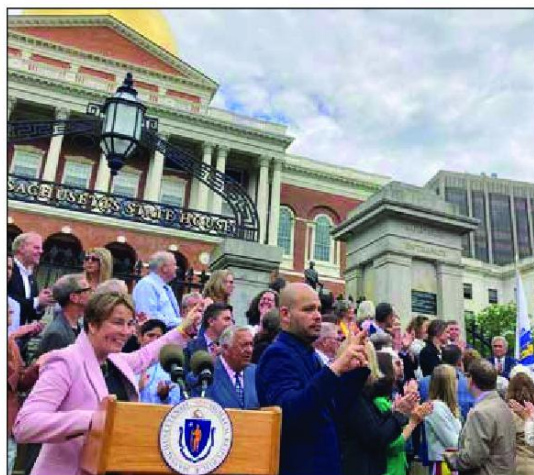
"No matter your age, your identity, your gender expression, here in Massachusetts you are welcome," Healey said as she raised the flag. "We see you, we hear you, we love you, we stand with you, we will always fight for you."

The ceremony comes ahead of the Boston Pride Parade on Saturday, the largest in New England.

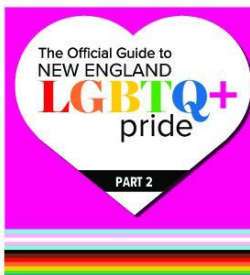
Standing on the Statehouse steps, Healey said she was reminded of all who paved the way for the court decision in Massachusetts that legalized same-sex marriage. She also said that the right to marry and other victories for the LGBTQ+ community must be defended against ongoing threats.

"We are facing a situation where too many are looking to take away important, hard-won rights and freedoms," said Healey, the state's former attorney general. "These are freedoms. Equal treatment under the law is something that is in our United States Constitution."

Wednesday's flag raising and Saturday's parade comes amid growing hostility toward the LGBTQ+ community elsewhere in the country. Some states have sought to limit drag shows, restricted gender-affirming medical care and banned school library books for their LGBTQ+ content.



Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, left, joins with lawmakers and members of the LGBTQ+ community to mark Pride Month in front of the State House in Boston. AP Photo by Steve LeBlanc.



BOSTON

JUNE 15

TRANS RESISTANCE STAND-OUT & TQBIPOC PICNIC

Harambee Park, 1-5 pm
transresistancema.com

JUNE 4-8

BOSTON BLACK PRIDE

Fifth annual Boston Urban Pride Weekend: "Reclaiming Boston Black Pride," eight events, four days.
lesbigayurbanfoundation.org

MASSACHUSETTS

FRANKLIN COUNTY PRIDE

JUNE 15

franklincountypride.org
Parade 1pm from Greenfield Middle School Federal Street to Engery

GREATER LOWELL PRIDE

JUNE 15

Flag raising, noon, City Hall, 375 Merrimack St., followed by a parade down Merrimack Street starting at 12:30pm and winding up at the Festival, 1-4pm, 40 French St., Boarding House Park.

BELMONT PRIDE PARADE

JUNE 15

belmontlgbtq.com/belmontlgbtq.com

ARLINGTON PRIDE

JUNE 22

Noon-3pm, Arlington Town Hall Garden, 730 Massachusetts Ave.
rainbowarlington.org

HOLYOKE PRIDE FEST

JUNE 22

Pride Fest: Noon to 6pm, Veterans Park.
holyokepride.org

see **MASSACHUSETTS**, page 8



"I'm single. I'm feeling full of pride. And PrEP."

—Jonathan Groff welcomes the audience to the Pride of Broadway event. You know what they say—better safe than pregnant.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo by Greg Hernandez from California, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Happy Pride Month!



State Representative Kevin

HONAN

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LGBTQ+ Families Call for Passage of Legislation Protecting Parentage Rights



Photo via Pexels.

As MA Celebrates 20 Years Since Marriage Equality

Submitted by MPAC

As hundreds of people gathered this month to mark the 20th anniversary of the historic Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling on marriage equality, the Massachusetts Parentage Act Coalition renewed its call for the Massachusetts legislature to pass legislation that would, among other things, protect LGBTQ+ families in forming the legal bond of a parent-child relationship. Massachusetts is the only state in New England without these statutory protections.

"As we celebrate the role Massachusetts has played in LGBTQ+ equality we cannot ignore that there is still work to do," said Polly Crozier, Director of Family Advocacy at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders. "LGBTQ+ families in Massachusetts today do not have the same protections afforded to other children and families, and the Massachusetts Parentage Act corrects that wrong. Every child deserves to have the full protection of our state laws. Children of LGBTQ+ families remain vulnerable in Massachusetts and beyond. Given the tremendous attacks on LGBTQ+ communities across the country, there has never been a more important time to ensure children are secure in their families. We cannot rest on our past accomplishments in Massachusetts."

Governor Maura Healey and Attorney General Andrea Campbell are strong supporters of the legislation and have called on its passage.

The Massachusetts Parentage Act (MPA, H.1713/S.947) is currently being considered in the Joint Committee of the Judiciary. The legislation updates Massachusetts statutes to clarify who can be a parent and how to establish parentage. This bill is critical to ensuring that all children can access the security of legal parentage, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, including through assisted reproduction and surrogacy. The bill's bipartisan sponsors include Democrat Senator Julian Cyr, Republican Senator Bruce Tarr, Democrat Representative Sarah Peake, and Republican Representative Hannah Kane.

**"As we celebrate the
role Massachusetts
has played in LGBTQ+
equality we cannot
ignore that there is
still work to do."**

-POLLY CROZIER

DIRECTOR OF FAMILY ADVOCACY AT
GLBTQ LEGAL ADVOCATES & DEFENDERS

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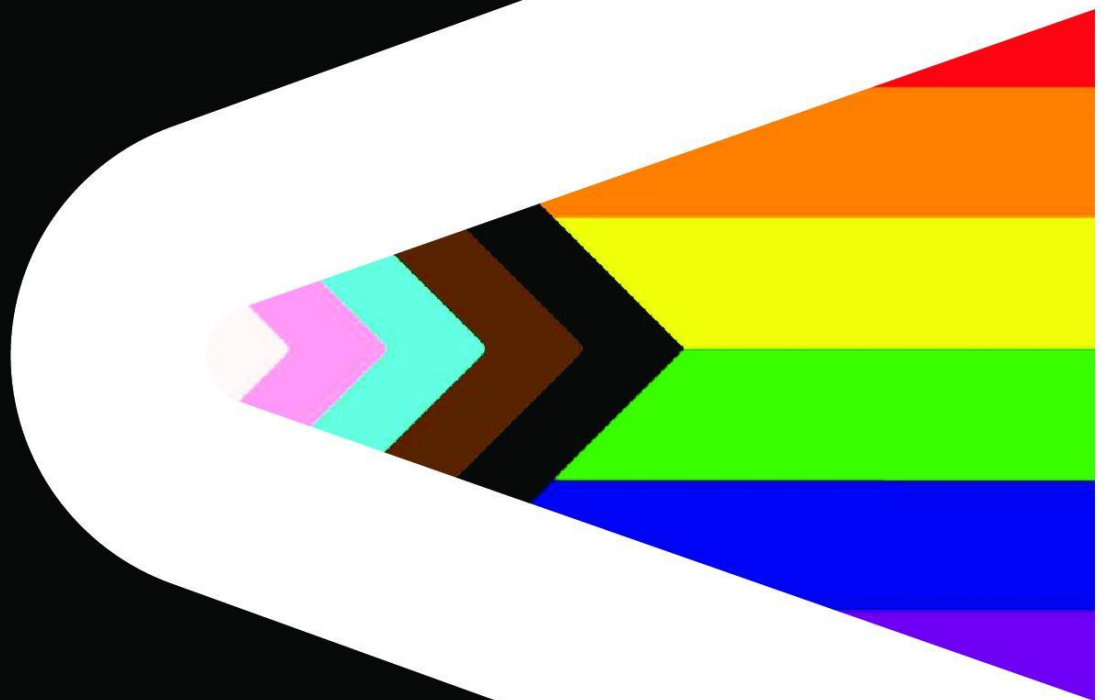


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JUNE IS PRIDE MONTH

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Parenting, Progress, and Pride

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

As we head into Pride Month, I am moved once again to ponder all that I am proud of. My son tops the list, as always—but I am also proud of how we LGBTQ families and our allies have been able to keep pushing towards equality, despite an unprecedented amount of anti-LGBTQ legislation and rhetoric right now.

Perhaps most notably for LGBTQ families, a small but growing number of states, including most recently Michigan and Minnesota, have reformed their parentage legislation to better recognize the ways families are formed today, laying out clear and equitable paths to legal parentage for children with LGBTQ parents and those formed via assisted reproduction.

Assisted reproduction has also gotten a boost from new guidelines established by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) last fall, updating the definition of “infertility” to make it more inclusive of LGBTQ and single people who seek fertility healthcare. Infertility, under the new guidelines, includes both medical reasons as well as simply needing donor gametes for any reason, either as an individual or with a partner. While they carry no legal weight, the ASRM guidelines are often cited by policymakers and legislators. In January, New Jersey used these guidelines as part of a new law making infertility coverage requirements more equitable, thus joining Maine, Illinois, Colorado, and D.C. as the only states using definitions of infertility that are clearly and fully inclusive of LGBTQ and single people.

The new guidelines were also applied in the May settlement of a class-action lawsuit against healthcare insurance giant Aetna, which had made LGBTQ policyholders pay out of pocket for multiple rounds of intrauterine insemination before they could qualify for fertility benefits (versus simply stating that they'd been having regular, unprotected sexual intercourse, as heterosexual, cisgender policyholders could do). Now, Aetna will update its clinical policy to be consistent with the new ASRM guidelines.

We can also be proud that May marked the 20th anniversary of the first marriage license deliberately issued to a same-sex couple in the United States—two moms who were the lead plaintiffs in the landmark legal decision. A total of four of the seven plaintiffs couples were parents, in fact, and their case was led by attorney and



Photo via Pexels.

queer mom Mary Bonauto, Massachusetts Chief Justice Margaret Marshall, who wrote the decision, noted marriage's positive impact on children as a key reason for extending it to same-sex couples—an argument used later in the U.S. Supreme Court decision that made marriage equality federal law. Granted, parenthood is not the only reason to marry, nor should marriage be necessary for parental rights—but marriage is a societal touchstone, weighted with meaning, rights, and responsibilities for adults and children alike.

Additionally, school-related LGBTQ equality got a boost when Florida's “Don't Say Gay/LGBTQ” law that banned LGBTQ content in schools was defanged. More than a dozen Florida parents, students, and teachers, plus LGBTQ organizations Equality Florida and Family Equality, who had challenged the law's constitutionality, reached a settlement with the state in March. While this does not repeal the law, it removes the most harmful, anti-LGBTQ aspects of the legislation. Among other things, it secures critical protections and clarifications like the restoration of free expression about sexual orientation and gender identity in classroom participation and assignments, and the affirmation that bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited. The law still prohibits “classroom instruction” on sexual orientation or gender identity, but that must now be applied neutrally to all identities, LGBTQ or otherwise.

In contrast to Florida's intransigence, Washington State passed a new law in March that actually requires public schools to teach about the contributions and history of LGBTQ people. The state will require schools to update their curricula for the 2025-26 school year, and joins California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey and Oregon, which

have similar laws.

Another positive step for schools was a new set of regulations from the U.S. Department of Education in April, affirming that Title IX, part of a broader educational law, protects students and school employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other characteristics. Regulations addressing the inclusion of transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students in school sports, however, are still pending.

The visibility of LGBTQ families in the media continues to grow as well. Recurring LGBTQ characters appeared on kid's and family shows on the Disney Channel, Netflix, Nickelodeon, Max, and Cartoon Network, according to GLAAD's “Where We Are on TV 2023-2024” report, released in April. And my own Database of LGBTQ Family Books has seen a continual wave of new titles this year.

Each of these victories, and many more besides, make me exceedingly proud of the vast community of LGBTQ families, and individuals of which I am part, and from whom I learn so much about joy, resilience, and hope. In that communal spirit, I want to invite all of you to join me for the 19th Annual LGBTQ Families Day on Monday, June 3, 2024, by sharing a family photo or message of support on social media with the hashtag #LGBTQFamiliesDay, or by celebrating in your community in whatever way uplifts the voices and experiences of any and all families with LGBTQ people in them.

However we choose to celebrate Pride this year, may it be a month to reflect on all that we are proud of, in our homes, communities, and the wider world, even as we renew our energy for the battles still ahead.

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

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We can also be proud that May marked the 20th anniversary of the first marriage license deliberately issued to a same-sex couple in the United States—two moms who were the lead plaintiffs in the landmark legal decision.



Pope Francis f-word exposes Catholic Church

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Pope Francis sent global shock waves when the news broke that he used the highly offensive f-word "frocchiaggine," meaning "faggotness" in Italian. In a closed-door conversation at the Italian Bishops' Conference, a discussion about whether to admit gay seminarians in preparation for the priesthood, the pontiff replied, "There is too much frocchiaggine in seminaries."

The news of Francis using this particular homophobic and eyebrow-raising epithet deeply hurt many out and proud Catholic LGBTQ+s hoping for full inclusion and acceptance by Pope Francis. "I imagine people like me are eating their optimistic words," Nina Girgenti of Boston told me. But Nina's optimism was not unfounded.

2023 looked optimistic

For example, during the Catholic Church's World Day of the Poor, in Torvaianica, a run-down seaside town just 20 miles south of Rome, a community of transwomen, many of whom are sex workers, received VIP seats as Pope Francis's guests at the monthly lunch gatherings. Francis called for the decriminalization of homosexuality and was lauded by LGBTQ+ advocates as a milestone that would help end harassment and violence against us, albeit the pontiff publicly stated that homosexual acts are a sin and not a crime. During World Youth Day, Francis announced that the Church was for everyone. "There is space for everyone, and when there isn't, please, let's work so that there is." Also, the Vatican agreed to baptize transgender Catholics and allow them to be godparents.

The pope's PR machine has come out with many incredulous excuses and tepid apologies for his gaffe. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said, "The Pope never intended to offend or express himself in homophobic terms, and he apologizes to those who felt offended by the use of a term reported by others." However, this faux pas suggests "even if intended as a joke, the Pope's comment reveals the depth of anti-gay bias and institutional discrimination that still exist in our church," Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA stated in her press release titled "Queer Catholic Group in Stands in Solidarity with Gay Priests, Those Seeking Ordination after Pope's Hurtful Use of Slur."

"The truth is that the Church simply could not function without those countless gay priests, bishops, and maybe even popes who currently serve and have served over the centuries."

- DUDDY-BURKE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DIGNITYUSA

The Catholic Church needs its gay priests

"The truth is that the Church simply could not function without those countless gay priests, bishops, and maybe even popes who currently serve and have served over the centuries," said Duddy-Burke. And I agree with Duddy-Burke. The reality here is that the Catholic Church is a gay institution. And that is not a bad thing!

The homosocial and homosexual milieus of gay priests have always been part and parcel of the life and operations of the Vatican as well as the Catholic Church for centuries. Their strength to come out now as a formidable force within the hallowed walls of the Vatican is laudable on the one hand and a liability on the other hand—especially in terms of casting a gay suspicion on all priests as well as the potential to expose those priests who want to remain in the closet.

"If they were to eliminate all those who were homosexually oriented, the number would be so staggering that it would be like an atomic bomb; it would do damage to the church's operation," said the late Richard Sipe, a former priest and psychotherapist who has been studying the sexuality of priests for decades. Sipe also points out that to do away with gay priests "would mean the resignation of at least a third of the bishops of the world."

The problem in the Catholic Church is not its gay priests and its solution to the problem is not the removal of them. Years of homophobic church doctrine have made the Church unsafe for us all and have created a down-low culture.

Eugene Kennedy, a specialist on sexuality and the priesthood and a former priest, wrote in his book, "The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality, that the Catholic Church" . . . had always had gay priests, and they have often been models of what priests should be. To say that these men should be kept from the priesthood is in itself a challenge to the grace of God and an insult to them and the people they serve."

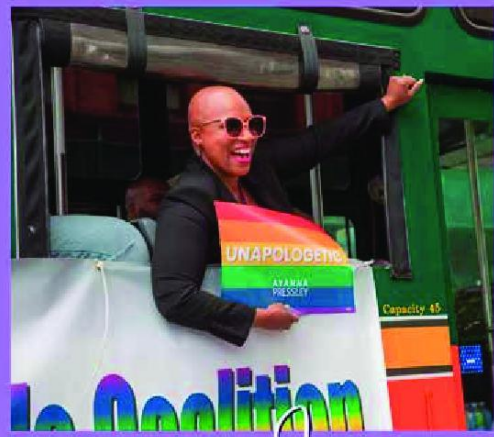
Can the LGBTQ+ community trust Pope Francis?

Once again, Pope Francis is rocking the world and continuing to command attention with his liberal-leaning pronouncements. However, the pontiff is a complicated, if not confusing, figure to us LGBTQ+ people. On the surface, Francis displays a pastoral countenance to his papacy that seemingly extends to our community, too.

In 2013, responding to a question about a possible "gay lobby" in the Vatican, Francis said, "If they accept the Lord and have good will, who am I to judge them?." Supporters and activists of the "gay lobby" in the Curia emphatically state that this brave and visible group is essential to the running of the Vatican as well as protecting themselves from the Church's hypocrisy in scapegoating them for many of the social ills of the Church.

But Pope Francis is the consummate flip-flopper of our time. He double speaks on issues. He embraces the LGBTQ+ community, and then he doesn't. His pastoral demeanor cloaks the iron-fisted church bureaucrat that he is. It's not enough for Francis to say he embraces our community—privately or publicly. He must also do it.

HAPPY PRIDE!



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billy masters

Continued from page 1

Welcome to another Pride Month. And what better way to show our solidarity than competing Pride events? Oh, those wacky folks in Los Angeles. When I hosted LA Pride (for seven consecutive years, but who's counting?), we were united—because there's enough of Billy to go around. Then West Hollywood booted LA Pride and now has OUTLOUD Music Festival, where the word "Pride" is eschewed. What can I say? It was a kinder, gentler, and certainly cheaper time. Oh, yes—OUTLOUD tickets were several hundred dollars. When I'm hosting, I have one rule of thumb: you give me all-access, I'll give you all-access. Of course, I wasn't hosting a concert by **Kylie Minogue**—and compared to her Vegas prices, people in WeHo actually got a bargain. They also got, from all accounts, a fantastic show. There were others who performed throughout the weekend. People like **Janelle Monáe** and **Keke Palmer**. For those who didn't want to break the bank, the festival kicked off with a free Friday night concert headlined by **Adam Lambert** and **Kesha**—who apparently no longer sports a dollar sign in her name.

Not to be outdone, LA Pride in the Park held a concert a week later, and they had some star power of their own—**Ricky Martin**! Also appearing was **JoJo Siwa**—well, the Lord giveth... Tickets started at a far more reasonable price, but VIP access was available for those who had a few hundred to spend. Ricky kept the capacity crowd entertained with a high-energy set which featured his hips on overdrive (and they didn't seem to be lying). He even showed a good amount of skin, the color of mocha. Once everyone dried off, pride went from the park to the street for the annual LA Pride March down Hollywood Boulevard with Grand Marshal **George Takei**.

Back in 2016, the City of West Hollywood bought the Coast Playhouse—in a prime location on Santa Monica Boulevard—for \$2.5 million. A minor renovation was planned to make it available for community presentations and small shows. Then in 2022, there was a plan to completely replace the building with a small theatre called The West Hollywood City Playhouse, which would include rehearsal space and a green area. Nothing came of these ideas. Enter legendary actress **Barbara Bain**. She attended a recent City Council meeting to advocate for the plan. "It is happening nowhere else in the country. They're ripping theaters down left and right and putting in cleaners, gas stations, and Lord knows what else. So, we have an opportunity here that I don't want to miss. Everything about building a theater—I don't know, I'm sure you're aware of the statistic—it generates funds. When there's an arts institution in the community, there's a lot of money made suddenly." Talk about a "Mission: Impossible".

Meanwhile, the adjacent (and iconic) Marix Tex Mex restaurant remains shuttered. Nobody has a clue what is happening there—least of all the patrons who have thousands of dollars of useless gift certificates. E-mails and calls to the owners are not returned, although they (**Mary Sweeney** and **Vickie Shemaria**) are still in the area. The eatery shuttered temporarily during Covid. According to their website, they planned to reopen on Cinco de Mayo in 2020. That was delayed due to some damage to the kitchen. "We count the days until we see your lovely faces and serve all your favorite Tex Mex food with our famous margaritas". I don't think I can count that high!

Before we left California, **Oprah Winfrey** posted a Pride Month message. "It was 35 years ago that my younger brother, **Jeffrey Lee**, died from AIDS. He was 29 years old. The year was 1989 and the world was an extremely cruel place—not just for people suffering from AIDS, but also for LG-BTQ people in general. I often think if he'd lived, he'd be so amazed at how much the world has changed. That there actually is gay marriage and a Pride month. How different his life might have been had he lived in a world that saw and appreciated him for who he was rather than attempting to

shame him for his sexuality. I believe that every single person has the right to love who they want to love and be the person they most want to be. My hope for you is that you are living a life that feels authentic to you and that you have the support around you to do so, no matter your sexuality. Whether or not you're celebrating Pride this month...or always, I wish for you the continued freedom to rise to your truest, highest expression of yourself as a human being."

Working our way east, let's take a pit stop in Las Vegas, where the successful "Weekends with **Adele**" residency continues at Caesars Palace. Last week, a guy yelled out, "Pride sucks!" Well, that stopped our diva in her tracks. Perched on the piano bench, she retorted, "Did you come to my fucking show to say 'Pride sucks'? Are you fucking stupid? Don't be so fucking ridiculous. If you have nothing nice to say, shut up, alright?" As it happens, the incident was caught on video, which you can see on [BillyMasters.com](https://www.BillyMasters.com).

Last week, "The View" celebrated the 30th anniversary of "Sister Act 2". Most of the cast reunited with **Whoopi Goldberg** for great stories and great music. Some cast members—like **Jenifer Lewis** and **Jennifer Love Hewitt**—were unable to be there in person, so they sent in video messages. But one notable person was conspicuously absent—and virtually unmentioned. On the show's podcast, **Brian Teta** (executive producer of "The View") said, "**Lauryn Hill**...we made every effort to get her here, but unfortunately it just didn't work out. We would have loved to have had her, she's very important to the movie, but it didn't work out." Maybe she was just late...again.

Inching closer to Boston, another reunion is taking place—and this one should be complete. "Queer Eye" is a global phenomenon, but it all started over 20 years ago. In July 2003, Bravo broadcast the original "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy", and it ran for five seasons. The boys are reuniting for a special evening at the Foxwoods Casino on June 22nd. Cleverly titled "An Evening with the Original Fab Five: 20 Years Later", **Ted Allen**, **Kyan Douglas**, **Thom Filicia**, **Carson Kressley** and **Jai Rodriguez** all plan to attend. They did another reunion a few months ago, and it was so successful they are adding dates. The show will include behind-the-scenes stories, design tips, Q&A, and a live make-over—God help us. You can grab your tix at [Foxwoods.com](https://www.Foxwoods.com).

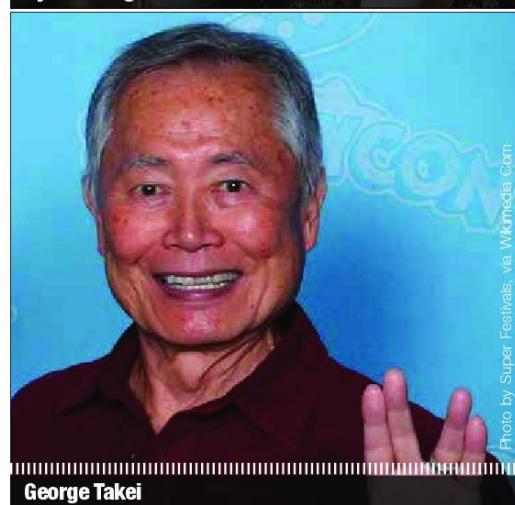
Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Jason in Miami: "Whatever happened to that movie that **Bette Midler** was making with **Susan Sarandon** and **Megan Mullally**? You wrote about it a long time ago. Is it still happening?"

Not only is it still happening, it's in the can and coming out on August 1st. "The Fabulous Four" stars **Bette Midler**, **Susan Sarandon**, **Megan Mullally** and **Sheryl Lee Ralph**. It actually only began filming last September. It probably seems like a long time ago because it was announced in May of 2022. Back then, **Sissy Spacek** was part of the cast. At some point, she dropped out—opening the door for **Miss Ralph**. The story is about three friends who travel to Key West to be bridesmaids at a friend's wedding. The bride being Midler, and the other three are her old college friends—which is odd because there's over a decade between Mullally and Midler. Maybe Megan was like a **Sheldon Cooper/Doogie Howser** situation. Anyway, fingers crossed for a successful opening.

When we can go from the Fab Five to the Fabulous Four, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. I'd be remiss not to mention that this past weekend was also Boston Pride, and next weekend will be Stonewall Pride Wilton Manors. While it looks like I'm missing all the fun, you can keep up with everything by checking out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that's proud 365 days a year. If you have a question you need answered, drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before we find out what else **Jonathan Groff** is full of. So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Kylie Minogue



George Takei



Sissy Spacek

Photo by David Shankbone, via Wikimedia Commons.

Pride

Continued from page 1

est event of its kind in New England.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey were part of the 10,000 marchers who participated in the parade.

Liberate Boston Pride organized a stationary

protest at the intersection of Berkeley and St. James Streets to protest BP4TP's corporate sponsorships from Delta Airlines, State Street, and Fidelity. Liberate Boston Pride's website says they are "unethical companies". The group also cited the goal to to publicly support Palestine and the removal of police officers from the parade as motivations for the protest.

Boston Police reported no injuries but confirmed three arrests at the parade.

The Boston Pride for the People Parade remains the largest pride parade in New England.



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Deb Goldberg
DEMOCRAT FOR TREASURER



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Navigating gay-straight friendships

True intimacy isn't only sexual

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

I walked through the crowd at DC's Capital Pride on June 8 as groups were lining up to set off on the Pride parade. Walking down a crowded side street, I saw one of the loveliest men in town, a straight ally. He greeted me warmly, hugged me, and kissed me on the cheek. I thought happily, how times have changed!

Despite the risk we now face of legal setbacks from a right-wing Supreme Court, the greater social and cultural acceptance LGBTQ+ people have won is largely beyond the reach of politicians and judges. Changed expectations are hard to erase.

Generational change is not the same everywhere. Cities attract people who take diversity more in stride. Urban/rural divides open us to wedge politics. We have more work to do to help people see that differences are not a threat.

Something I have experienced more frequently in recent years is straight men who enjoy the company of gay men, and even flirt with them. They are not interested sexually, but neither are they threatened in any way. I find it refreshing.

I have had straight neighbors like that. One was a mix of Anglo and Asian. He is the kind of person who lights up any room he is in. Normally in the morning he darted down the back stairs; but if I was leaving for work at the same time, he rode down the elevator with me, because he found me amusing. Once he said he had a sore shoulder from a sports injury, and I said I gave a very soothing massage. He laughed in a way that melted me into the floor, but that

was as far as it went. One winter evening he and his girlfriend joined me on our building's roof to observe a lunar eclipse.

After he moved to Virginia to live with his girlfriend, I encountered them at the annual high heel race on 17th Street in Washington the week before Halloween, which draws large and diverse crowds.

There is a prominent Washingtonian with whom I feel a close friendship, as distinct from a professional one. He is straight and happily married, but then I myself am in a committed relationship. The public figure and I have a lot in common on policy matters, but we are also simpatico at a personal level. As time passes, I increasingly meet him more as a friend and confidante than an advocate.

Every conversation with an attractive, friendly person doesn't involve thoughts of sexual conquest. The mix of affection and desire varies from case to case. Respect that grows with understanding increases the comfort level, as does a sense of humor.

I have a dear friend with whom I lost touch decades ago when he moved to another city. We reconnected a few years back via the LinkedIn networking site. He and I were very close in our late 20s. We felt a natural connection. There was love between us, but I also desired him, which he could not reciprocate. Our mutual bond proved stronger than our difference.

Once over lunch he told me that his fiancée did not want children, though he very much did. Af-

ter joking that he might as well marry me in that case, I told him he needed to find a woman who wanted children. Which he did. It is good to be in touch again. His auburn hair has gone white, but our feelings remain.

As the social space grows in which we can navigate our differences, safety increases. In private encounters we don't think of an entire community looking over our shoulders; yet to some extent, each of us carries an invisible crowd with us.

With certain close straight friends, it almost feels as if we had a torrid sexual affair and then became friends.

The 1930 song "Georgia On My Mind," by Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorell, has these lines:

"Other arms reach out to me,
Other eyes smile tenderly,
Still in peaceful dreams I see
The road leads back to you."

Those lyrics come to mind as I think of my partner overseas. Loneliness can make fools of us. But having given my heart to someone, I am less beset by the restlessness that preoccupied me in my youth. Thinking of the man who has proven his love for me in countless moments of grace, I realize I am already home. How blessed I am when a sweet straight friend, with a chaste kiss, shows he gets that.

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

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Massachusetts

Continued from page 1

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JUNE 22

Paradenoon, Shedd Park, 27 Congress St. to Festival. Festival: 11am to 4pm Salem Common, N. Washington Square.
northshorepride.org

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JUNE 23

2-7pm, Waterfront Square, 400 Ocean Ave.
nextstoprevere.com

WALTHAM PRIDE

JULY 16

Waltham Common, 610 Main St., 11am to 4pm
Walthampride.org

CAPE COD PRIDE FESTIVAL

JULY 20

Hyannis Village Green.
capecodpride.org

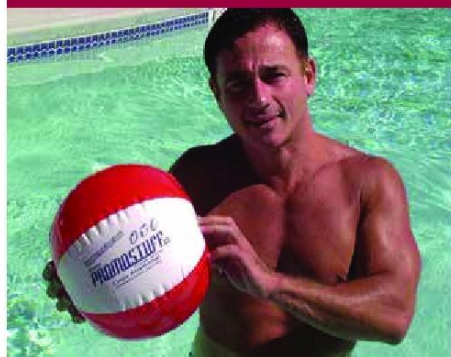
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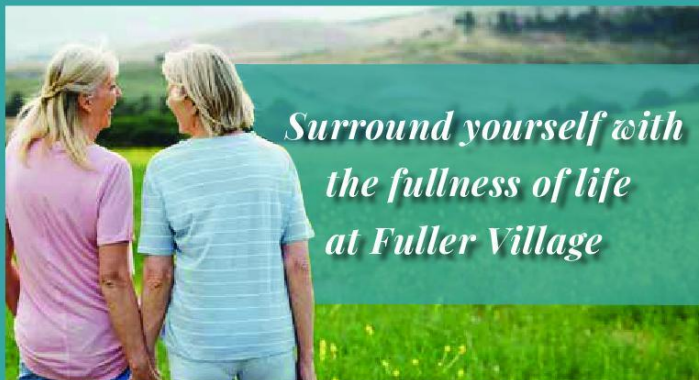
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