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A Visible Day of Black Trans Joy

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer



Neon Calypso, Candace Persuasion, Giselle Byrd, Justice Williams, and Teasha Purdy. Photo by Craig Bailey.

Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV) is a powerful reminder to honor and uplift transgender and non-binary people. It is also a day to celebrate the lives and contributions of trans and non-binary people, while

acknowledging the harsh reality of the continued assaults on the community. In commemoration of TDOV, The Theater Offensive, in partner-

see **MONROE**, page 7



How the Early 90s Shaped Queer Families

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

My spouse Helen and I recently celebrated our 33rd anniversary, which got me thinking about the early 1990s when we first met. Take a walk back with me through a few significant early 90s moments and milestones for queer families.

At the start of the decade, the World Health Organization in 1990 removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental disorders, a sign of changing attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people as a whole. And while out queer individuals and couples had been intentionally starting families

since the 1970s, this surged in the 1980s. By 1990, queer family building was enough of a trend for Newsweek to write of a "gayby boom," the first documented instance of the term.

New avenues were also opening up. The first documented use of what would become known as reciprocal IVF (RIVF)—one partner carrying eggs from the other—dates to 1995, as far as I have found, but the technique (which Helen

see **MOMBIAN**, page 4

Supreme Court rules against Colorado ban on "conversion therapy" for LGBTQ+ kids

Advocates, officials react

By Bay Windows staff

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-1 that a challenge to Colorado's ban on conversion therapy for minors must be reconsidered under a more demanding First Amendment standard, siding with a Christian counselor who argued the law restricts what licensed therapists can say to clients. The decision did not immediately strike down the 2019 Colorado law but sent the case back to lower courts to review it under "strict scrutiny," the most demanding level of constitutional review.

Writing for the majority, Justice Neil Gorsuch said Colorado's law may amount to unconstitutional "view-

see **SCOTUS**, page 5



Supreme Court building photo by Jarek Tuszyński, via Wikimedia Commons.

Pride flag removals at BU spark debate over signage policy

By Sue O'Connell
Editor

The removal of Pride flags from several Boston University faculty office windows has sparked a debate on campus about free expression, inclusion and how universities regulate sig-

nage on their property.

The dispute surfaced in mid-March when BU administrators removed Pride flags that had been displayed in outward-facing office windows, including in the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program. Some professors returned from spring break to

find the flags taken down and notices left in their offices indicating a policy violation.

Nathan Phillips, a Boston University professor, rehung the flag after administrators removed it. "I haven't

see **BU**, page 2

NEW ENGLAND BRIEFS

By Bay Windows Staff

Maine transgender sports initiative qualifies for ballot

A proposed ballot initiative that would restrict transgender girls from participating on girls' school sports teams in Maine has qualified for con-

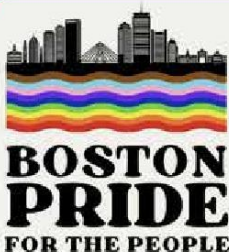
sideration under the state's citizen initiative process.

Secretary of State Shenna Bellows said election officials verified more than 70,000 petition signatures — exceeding the roughly 67,000 valid signatures required to advance the proposal, according to reporting by

Maine Public.

Under Maine law, the Legislature can either enact the measure directly or send it to voters statewide in November 2026. Supporters say the proposal would protect fairness in girls'

see **NE BRIEFS**, page 5



Festival & Parade Saturday, June 6 at 12p.m.

Boston Pride For The People is excited to announce Pride Month celebration in Boston on June 6, 2026. The celebration will include a parade, a festival, and more! Go to bp4tp.org for more information.



LGBTQ+ CALENDAR

APRIL 2026

Thursday, April 2, 2026

TDOV Trans Takeover

The Queer Neighborhood Council (TQNC) hosts its Trans Day of Visibility Trans Takeover, 6–9 PM. A community celebration of trans joy and visibility.

Host: The Queer Neighborhood Council
tqnc.org

Thursday, April 3, 2026

History Project Community Archive Open House

The History Project hosts an open house featuring LGBTQ+ archival materials and opportunities to learn about preserving community history.

Host: The History Project
historyproject.org

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Reading is Resistance:

April Book Club & Community Hang

TQNC's in-person queer book club and community gathering, 6–8 PM. All are welcome.

Host: The Queer Neighborhood Council
tqnc.org

Thursday, April 10, 2026

GLAD Law Virtual Community Update

GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders provides a public update on current litigation and LGBTQ+ legal advocacy efforts in Massachusetts and nationally.

Host: GLAD Law
glad.org/events/

Friday, April 10, 2026

Handel's Water Music – Pride Celebration Concert

The Handel and Haydn Society celebrates Pride

during its performance of Handel's Water Music. LGBTQ+ organizations will host information tables and community outreach activities before the concert, followed by a reception.

Location: Symphony Hall Host: Handel and Haydn Society
handelandhaydn.org

Sunday, April 12, 2026

Handel's Water Music – Pride Community Reception

A second Pride-themed performance of Handel's Water Music, followed by a larger community reception where LGBTQ+ organizations, musicians, donors, and supporters gather to celebrate Pride and community partnerships.

Location: Symphony Hall Host: Handel and Haydn Society
handelandhaydn.org

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

PFLAG Greater Boston Pride & Passion Gala

PFLAG Greater Boston hosts its 24th annual Pride & Passion fundraiser supporting LGBTQ+ families and youth advocacy programs across Massachusetts. The event includes community awards, dinner, and remarks from local leaders and activists.

Location: Boston Host: PFLAG Greater Boston
gbpflag.org

Thursday, April 23, 2026

Families of LGBTQ+ Youth Circle Up

TQNC hosts a gathering for families of LGBTQ+ youth, 6–8 PM, creating space for intergenerational support and community connection.

Host: The Queer Neighborhood Council
tqnc.org

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Queer Advocacy Potluck & Food Drive

TQNC's community advocacy potluck and food

drive, 6–8 PM, bringing together queer advocates, organizers, and neighbors.

Host: The Queer Neighborhood Council
tqnc.org

MAY 2026

Saturday, May 2, 2026

Hampshire Pride

Hampshire Pride's 4th annual celebration kicks off the 2026 New England Pride season in Northampton. Schedule: Parade 11 AM–12:30 PM | Vendor Festival noon–6 PM | Main Stage 1–6 PM | Drag Stage 2–6 PM | Bar Crawl 6 PM–2 AM. Allied and non-LGBTQ+ orgs are welcome to participate.

Location: Sheldon Field to Route 9 & Main Street, downtown Northampton, MA Host: Hampshire Pride, Inc.
hampshirepridemag.com

May 2026 — Date TBD

Massachusetts Youth Pride

The oldest youth-led, adult-supported LGBTQ+ Youth Pride celebration in the country, organized by BAGLY. Features a march, festival, community partner resource fair, and a live stage show produced by LGBTQ+ youth. Open to youth and allies. Watch BAGLY's site for date announcement.

Location: Boston, MA Host: BAGLY
bagly.org/myy

Tuesday, May 7, 2026

Boston Spirit Executive Networking Night

Boston Spirit Magazine hosts its annual networking event connecting LGBTQ+ business professionals, corporate leaders, and entrepreneurs across New England.

Host: Boston Spirit
bostonspiritmagazine.com

Friday–Sunday, May 29–31, 2026

Cape Ann Pride 2026

The third annual Cape Ann Pride celebration spans Greater Cape Ann — Gloucester, Essex, and Rockport — with a combination of free and ticketed events over the long weekend. Past celebrations have included a Pride flag raising, a Tea Dance on the Pier at Maritime Gloucester, bowling, live DJ sets, and more. Full schedule coming soon.

Location: Gloucester, Essex & Rockport, MA Host: Cape Ann Pride Coalition

Note: The Cape Ann Pride Coalition's own website lists the celebration as May 28–31; the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce lists May 29–31. Confirm dates at capeannpride.org before publishing.

capeannpride.org

Sunday, May 31, 2026

TQNC Queer Art Market

TQNC's Queer Art Market returns, 12:30–5 PM, featuring queer artists, artisans, and community groups in an outdoor market setting welcoming all committed to LGBTQIA+ spaces.

Host: The Queer Neighborhood Council
tqnc.org

JUNE 2026

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

MassEquality Advocacy Day at the State House

MassEquality organizes a day of meetings with lawmakers and advocacy training focused on advancing LGBTQ+ protections in Massachusetts.

Location: Massachusetts State House Host: MassEquality
massequality.org/events

see LGBTQ+ CALENDAR, page 7

BU

Continued from page 1

gotten the third strike yet, so I'm just waiting," Phillips told Boston.com.

University officials say the removals were part of enforcing existing rules governing signage and posted materials on campus. The policy states that "unattended placards, banners, or other signs" are not allowed unless placed in designat-

ed locations such as authorized bulletin boards or free-expression boards, according to a university explanation published on BU's website.

The policy is "content-neutral," the university said, adding that restrictions exist because outward-facing displays on university buildings can be interpreted as institutional speech rather than personal expression, according to Boston University's policy explanation.

Faculty critics say the enforcement has been

uneven and sends the wrong message to LGBTQ+ students. One professor described discovering the removed flag during spring break as feeling "like a gut punch," Boston.com reported.

The controversy has drawn commentary beyond the campus. In an opinion piece in The Advocate, Boston University lecturer Heather Barrett wrote that Pride flags serve an important role for LGBTQ+ students. "They signal safety and belonging," Barrett wrote in the March

opinion column.

University leaders have said the policy is not aimed at any specific community and that Boston University remains committed to supporting LGBTQ+ students and faculty while applying signage rules consistently across campus, according to the university's published guidance.

Faculty groups say the debate is likely to continue as administrators review how the policy is applied across the university.

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Judge rules US government overreached with transgender health care declaration

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A federal judge said the government overreached by issuing a declaration that called treatments like puberty blockers, hormone therapy and surgeries unsafe and ineffective for young people experiencing gender dysphoria, according to a ruling Thursday in Oregon.

Judge Mustafa Kasubhai ruled that Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. didn't go through the proper administrative procedures in December when issuing the declaration, which warned doctors that they could be excluded from federal health programs like Medicare and Medicaid if they provide these treatments.

The ruling grants preliminary relief to health professionals who provide the treatments. The judge also denied the government's motion to dismiss the case.

"Today's win breaks through the noise and gives some needed clarity to patients, families, and providers," Letitia James, the Democratic New York attorney general who led the lawsuit, said in a statement Thursday. "Health care services for transgender young people remain legal, and the federal government cannot intimidate or punish the providers who offer them."

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services did not immediately respond to an email requesting comment.

The New York Times reported that the judge spoke about the broader implications associated with this case, especially as it relates to democracy.

"The notion that 'I will go forward and issue a declaration and see if we can get away with it' is not a principle of governance that adheres to the overarching commitment to a democratic republic that requires the rule of law to be regarded and respected and honored as a sacred," the judge said.

The decision is the second major legal setback for Kennedy and HHS this week. Another

federal judge in Boston on Monday temporarily blocked several of Kennedy's vaccine policy changes. The judge ruled Kennedy likely violated federal procedures in revamping a key vaccine advisory committee and slimming down the childhood vaccine schedule without the committee's input. Federal officials have indicated they plan to appeal that ruling.

A coalition of 21 states and the District of Columbia had sued HHS, Kennedy and its inspector general over the declaration, alleging that it is inaccurate and unlawful and asking the court to block its enforcement.

The lawsuit says that HHS's declaration seeks to coerce providers to stop providing gender-affirming care and circumvent legal requirements for policy changes. It also says federal law requires the public to be given notice and an opportunity to comment before substantively changing health policy — neither of which, the suit says, was done before the declaration was issued.

HHS's declaration based its conclusions on a peer-reviewed report that the department conducted earlier this year that urged greater reliance on behavioral therapy rather than broad gender-affirming care for youths with gender dysphoria.

The report questioned standards for the treatment of transgender youth issued by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health and raised concerns that adolescents may be too young to give consent to life-changing treatments that could result in future infertility.

Major medical groups and those who treat transgender young people have sharply criticized the report as inaccurate, and most major U.S. medical organizations, including the American Medical Association, continue to oppose restrictions on transgender care and services for young people.

The judge's ruling was at the end of a roughly 6-hour hearing and will be followed by a written decision.

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Amid Chaos, Character Trumps Policy

Decency, honor and resolve will defeat a madman

by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net

contributing writer

A recent meme on social media showed a selfie of three young men heading to the Conservative Political Action Conference. Someone on Facebook commented, "Grindr outage coming in 3...2..."

Aside from the pathetic prospect of gay men hanging out with people who hate them, an odd moment came at CPAC when Matt Schlapp of the American Conservative Union asked the crowd how many wanted to see impeachment hearings against Trump. The initial reaction was cheers.

Signs of dissent within MAGA ranks are encouraging, but will they matter? Trump is pressing on with his war against Iran despite its unpopularity across the political spectrum. He says Cuba is next. The potentially disastrous consequences are not his concern.

The massive turnout at over 3,300 "No Kings" rallies on March 28 was invigorating. Yet many on social media complain that no one is doing anything to stop Trump. Do all the lawsuits, protests and campaign organizing count for nothing? How do these Trump opponents think they help by erasing the resistance?

Impatience is only a virtue if it moves you to help instead of throwing up your hands.

Failing to do the right thing can make us complicit. When the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring the slave trade "the gravest crime against humanity" by a decisive majority, the United States voted no.

Concerns by some people about the prospect of reparations might be more credible if Trump and

his lieutenants were not so eager to rekindle the Civil War. It is not just that their ill-concealed bigotry illustrates the living legacy of past wrongs. They are actively and aggressively trying to erase everything from America's history that does not glorify our past.

This revisionism is in line with an executive order Trump issued a year ago deceptively titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," requiring federal parks and museums to remove items that portray the struggle for equality. He has gone after the Smithsonian Institution in particular.

Nor is the fight only over words and images. People inconvenient to Trump's vision are being targeted. This is seen in the nationwide flood of anti-trans legislation and the labeling of trans activists as domestic terrorists.

This brings fresh urgency to observances like the Trans Day of Visibility on March 31. Attacks on a community's visibility are attacks on its existence.

A trans friend writes, "I can feel the walls beginning to close in. First it was the Kansas anti-trans driver's license nonsense. The next thing was ... the International Olympic Committee banning trans women athletes. What will be next?"

She observes that trans folk constitute less than 1 percent of the adult population. She notes the absurdity of reducing the argument to XX and XY chromosomes when "the relevant differences are far more subtle." She points to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. "Why not inform our opinions with real scholarly and medical

information rather than shooting off our mouths about something we know so little about?"

She says it is easy to target a tiny minority like hers because "we can't rise up to mount a defense against such overwhelming odds."

She is right. Cisgender liberals need to stand with her, knowing that we are next in the far right's crosshairs. After allegedly scary minorities are erased, all of America's problems will remain to be dealt with. We must summon our best selves to defeat the worst people who have hijacked this country.

White male supremacy is on the march. The New York Times reported on March 27 that Pete Hegseth's chief of staff, Ricky Buria, had scolded Army Secretary Daniel P. Driscoll about the proposed promotions of two black and two female officers. The Times wrote, "Mr. Buria told Mr. Driscoll that President Trump would not want to stand next to a Black female officer at military events." The poor dear!

My friend Robert Naylor, a longtime journalist and author of the new book "The Soul of a Leader," writes of Hegseth's action:

"This assault on 'wokeness' is a brazen attack by a mediocre, petty, insecure TV personality on people of color and women, and nothing more than dressed up white supremacy."

Yes. We need to combat the mob mentality and intolerance stoked by a reckless demagogue and restore a more mature, honest, and respectful public discourse for all our sakes. Amid rising chaos, character trumps policy.

If we normalize pathology and hold back while the fascists run roughshod over us, we will lose our country.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rosendall@me.com.

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Mombian

Continued from page 1

and I used in the early aughts) likely started even earlier. The first definitive instance comes from records of a California Supreme Court case in which a couple who had done RIVF in 1995 later separated, and the non-gestational mother sued successfully to be recognized as a parent. Nancy Polikoff, professor of law emerita at American University Washington College of Law, who told me of this case, shared, "It was certainly my impression that the practice [RIVF] was well established (if rare) by then." Indeed, a 1993 article in the journal *Ethics & Behavior* discussed the ethical issues raised by a hypothetical lesbian couple seeking to do RIVF. The contributor who originated the article, Timothy Murphy, now a professor of philosophy at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, told me in an e-mail that it was based on a real couple whom a colleague had mentioned, although he doesn't know if they actually went forward with the procedure.

In 1993, too, Vermont and Massachusetts became the first U.S. states to allow same-sex couples to adopt jointly statewide. By the mid-90s, more than a dozen states had also granted co-parent (second-parent) adoptions to non-gestational parents, thanks to the efforts of many individuals and advocacy organizations.

On the flip side, many courts were still biased, such as the Virginia circuit court that in 1993 took away Sharon Bottoms's son because she was in a relationship with another woman. It placed him with his grandmother, although Bottoms claimed that the grandmother's live-in boyfriend had previously molested Sharon. The Vir-

ginia Supreme Court upheld the ruling in 1995. Tragic as it was, the case helped raise public awareness and rally activists to push further for LGBTQ+ family rights.

The era also saw the first LGBTQ+-inclusive picture books to reach broad public awareness. In 1990, LGBTQ+ publisher Alyson Publications launched its children's imprint, Alyson Wonderland, with "Daddy's Roommate," by Michael Willhoite, and "Heather Has Two Mommies," which author Lesléa Newman and a friend had self-published in 1989.

In 1991, both of the above titles, plus Newman's "Gloria Goes to Gay Pride," were included as suggested readings in a proposed "Children of the Rainbow Curriculum," a set of multicultural resources created by the New York City Board of Education to teach first-graders respect for all.

After vocal opposition from some parents, religious groups, and one school district president who said the books would "promote sodomy," however, the Board in 1992 rejected the curriculum. School Chancellor Joseph Fernandez's contract was not renewed in 1993; *Education Week* reported that the controversy was a large part of that, and was "the central issue in about one-fifth of the local board races and a major issue in more than half of them" (3/24/1993). One can see echoes of this battle in the attempts to ban LGBTQ+-inclusive materials in schools today.

A long shadow over LGBTQ+ families in the early 1990s, too, was the ongoing AIDS crisis. During the 1980s, 70 to 90% of the members of gay fathers' groups in San Francisco and Los Angeles had died from AIDS-related illnesses, and the crisis "shook the lives" of many children with gay fathers, wrote Daniel Winunwe Rivers in his 2013 history of lesbian and gay families, "Radical Relations."

As local groups were hit hard, however, "they were sustained by a nationwide umbrella organization, the Gay Fathers Coalition International," Rivers explained. By the early 90s, this group, renamed Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International (GLPCI; later Family Equality), "was increasingly central to gay and lesbian parent advocacy," he asserted.

In 1990, too, a group of young people who had met at a GLPCI conference formed "Just for Us," an organization for people with LGBTQ+ parents. In 1993, it changed its name to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) and still exists today under the acronym, building community, offering resources, and engaging in advocacy. (See colage.org.)

In the summer of 1994, the executive director of GLPCI, Tim Fisher, and his partner Scott Davenport, invited other LGBTQ+ families to a barbecue in Provincetown, Massachusetts. This led to nearly 45 families gathering the next summer for the first official "Family Week." The event is now the largest annual gathering of LGBTQ+ families in the world; in 2025, 600 families attended. (See familyequality.org.)

These are just a few highlights of LGBTQ+ families in the early 90s, not a complete history. (In particular, the history of transgender parents and their children during this time remains to be brought to light.) I hope they are enough, however, to show the time as a pivotal one of both challenges and progress, whose ramifications are still with us today.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents, plus a searchable database of 1,900+ LGBTQ+ family books. She is an unpaid volunteer member of Family Equality's Communications Committee.

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SCOTUS

Continued from page 1

point discrimination" because it allows counselors to affirm a minor's sexual orientation or gender identity but prohibits efforts to change it. Laws regulating speech based on viewpoint are considered the most serious type of First Amendment restriction.

The case, *Chiles v. Salazar*, was brought by a licensed counselor who said the law prevented her from offering therapy aligned with her religious beliefs. Colorado defended the statute as a regulation of professional conduct intended to protect minors from practices widely condemned by major medical organizations.

Conversion therapy bans have been adopted in Colorado and at least 25 other states, as well as Washington, D.C., after medical and mental-health groups warned the practice can cause significant psychological harm to LGBTQ+ youth. While the Supreme Court did not invalidate those laws outright, legal experts say the ruling could invite new challenges to similar bans across the country, according to reporting by the Associated Press.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson filed the lone dissent, warning that the majority's reasoning could limit states' ability to regulate licensed professionals to protect vulnerable patients. Jackson argued Colorado's law was aimed at

preventing harm to minors and did not discriminate based on viewpoint but instead regulated professional practices that lawmakers concluded were dangerous.

GLAD, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders

"What we know — and what the majority acknowledges — is that conversion therapy is harmful and that people have been dramatically hurt by efforts to change who they are," said Jennifer Levi.

Governor Maura Healey

"Massachusetts will always stand up for LGBTQ+ young people and their families and make sure they are safe, healthy, and able to be who they are."

Human Rights Campaign

"This decision is deeply troubling and puts LGBTQ+ young people at risk. Conversion therapy is a dangerous and discredited practice that every major medical and mental health association has condemned."

The Trevor Project

"Conversion therapy is not therapy. It is a dangerous and discredited practice that harms LGBTQ+ young people. Research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ youth who are subjected to conversion therapy attempts face significantly higher risks of depression and suicide."

The legislative debate follows Gov. Kelly Ayotte's veto of a similar bathroom bill earlier this year. Ayotte said the legislation was not the right approach, New Hampshire Public Radio reported.

NE Briefs

Continued from page 1

athletics, while LGBTQ+ advocates argue it would harm transgender students and conflict with protections under the Maine Human Rights Act, Maine Public reported.

A group of Maine voters has filed a lawsuit challenging the petition drive behind the proposed transgender sports initiative.

The lawsuit alleges problems with the signature-gathering process and asks the court to invalidate the effort before it can move forward, according to WMTW-TV in Portland.

State election officials previously determined that 71,033 signatures were valid — above the threshold required for a citizen initiative to advance, WMTW reported.

Transgender policy debate continues in New Hampshire Legislature

New Hampshire lawmakers continue to debate legislation affecting transgender rights, including proposals related to restroom access and state non-discrimination law.

Several bills addressing gender identity were considered earlier this year by the House Judiciary Committee. One proposal that would have removed gender identity from parts of the state's anti-discrimination law was rejected, while two bills addressing bathroom access advanced for further consideration, according to New Hampshire Public Radio.

Boston charter school students create visible LGBTQ+ safe space

Students at Boston Green Academy have been creating artwork and rainbow-flag displays as part of an effort to build a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ classmates.

Members of the school's Art Love club have painted murals and posted affirming messages around the building, saying the effort helps signal that LGBTQ+ students have support within the school community, according to WBUR.

Students told WBUR the displays are particularly meaningful at a time when LGBTQ+ issues are increasingly part of national political debate.

Winooski elects Vermont's first Black, openly gay mayor

Winooski, Vermont, has elected Thomas Renner as mayor, making him the city's first Black and openly gay mayor.

Renner, who previously served on the city council, said he hopes to focus on housing, immigration issues and community engagement in the diverse city just outside Burlington, according to VTDigger.

Renner told VTDigger that Winooski's immigrant communities face growing anxiety in the current political climate and said city leadership must ensure residents feel supported.



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“Hudson told me, ‘The other guy was good, but Connor felt like he was going to pin me down and...’”

- Heated Rivalry creator Jacob Tierney explains how Storrie was cast. Why do straight guys always fantasize about this?

Photo by Robert Thivierge (Thivier), via Wikimedia Commons.

What a week it was. As we go to press, one headline caught my eye: “Thieves steal 12 tons of KitKat chocolate bars in Europe”. Isn’t that the type of story you’d click on? Well, you don’t have to — I did. The truck transporting the bars left Italy but never arrived in Poland. Apparently, like all valuables, the bars are traceable via a “unique batch code”. Nestle, which makes the product, made this statement: “Whilst we appreciate the criminals’ exceptional taste, the fact remains that cargo theft is an escalating issue for businesses of all sizes.” Gimme a break.

Last week, the **First Lady** posed alongside an animatronic creation from Future AI which is touted as a revolutionary (if unaffordable) way to help students. I was horrified. I couldn’t believe that this cold, mechanical being with no feelings or emotions was standing there in the White House — next to a robot!

A couple of people from our community faced health struggles that led to hospitalization. First up was **Sam Champion**, who got a surprise after a nuclear stress test (and you thought the nukes were in Iran). The results were concerning enough to have him undergo treatment in the cardiac catheterization laboratory at Mount Sinai Medical Center in NYC. We hear he’s doing well and wish him a speedy recovery.

Then there’s **Perez Hilton**, a name I haven’t heard in eons. He posted some troubling photos from Southern Hills Hospital in Las Vegas (he moved there in 2023). Apparently it started with a bout of the flu — which fells so many seniors these days. Believe it or not, it was the medication which led to a 21-day hospital stay. “I have been taking all this medication without food for weeks, I developed an ulcer then a perforation and then sepsis.” See? Let that be a lesson to you all — never deny yourself food! Perez had laparoscopic surgery, then had fluid in his lungs, and then a heart issue, and finally, catheterization. None of it sounds pretty, but it had a curious result — Hilton decided to enroll his kids in Catholic school. A curious choice. I’d suggest eat more, pray less. But I’m practical that way.

There’s a mixed bag of news from my pal, **Chip Arndt** (of **Chip and Reichen**, the first gay winners of “The Amazing Race”). Last May, he found out he had HPV—positive cancer affecting his tonsils, throat and back of tongue. He recently related his experience in detail on Facebook which included intense chemo and radiation treatments. Results have been promising, and he hasn’t lost his sense of humor: “I’m feeling great even though I’ve lost 40 pounds through it all. Chemo is very effective to losing weight but not a recommended go-to method.” In a post—surgical post, he shares a philosophy: “Reminder: We all have our shite and we also have each other! Never feel you’re alone or a burden to others. When in doubt just reach out and I promise that you’ll be amazed with the support that follows!! PROMISE! Onward we go, together!!!” Team Chip all the way.

I don’t know if this last item is a health concern, but **Tiger Woods** was back in the news for what appears to be a rerun. I don’t have much to say, except I’d dissuade any of my readers from accepting a ride from him.

Last week, previews began for the Broadway revival of “The Rocky Horror Show”. As you know, the production is led by a very sexy **Luke Evans** as Frank-N-Furter, who in the released photos seemed to be wearing a black Lycra, high-thigh cut bodysuit with a fishnet body stocking. But in the video we got from one of the first previews, we can see the show indeed ends with him in a sexy corset and a black leather jock strap which quite clearly shows his penis bouncing about. And, of course, you can follow the bouncing bob on BillyMasters.com.

We recently reported that **Lea Michele** will be leaving the Broadway production of “Chess” on June 21st (days after she wins — or loses — a Tony Award). When someone told me Lea would be replaced by a JoJo, I was appalled. Surely if there is anyone I’d like to see less in “Chess”, it’s **JoJo Siwa**. Therefore, I’m both pleased and relieved to report that the actual replacement is **Joanna “JoJo” Levesque**. This JoJo previously appeared on Broadway in “Moulin Rouge! The Musical” — although long after her new “Chess” co—co-star, **Aaron Tveit**, had left the show.

Picture it — Boston, 2019. **Faye Dunaway** starred as **Katharine Hepburn** in the play “Tea at Five” at the Huntington Theatre. She could have given a stupendous performance on opening night, but she was already

loathed by everyone connected with the show — which is hard to do in a one—woman show. Let’s just say the rehearsal period made the “Master Class” national tour look like a Disney show. After Faye allegedly slapped a crew member, the possibility of a Broadway transfer disappeared. Eventually, playwright **Matthew Lombardo** was able to see the absurdity of the situation and use it as a starting point for a new comedy — “When Playwrights Kill”. This play is about a writer (the delightful **Matt Doyle**) of a play doing a pre—Broadway tryout starring a very difficult diva (the delicious **Beth Leavel**) who could jeopardize the entire venture. How can the situation be salvaged? You’ll have to see “When Playwrights Kill” to find out. BTW, the stage manager is played by the ebullient **Marissa Jarret Winokur**. And in a moment of art—imitating life—imitating art, the world premiere takes place at the Huntington Theatre in Boston! It runs April 3rd through the 18th. Get your tickets at WhenPlaywrightsKillBoston.com.

We interrupt this column to bring you a message from a real diva: “It has been an honour to sing and entertain my fans for over 70 years...At this point of time, I’m sorry to say, that due to up—and—coming hand surgery, I will no longer be able to reply to fan mail. We kindly request for you to avoid sending vinyls, personal items and photographs, as we will be unable to post them back to you. Your support has been incredible. Every single letter I have received has been an honour. All my love, **Dame Shirley Bassey**.” Such a cold finger.

Another diva is poised to make a comeback. **Celine Dion** is reportedly planning to return to the concert stage this fall. Prior to the pandemic and her Stiff Person Syndrome diagnosis, Celine was scheduled to do a series of concerts at the Paris La Defense Arena as part of her “Courage World Tour”. So it’s fitting that she’s planning on fulfilling those engagements as her return. Last week, the City of Lights was canvassed with posters listing the titles of Dion’s songs. We expect an announcement for the September and October concerts any time now.

Someone else is leaving the spotlight. **Dionne Warwick** claims that her latest release will be her last. “DWuets” is made up entirely of **Diane Warren** songs (Diane and Dionne both share the “DW” initials) and is produced by Warwick’s son, **Damon Elliott**. But fear not, Warwick says while she’s bowing out of more recordings, she plans to continue to do intimate live dates.

By the by, Dionne told our pal **Sherri Shepherd** that **Teyana Taylor** has been signed to a biopic about the singer’s life. Warwick said, “After meeting her, I said, ‘Oh, my, that’s my alter ego.’” She also praised Taylor for speaking her mind and having no filter.

People have been asking me if Sherri Shepherd has any plans once her talk show wraps. She’s in the midst of her nationwide comedy tour (the full schedule can be found on SherriShepherd.com). She’ll also join forces with **Robin Roberts**’ production company on a Lifetime film called “Angel in the Rubble”, which is based on **Genelle Guzman**, who was the last survivor pulled from the 9/11 rubble. Sherri will not only be an executive producer on the film, she’ll also star as Genelle. It will air in September to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the attack.

We have time for a very quick “Ask Billy” question. Darren in NYC asks, “I just caught the first episode of ‘SNL UK’. Who was the cute guy who played Princess Diana?”

That would be **Jack Shep**, who is 25 years old and openly gay, which I’m sure comes as no surprise to any of my readers. He started out doing skits on TikTok as a teen and has been working steadily. He’s the youngest cast member on “SNL UK” and, while he did several skits in the premiere episode, his “Shy Di” in “The Last Supper of **David Attenborough**” went viral. The following week he topped himself (if that’s possible) by playing the former Prince Andrew. Needless to say, you can see both on BillyMasters.com.

When someone can play both Prince Andrew and Princess Diana, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. Talk about range. Of course, you can find a whole range of content on BillyMasters.com — the site that is truly versatile. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before JoJo Siwa is cast as Grizabella! Until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.



Screenshot via YouTube, Perez Hilton.



Photo by Eyedea Film, via Wikimedia Commons.



Photo via YouTube, Sky TV.

Monroe

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ship with LGBTQ+ Elders of Color, hosted a mutual aid market alongside a conversation series titled "Stories of Becoming" with community leaders Justice Williams aka Coach Justice and Teasha Purdy aka Teasha Boo about their journeys. As the event's promotion beautifully affirmed: this was a space to witness and celebrate "how one still stands in their power at a time when the world wants them to fall down." And Black trans joy was on display.

Flipping the script

"Being trans is more than a tragedy story—especially being Black and trans," said The Theater Offensive's Executive and Artistic Director, Giselle Byrd, addressing her audience at the Boston Center for the Arts. Byrd, is the first Black trans woman in the country to head a regional theater. "We create beauty in the face of erasure."

The dominant "Black trans tragedy" narrative in the media obfuscates the full humanity and achievements of Black trans people. This is despite the fact that Black trans individuals were foundational leaders in the modern LGBTQ+ civil rights movement, beginning with the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969. Their contributions have been whitewashed—rendered invisible, if not erased—due to the intersecting oppressions of racism, transphobia, and misogyny, both within white, straight society and in queer communities themselves. However, Byrd's vision of acknowledging the full humanity of Black trans people is transformative. Since taking the helm of TTO, she has intentionally centered Black trans lives.

In an Oprah-style Super Soul Sunday format, Byrd facilitated two moderated conversations, posing questions not often asked of Black trans people:

How are you claiming joy?

What sacred aspects of your childhood shape who you are today?

Who were your role models?

How do you care for yourself?

What legacy do you hope to leave through your work?

A man about justice

Justice Williams works in the Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement as a Community Relations Specialist, a role that reflects a lifelong calling to community activism—one he genuinely enjoys. His commitment to advocacy began well before relocating to Boston from New Jersey. "My first act of activism," Williams recalls, "was fighting for African American history classes in my high school—and winning."

That same passion and determination now fuel his work across Boston's diverse neighborhoods. As a Community Relations Specialist, Williams leads initiatives focused on education, engagement, and empowering communities.

Justice shared with the audience that he came out as trans later in life. He spoke about how society places people into boxes that fail to capture the fullness of his identity and humanity. "I was Black before I was anything else," Williams stated. "My Blackness holds an expansiveness that no box can contain."

Williams also emphasized that he uses the spaces he occupies to raise awareness about the violence facing Black trans

women. "I talk about Rita Hester. I've brought people together in her name." Rita Hester, a Black trans woman, was murdered in November 1998 in the Allston section of Boston. Her killing sparked the "Remembering Our Dead" web project, which became the catalyst for the annual International Transgender Day of Remembrance, observed on November 20.

Williams is being recognized for his impact as one of MassEquality's 2026 Beacons of Light honorees. This April, he will receive the Community Icon Award. When asked what brings him joy, Williams shared simply and powerfully: "Being in community—and being of service to my people."

At the end of Williams's interview, he was surprised with a high-energy performance by Neon Calypso, a Boston-based drag queen and community advocate who highlights the resilience of trans women of color.

Teasha Purdy: Queen Mother

Teasha Purdy is a beloved and revered Black trans woman in her community. A renowned performer, Purdy has also been a tireless activist, working in the political sector for more than two decades on behalf of trans and nonbinary equality. Despite the many accolades and awards she has received, Purdy takes the greatest pride in her role as a chosen mother, having mentored and supported numerous young people who have gone on to thrive in their own lives. One of her children is Candace Persuasion of the Boston Dolls—a trans Asian performer and former Community Relations Specialist with the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ+ Advancement. Candace honored Purdy with one of her signature performances at the conclusion of the interview.

Byrd asked Purdy if she could recall her first experience of motherhood. Purdy shared that she began her journey with three children. "They just showed up. I didn't know what I was doing. I just jumped in," she said with a laugh. "I knew these kids were having problems at home and were unhoused." Black transgender and nonbinary youth face an elevated risk of homelessness due to overlapping factors, including family rejection, systemic transphobia and racism, and discrimination within the foster care and justice systems.

This crisis is further exacerbated by current political climates, cultural tensions, and the influence of the traditional Black Church. Across the African diaspora, the intersection of race, gender identity, and sexuality is often shaped by conservative religious beliefs. According to a 2022 Pew Research Center report, approximately 70% of Black Protestants believe that gender is immutable—fixed at birth, much like skin color.

The traditional Black Church has often, and at times unapologetically, closed its doors to LGBTQ+ people. Even as many of these youth turn to the church for refuge, they frequently find neither support nor sanctuary. Purdy, a PK (pastor's kid), grew up within the Black Church but was raised in a loving and affirming religious family. "My mother took a moment," she recalled, "but my grandfather simply asked, 'So what's your name?'"

Living beyond the day

TDOV brings the community joy. Joy, however, is not reserved for only non-trans people. Joy is expansive because it deepens our capacity to love, accept ourselves and others. It transforms existence from simply survival to truly living one's authentic selves. The transgender community deserves more than just a single visible day to experience what others can take for granted everyday.

Friday, June 5, 2026

Boston Dyke March

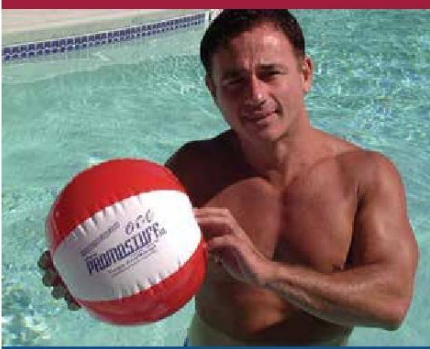
The annual Boston Dyke March gathers at 6:30 PM at the Parkman Bandstand on Boston Common. The march believes in anti-capitalist, intersectional gender liberation and is mask-required, ASL interpreted, and fully accessible, with a wheelchair, stroller, and scooter accessible route and an accessibility vehicle for those who need it.

Location: Parkman Bandstand, Boston Common Host: Boston Dyke March

Note: This date (June 5) is sourced from third-party event listings. Confirm at bostondykemarch.com as the 2026 date has not yet been officially announced on their own site.

bostondykemarch.com

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LGBTQ+ Calendar

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Friday-Sunday, June 5-7, 2026

Provincetown Pride

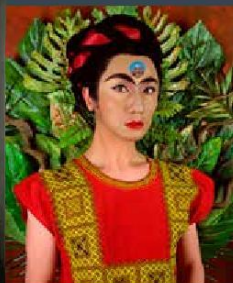
Provincetown Pride kicks off the summer season with a parade down Commercial Street, dance parties, performances, and community gatherings. The Boston-Provincetown fast ferry operates from Long Wharf for the weekend (approx. 90 minutes). Book early — Friday afternoon ferries fill fast.

Location: Provincetown, MA
provincetown.com

PERSONA

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE RE-IMAGINED SELF

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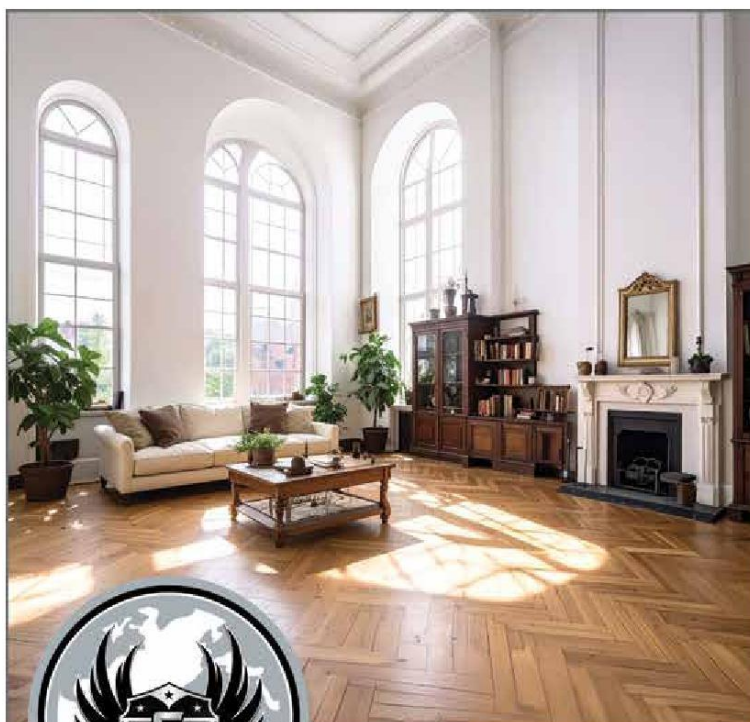


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Images from left to right: Claude Cahun (French, 1894–1954), *I am in training don't kiss me*, 1927. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Collections. Yasunao Maruyama (Japanese), *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Skull Ring)*, 2001. Digital chromogenic print mounted on aluminum. © Yasunao Maruyama. Courtesy of the artist, Lubing Augustine, New York, and Yoshiko Isihiko Office, Tokyo. Samuel Fosso (Cameroonian), *Self-Portrait (Makalé X)* and *Self-Portrait (Angela Davis)* from *African Spirits* series, 2008. 8x10 Fiber-based Glossy Paper. © Samuel Fosso. Courtesy of the artist and Yassi Mili, New York. Narcissister (American), *Unified Self-Portrait Series (Pink Nails)*, 2012. C-Print. © Narcissister. Courtesy of the artist. Claude Cahun (French, 1894–1954), *Self-portrait (reflected image in mirror, chequered jacket)*, 1928. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the Jersey Heritage Collections



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