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BAY WINDOWS

Serving New England's LGBTQ+ Communities

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Holiday Gift Guide

LGBTQ Picture Books

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

The LGBTQ-inclusive picture books published this year have dazzled me. Here are some that stand out and seem the most celebratory, perfect for holiday giving.

In several tales of family life, the queerness is incidental to the story: "Too Green!" by Sumana Seeboruth, illustrated by Maribel Castells (Barefoot Books), with a two-mom family (also available in an English/Spanish edition); "My Mommies Built a Treehouse," by Gareth Peter, illustrated by Izzy Evans (Lantana); and two tales that include two-dad families among others: "Soon, Your Hands," by Jonathan Stutzman, illustrated by Elizabeth Lilly (Knopf); and "Awake, Asleep," by

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 5*

Gathering ourselves on a frayed Thanksgiving

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

Thanksgiving is a good day for reconnecting. The importance of friends and family was never so clear to me as it was during the Covid-19 shutdown in the spring of 2020. I felt so isolated, I was concerned about my mental health.

Since then, I have been uplifted by many acts of kindness I witnessed, whether in local shops or in WhatsApp calls with struggling friends in Africa. From people with plenty to people with nothing, I have encountered generous, brave spirits who provided soothing respite from the fanaticism and strife reflected in the news and social media. Their grace, whether amid light or darkness, is a victory in itself.

The strength of character and simple goodness of these people lowered my stress level as I watched a parade of threats to our liberties march by. That helped me avoid clinging desperately to every meager

see **ROSENDALL,** *page 2*

First married and Black gay couple to receive AARP award

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Courtesy photo.

On November 12, Paul Glass and Charles D. Evans of Falmouth were honored with this year's AARP Andrus Award for Community Service. It's AARP's most prestigious and visible state volunteer award for community service. They are the first married and Black gay couple in AARP's history to receive the award.

AARP, formerly the American Association of Retired Persons, is one of the largest organizations in the country, focusing on issues affecting Americans over the age of fifty with a membership of over 38 million members as of 2018. The AARP Andrus Award for Community Service is an annual awards program developed to honor individuals whose service is a unique and valuable contribution to

see **MONROE,** *page 4*

DECISION 2023

LGBTQ+ Election Results

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

Off-year elections are typically dull –with no presidential, Congressional, or other big spotlight races on the ballot. But Tuesday night's off-year election results had many moments for LGBTQ people to celebrate.

Much of that success came in Virginia where Danica Roem, a transgender member of the House of Delegates, won election to a State Senate seat from northern Virginia. Roem was up against a Republican opponent endorsed by Republican Governor Glenn Youngkin. by about three points, becoming only the second transgender woman in the U.S. to be elected to a state senate. (Sarah McBride was the first, winning her state senate seat in Delaware in 2020.)

"You attack trans kids in my district at your own political peril," said Roem in an interview with The Hill newspaper.

Bisexual African American state delegate candidate Joshua Cole was the dramatic 51st Democrat late Tuesday night, when his victory gave Democrats the one seat majority they need to keep control of the Virginia House of Delegates. Polls and commentators had widely suggested Republicans might take control of the House and Senate, giving Youngkin the rubber stamp he needed to push an agenda restricting abortion, banning LGBTQ-related books, and allowing parent groups to take control of public school curricula.

All seven LGBTQ candidates for the Virginia House of Delegates won their seats Tuesday night, and only two of those seven were incumbents.

Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund President Annise Parker praised Roem, noting that Roem faced "an unprecedented deluge of anti-trans hate on the campaign trail."

"Her win tonight will make national headlines and serve as a deafening rebuke to bigots who continue to try and silence the LGBTQ+ community and trans people in particular."

Roem will join openly gay State

see **DECISION 2023,** *page 4*

Transgender Day of Remembrance 2023

From Tran Resistance website

Saturday Nov 18,
12:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Jackson Mann Community Center, 500 Cambridge St, Allston.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of Rita Hester, a pioneering transgender woman and advocate from Allston. Her life not only mattered but inspired a local

see **REMEMBRANCE,** *page 7*

"Fame is a hollow trophy. No matter who you are, you can only eat one pastrami sandwich at a time."

— Wise words from Barbra Streisand.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo by lifescript, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Rosendall

Continued from page 1

scrap of good news that came along.

For example, The Advocate recently had a headline, "Vatican Rules Transgender Catholics and Babies of Same-Sex Couples Can Be Baptized in the Church." That is welcome as far as it goes, but feels too little and too late.

Though brought up in the Catholic Church, I managed to get through much of my life as a gay man outside its good graces. How grateful do they expect me to be for their baby steps of tolerance? How long is one expected to wait wretchedly in the cold before being welcomed into the feast?

Happily, I am on a more solid footing with my family. Thanksgiving dinner will be at my youngest sister's house. I suppose it is a blessing that the Republican voters in the family will be at a different gathering. I love them all, mind you, but who needs an argument over whether America should invade Mexico, elect a demented dictator wannabe, or whether Nikki Haley was right to call Vivek Ramaswamy "scum" at a recent debate?

I suppose we could say things like, "Hey turncoat, please pass the stuffing," but that hardly sounds familial. Besides, my plate at Thanksgiving is so full to start with that I barely have room for pie, much less seconds of anything. That's something to be grateful for: a day when overeating is considered a sign of patriotism, so no one will fault my dietary choices.

On the other hand, I could warm to a discussion of whether Sen. Tim Scott will drop girlfriend Mindy now that he has suspended his presidential campaign. But beards are useful in Washington; maybe she'll settle for being a member of the senatorial wives club.

Would this be a bad time to mention that the Justice Department has investigated a high-end brothel network with politicians as customers? Personally, I think we should let them off as long as they didn't spill national secrets, charge it as a work-related expense, or demonize others for indulgences they themselves were enjoying. Otherwise, hey, we all get lonely.

I am not especially grateful that fashion critic Vanessa Friedman of The New York Times saw fit to describe Ivanka Trump arriving at her father's civil fraud trial "in a navy wool coat and navy pantsuit, a black leather tote clutched in one hand, tiny pearl studs in her ears and with her blond hair falling in soft waves around her face, the picture of gentle, pulled-together professionalism and good will."

Really? Ivanka certainly should be able to dress nicely after she and husband Jared used their positions to grift fortunes from the Chinese and Saudis.

Nor am I grateful that Speaker "MAGA Mike" Johnson, one of God's answers to those who asked how much worse it could get, flew to Paris for a right-wing confab a week before a looming government shutdown.

I am thankful, however, for the journalists digging up the goods (or bads) on Johnson's far-right record; for the prosecutors holding Donald Trump accountable for his various crimes; for my fellow citizens defending women's reproductive rights; for Democrats stepping up to challenge right-wing officeholders (for example, Colin Allred running against Sen. Ted Cruz in Texas, and Lucas Kunce running against Sen. Josh Hawley in Missouri).

I am not thankful that the world is on fire. It seems that hate is built into our DNA. The people I am most grateful for this Thanksgiving are those who dedicate themselves to overcoming the destructive proclivity of humankind. Here's to the peacemakers, who persevere despite crossfire from all sides.

Amid the tumult, may you find sustenance for body and soul.

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

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Board rejects replacing an LGBTQ sports bar in the South End with a marijuana shop

Courtesy Adam Gaffin
www.universalhub.com

On October 31, the Zoning Board of Appeal today rejected a plan to replace Cathedral Station, 1222 Washington St. in the South End, with a marijuana dispensary.

But that doesn't necessarily mean one of the city's few remaining LGBTQ-focused bars will stay open. Michael Ross, attorney for would-be dispensary operator Nike John, said his client didn't force Cathedral Station out; its owner wanted to retire. In chat for the Zoom hearing, though, Jeremy Cattani, who has worked at the bar since 2014, called that "misrepresentation" and said it's a rumor that John and Ross made up.

Following a long hearing, the board initially voted 4-3 to approve John's proposed Boston Garden dispensary, but zoning votes require at least five votes, so the vote lost. On a second motion, the board then voted 5-2 to reject her plans without prejudice - which means she can re-apply for the conditional-use permit she needs within a year. Or she could sue in Suffolk Superior Court to seek to "annul" the vote.

Board members Norm Stembridge, Katie Whewell, Jeanne Pinado and Dave Collins initially voted in favor, while Gio Valencia, David Aiken and Chairwoman Sherry Dong voted against. On the second vote, to deny, Stembridge, Valencia, Collins, Aiken and Dong voted yes, Whewell and Pinado voted no.

The hearing brought opposition from both elected officials and residents on several fronts: The pot shop would replace a beloved "safe space" for the LGBTQ community at a time when it is increasingly under attack across the country, it would provide too much of an enticement for all the kids who congregate at Peters Park and all the addicts at Mass and Cass and Pine Street Inn, and would put both kids in nearby daycares and people going to the SOWA market at risk.

"The loss of another center of our culture would be tragic," state Rep. John Moran (D-9th), who is gay, said. He called the location, across Washington Street from the park and near several schools and daycare centers "very troubling" and added that what really "sickens me" is what he said was evidence that John wants to get approval for the shop and then sell it for as much as $5 million. "That is not the intent of the equity program," he said, referring to the preferential treatment John gets in the process for marijuana licenses because she is Black.

Through aides, City Councilors Ed Flynn (South End, South Boston, Chinatown, downtown) and Michael Flaherty (at large) also opposed the dispensary request.

Residents voiced similar concerns.

Raul Gonzalez, who lives on West Dedham Street, echoed Moran's comments and noted all the LGBTQ venues that have closed in recent years, including Machine in the Fenway and the Eagle in the South End.

South End resident and developer Mario Nicosia, who helped coin the name SOWA, said that in his six decades of going to community meetings, "I've never seen the neighborhood so in sync against something" as it is against the dispensary.

"Even the dogs at Peters Park took a vote and they don't want this," he said.

One resident, Jennifer Grella of Harrison Avenue, who has lived in the neighborhood since 1988, did support the proposal, saying John had proven to be a serious business operator who would clean up the property and surrounding block. She said the concerns about schools and Mass and Cass, when there's already another dispensary even closer to that area, are nothing but "NIMBYism at its worse."

Ross said it's hardly his client's fault that the bar's owner wants to retire - or her responsibility to figure out what to do about that - and that the ward and precinct in which the dispensary would sit overwhelmingly voted in favor of recreational marijuana use in 2016. Of course, he said, the 20 people who opposed it would show up at a hearing on his client's proposal - although the mayor's South End liaison told the board that her office had gotten 100 letters opposed to the proposal and just 7 in favor.

Ross continued that Washington Street is a heavily trafficked road with four travel lanes and two parking lanes, so it's not like it's easy to get to the park and there have been no problems at a dispensary about a half mile from Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. He denied his client is about to sell out, noting she has operated a dispensary in Charlestown for 13 months now. He also denied rumors that she wants to open a cafe where customers could toke away, saying that those don't even exist yet, but that she would be amenable to a condition in zoning approval not letting her open such an addition.

Pinato moved to approve the proposal, saying that while she understands the opposition, the board typically defers to the Boston Cannabis Board, which approved the proposal earlier this year. Whewell said she was voting strictly on zoning issues and she saw no reasons that would merit denying a conditional-use permit. Valencia, however, after noting the board has approved most cannabis applications, said he could not support this one because of the location across the street from a park and the concerns about the loss of Cathedral Station.

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www.governmentjobs.com/careers/andoverma

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HH	80% AMI
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M-F	11/3 to 11/19/2023	9 AM - 5 PM	Fenway CDC Office, 66 Westland Ave., Boston, MA 02115
Tuesday	11/7/2023	5 PM - 7 PM	Our Lady's Guild House, 20 Charlesgate West, Boston, MA 02215
Saturday	11/12/2023	11 AM - 1 PM	Our Lady's Guild House, 20 Charlesgate West, Boston, MA 02215

To request an online application or to have one sent by email visit **https://bit.ly/OLGHAppRequest**

We will be holding informational meetings on **November 13, 2023 at 10 AM at 110 Peterborough Street, Boston, MA 02215. Join virtually**, too, through the following link: **www.LiveOLGH.com**

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Decision 2023

Continued from page 1

Senator Adam Ebbin, who has served in the Virginia Senate for 11 years, after serving eight years in the House. Ebbin won re-election handily, 78 percent to 22 percent.

In Mississippi, openly gay candidate Fabian Nelson won his primary in August and was unopposed Tuesday for the state House of Representatives. Nelson becomes the first openly LGBTQ state legislator in Mississippi history.

And in Miami Beach, which includes the popular LGBTQ destination South Beach, openly gay Michael Gongora has won the right to face another top contender in a runoff to become mayor of Miami Beach. Gongora has been serving on the Miami Beach City Commission. The runoff will take place November 21.

Portland, Maine, openly gay mayoral candidate Andrew Zarro appeared Tuesday night to have forced the race's leading candidate into a ranked choice tabulation of the votes. Zarro has been serving on the Portland City Council. Results are not expected before Wednesday morning.

Overall, openly LGBTQ candidates won 12 out of 14 statewide races and seven of 12 mayoral races (with an additional two races going to runoff and one race (Cromwell, Connecticut) not yet called. Out of at least 141 LGBTQ candidates running for various local seats in 21 states, data so far indicates 73 won, 14 lost, 3 advance to a run-off, and 51 races are yet to be determined.

Other important elections

Mainstream media outlets had identified a few races they considered especially interesting in the off-year voting. One of the biggest focuses was the Virginia legislature, where it appeared Republicans might take control of both chambers and give the Republican governor a rubber stamp for abortion restrictions, book bans, and parental control of school curricula. But that didn't happen. Instead, Democrats held onto control of both chambers.

There were two gubernatorial races Tuesday night, races that many commentators thought might gauge support for former Republican President Donald Trump. One of the biggest of those contests was in Kentucky, where the Republican challenger to incumbent Democrat Andy Beshear, had the support of Trump and U.S. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell. Governor Beshear has not been shy about expressing support for transgender people and, this year, he vetoed a bill that sought to deny gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth. In 2020, he was the first sitting Kentucky governor to attend an LGBTQ rally at the capitol.

In Mississippi, it appeared incumbent Republican Governor Tate Reeves would survive a fierce challenge from Democrat Brandon Presley. Reeves has taken a highly visible position *against* transgender females participating in girls sports. He also tried to make transgender athletes and transition surgery issues by claiming, apparently without evidence, that the Democrat, Presley, did support those issues. Presley's position was actually somewhat guarded: He said he trusts parents to make the best decision for their children about gender-affirming and other medical care.

Ohio voters overturn ban on abortions

Only one state had an abortion measure on its ballot November 7: Ohio. Issue 1, or the "Right to Make Reproductive Decisions Including Abortion Initiative," sought to amend the state constitution to ensure that individuals had the right to make reproductive decisions –including abortion, fertility treatment, and contraception— for themselves.

Last year, seven states passed ballot measures that upheld the right to choose abortion. Next year, during the presidential election, 13 states will have similar measures are on the ballot.

Alabama mayor outed, commits suicide

And in the somewhat obscure reaches of a small town in Alabama, an incumbent mayor killed himself November 3, just two days after a private internet news service reported the mayor, who was also a Baptist preacher, had a "secret life" as a "transgender woman." Fred Copeland, 49, was married to a woman and had three children. As mayor for seven years, he dubbed his little town of Smiths Station as "Mayberry 2023." But on November 1, an internet site called 1819news ran a story with photos that appear to be of Copeland dressed as a woman. According to local news reports, local police authorities were asked to do a wellness check on Copeland and finally found driving around. When they pulled him over, Copeland got ouwt of the car, pulled a gun, and shot himself.

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HERE ARE THE NEW ENGLAND LGBTQ+ CANDIDATES WHO WON THEIR ELECTIONS:

MASSACHUSETTS, PER THE LGBTQ+ VICTORY FUND

Ashley Shade, North Adams City Council
Patrick Kavey, Pittsfield City Council, Ward 5
Liz Breadon, Boston City Councilor, District 9
Christian Dumas, Mayor of Marlborough
Paul Ruseau, Medford School Committee
Peter Marchetti, Mayor of Pittsfield
Dina Lampiasi, Pittsfield City Council, Ward 6
Benjamin Harn, Newburyport City Council, Ward 4
Andrew Fitch, North Adams City Council

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Matthew Gerding, Mayor of Somersworth
Robbie Warach, Dover City Council lWard 2

CONNECTICUT

Caroline Smith, New Haven City Council, Ward 9
James Demetriades, Mayor of Cromwell
Barry Walters, West Hartford Town Council
Chad Cardillo, Meriden City Council At-Large
Karen Martin, East Haven Town Council, District 2
Jeffrey Litke, Naugatuck School Board

Monroe

Continued from page 1

their community and society, reflecting AARP's vision and mission.

"I am beyond honored and grateful for this recognition. I feel we are not put on this earth to exist but to be of service to others and our community," Charles told me.

When AARP Massachusetts was looking to honor the state's top volunteer, Paul's and Charles's names rose to the top. They have made a difference in the lives around them, sharing their knowledge, experience, talent, and skills to enrich the lives of our community.

"Paul and Charles have channeled the many negative experiences they endured into positive, healing, and inspiring volunteer work and leadership," Barrie Atkin of Swampscott wrote who nominated the guys. "Their signature work co-founding LGBTQ+ Elders of Color in 2013 in Massachusetts was innovative, unusual, and courageous. No such organization existed at that time. In collaboration with the LGBTQ+ Aging Project, they identified the need and turned the need into a reality. They didn't just co-found the organization along with others. Their continued leadership inspires many others to be involved."

People of color are underrepresented and underserved regarding aging services and resources. Paul and Charles understand the intersectional challenges and complexities of growing older as African-American gay men.

LGBTQ+ senior communities with multiple identities confront multiple challenges. Their organization, LGBTQ+ Elders of Color, fills the gap Massachusetts LGBTQ+ organizations and local, state, and federal public health systems missed. Outreach is essential because the challenges facing African American LGBTQ+ seniors intensify with age.

According to Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (Sage) and Movement Advancement Project (MAP), approximately one-third of LGBTQ+ elders live at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, with 40 percent African Americans. These seniors often feel more vulnerable, invisible, and isolated by retirement. Historical and ongoing discrimination have created significant lifelong challenges for this demographic group: limited wealth and savings, low wages, few labor protections, housing instability, food insecurity, stigma, immigration, HIV status, and higher mortality from treatable conditions. All have contributed to a lack of well-being and lowered quality of life.

By 2050, POC seniors will comprise over 40 percent of the elderly population, with approximately 3 million being LGBTQ+. With this projection, specific cultural and linguistic competence training and nondiscrimination policies are needed to support a rapidly growing demographic group that has experienced a lifetime of health, educational, and economic disparities.

In 2018, Massachusetts legislators passed "An Act Relative to LGBT Awareness Training for Aging Services Providers," mandating LGBTQ+ cultural awareness training for all state-funded and licensed aging service providers within 12 months of employment. These challenges can only be remedied by policymakers and aggressive programs invested in expanding care and services specifically targeted to these racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse communities.

These Dapper Dans, as I fondly dubbed them, unique and invaluable resources and services for its LGBTQ+ elders of color reverberate throughout the Bay State. Since childhood, their indefatigable spirit to give back to their community was ingrained in them.

"Since relocating to Massachusetts on Cape Cod in 2002 and our subsequent retirement, we have enriched our lives with stronger connections to the community through outreach and advocacy," Paul told the audience at the award ceremony. "To some, retirement may mean the opportunity to relax and take it easy. To us, retirement has provided an opportunity to find new ways to help others,"

Without the foundation Paul and Charles have laid for us LGBTQ+ elders of color, we wouldn't be the vibrant, visible, and growing community that we are.

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Mombian

Continued from page 1

Kyle Lukoff, illustrated by Nadia Alam (Orchard Books).

Two books celebrate the many types of families, including queer ones: "A Family Like Ours," by Alice Lee and Frank Murphy, illustrated by Kayla Harren (Sleeping Bear Press); and "Love without Bounds: An IntersectionAllies Book about Families," by Carolyn Choi, Chelsea Johnson, and LaToya Council, illustrated by Ashley Seil Smith (Dottir Press).

Other family and relationship topics are explored in "Our Wish for You: A Story About Open Adoption," by Dano Moreno, illustrated by Ryan O'Rourke (Charlesbridge), with two dads and a birth mother; "Dad and Daddy's Big Big Family," by Seamus Kirst, illustrated by Karen Bunting (Magination Press), in which a girl with two dads learns about her extended family; and "Grandad's Pride," by Harry Woodgate (Little Bee), the standalone follow-up to the Stonewall Award-winning "Grandad's Camper"; and "The Wishing Flower," by A.J. Irving, illustrated by Kip Alizadeh (Knopf), about a girl with a crush on another girl.

Gender creative boys star wishing_flower in "The Fairest in the Land," by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Joshua Heinsz (Abrams), and "The Good Hair Day," by Christian Trimmer, illustrated by J Yang (Abrams); gender creative girls star in "Flower Girl," by Amy Bloom, illustrated by Jameela Wahlgren (Norton); and "Molly's Tuxedo," by Vicki Johnson, illustrated by Gillian Reid (Little Bee).

Gender identity takes center stage in "They, He, She: Words for You and Me" from Mudpuppy, illustrated by Andy Passchier, a bright board book; "Not He Or She, I'm Me," by A.M. Wild, illustrated by Kah Yangni (Henry Holt), about a day in the life of a nonbinary child; "I Can Be...Me!" by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Maya Gonzalez, a celebration of self; and "The Gender and Infinity Book for Kids," by Maya Gonzalez (Reflection Press), a holistic look at gender through the infinity of nature.

Biographies include "Little Black Lives Matter," by Khodi Dill, illustrated by Chelsea Charles (Triangle Square), a board book with queer lives among many others; "Dare to Question: Carrie Chapman Catt's Voice for the Vote," by Jasmine A. Stirling, illustrated by Udayana Lugo (Union Square); "Good Books for Bad Children: The Genius of Ursula Nordstrom," by Beth Kephar, illustrated by Chloe Bristol (Anne Schwartz), about the pioneering (and queer) children's book editor; "Door by Door: How Sarah McBride Became America's First Openly Transgender Senator," by Meeg Pincus, illustrated by Meridth McKean Gimbel (Crown); "No Horses in the House! The Audacious Life of Artist Rosa Bonheur," by Mireille Messier, illustrated by Anna Bron (Orca); "Unstoppable: How Bayard Rustin Organized the 1963 March on Washington," by Michael G. Long, illustrated by Bea Jackson; "Desert Queen,"

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 7*

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billy masters

Continued from page 1

You all know that **Barbra Streisand's** book is out. And I know you know this, because the majority of emails I received last week are about it. Since the book is only slightly longer than "War and Peace", and the audiobook clocks in at 48 hours, I haven't made my way through the whole thing. But I know you'll want some details that you won't read elsewhere. So I skipped to the chapter about her attempt at filming **Larry Kramer's** "The Normal Heart". At first, she was going to direct and star in it. But there were numerous issues with Larry's script, the casting, the money, and the studio. After numerous roadblocks, Streisand stepped down as director in frustration. Kramer asked **George C. Wolfe** to direct the film, in which Barbra would still act (alongside, we now learn, Ben Stiller). But the difficulties continued. Kramer criticized Barbra publicly, and the project eventually fell apart.

But Barbra never gave up on "The Normal Heart", and actually put together a cast that would include **Mark Ruffalo, Bradley Cooper and Julia Roberts**. The sticking point was that nobody would pay Larry the one million dollars he wanted for his script. While this was going on, Julia was making "Eat Pray Love" directed by **Ryan Murphy**. Barbra explains, "The next thing I hear is that Ryan has written Larry a check for one million dollars and will be directing the movie for HBO with Julia Roberts and Mark Ruffalo. Well, he didn't get **Bradley Cooper** — then I would have had to kill myself!" Throughout this chapter, Barbra speaks at length about her son **Jason Gould**, "Jason really wanted me to make this movie, and I was looking forward to working with him on the film in some capacity. It meant so much to me just as his mother." After critiquing Murphy's version, she summed up by saying: "I'll always regret I didn't get to make 'The Normal Heart'. It's my loss. But I'm glad Larry finally got it made."

Barbra also talks about many films she was asked to be in. One surprise was "Splash" — the **Ron Howard** movie with **Daryl Hannah** as a mermaid. Picture the climactic scene, where **Tom Hanks** finds Barbra with a mermaid tail in the bathtub! I would have paid anything to hear him say, "So don't just lay there, honey — swim something."

Dateline: Smiths Station, Alabama. **F.L. Copeland**, known to his friends as "Bubba", had been mayor of the small hamlet since 2016. Prior to that, he was on the city's Board of Education for 11 years. He was also pastor of the First Baptist Church in Phenix City, Alabama. He's also a proud **Trump** supporter. On November 1st, a website published a social media post of Bubba dressed as a woman, using the name **Brittini Blaire Summerlin**, and describing himself as "a transgender curvy girl". When asked for a comment, Bubba said this was simply a "hobby for getting rid of stress". After the story broke, he addressed his congregation. "Yes, I have taken pictures with my wife in the privacy of our home in an attempt at humor because I know I'm not a handsome man nor a beautiful woman, either." The outlet that ran the initial report issued a follow—up. They learned that Copeland had written some trans fiction categorized as both "violent" and "disturbing". After that report came out, the police responded to a "welfare check" and spotted Copeland driving down a road. They pulled him over, he exited the vehicle holding a handgun and killed himself.

In news that would have been music to Bubba's ears, the Catholic Church has ruled that transgender people can be baptized. This has been largely due to the work of **Pope Francis**, who has fought the church hierarchy in terms of LGBT rights. The new doctrine states that trans people can be baptized "as long as there is no risk of causing a public scandal or disorientation among the faithful." So I guess you can't film it for "RuPaul's Drag Race"! They also allow people in same—sex relationships to be witnesses in a Catholic wedding — as long as they aren't the ones getting married, naturally. Whether the child of a same—sex couple may be baptized appears to still be in question.

Bad news for **Belinda Carlisle**. For the third time, she will have to postpone an Australian tour. I'll let her tell you what happened. "As you know, I'm supposed to be going to Australia next week for a tour that's been rescheduled three times. And I had an accident and damaged my knee and I have to have sort of emergency surgery tomorrow. So this is all going to prevent me from going to Australia this time. I'm embarrassed and I'm really, really, really sorry. And I'm hoping that it gets rescheduled for 2024...if you'll have me." Get well soon, Babe.

Meanwhile, the ageless **Lulu** is preparing to celebrate 60 years in showbiz (and her 75th birthday) with five special shows in the UK — culminating in a special evening at the London Palladium on April 17th. And, yes, I think it goes without saying that the champagne will be flowing.

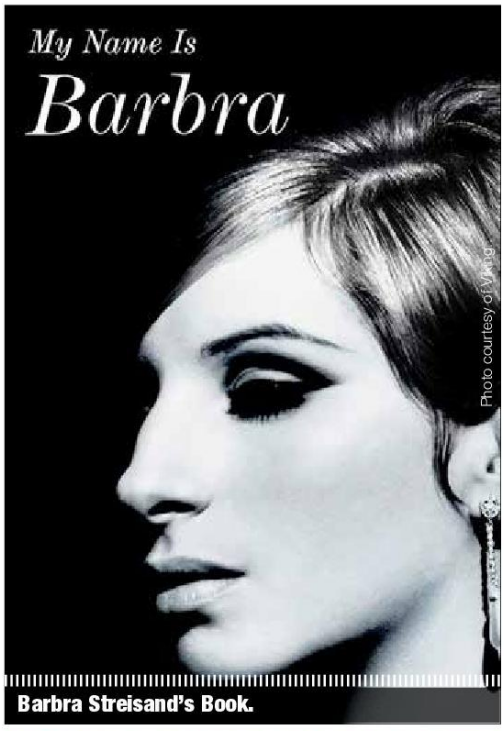
I know I occasionally come off as someone who's seen it all and isn't fazed by much. But last week, I was watching "Dancing in the Stars" (as Barbara Walters liked to call it) and there was a moment in the group dance when the pairs interchanged. Suddenly we had four same—sex partnerships: **Barry Williams and Sasha, Jason Mraz and Pasha, Alyson Hannigan and Peta, Ariana Madix and Daniella.** I have to confess, my little gay boy heart skipped a bit of a beat. What's most interesting is that none of the dancers nor the judges mentioned it — as if it were no big deal. And I thought to myself...what a message they're sending out.

Same—sex dancing partners have been commonplace for much longer on the UK's "Strictly Come Dancing". This season brings us **Layton Williams** — known in the UK from many TV and West End productions. His partner is the delicious **Nikita Kuzmin** — who is straight, but we're not holding that against him (he also gets blonder every week). Their dances have routinely been showstoppers. It's certainly been a banner season for Nikita, who got to open a recent show paired with fellow pro, the stunning **Vito Coppola**, in a mesmerizing same—sex love story set to "Something Just Like This". It brought down the house. Kuzmin was born in Ukraine and raised in Italy (where he trained alongside Coppola). When his parents showed up to see him in the studio, he got choked up. "In the end, I'm just a kid from Ukraine who's just living his dream." Clips can be found on our website.

All this chit—chat about "Strictly" was sparked by an "Ask Billy" question worthy of answering in print. Jared from London asks: *"Are you watching 'Strictly'? What do you think of Bobby? I'm sure you saw his package on the Halloween episode. It's made all the papers here."*

Now you've got my attention, and I tuned in. **Bobby Brazier** is a 20—year—old, mop—topped, lanky lad best known for his role on the UK soap "EastEnders". He is the son of a contestant on the 2003 edition of "Big Brother UK"...so he was basically born into reality television. In the Halloween episode, his pants weren't extraordinarily tight. But as the dance went on, a large, bulbous mass worked its way against his left thigh. It was so distracting that **Shirley Ballas** (Mark's mum) seemed speechless. Even the typically unflappable Craig Revel Horwood appeared somewhat flapped. He kept his comments to the dancing, but added, "Is there anything that bottom of yours can't do?" According to all the media reports, the BBC was flooded with phone calls. Most were in favor of the bouncing bulge, while there were a few dissenters. You can check it out for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

When we're topping the leaderboard with someone's bottom, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. I should mention that Brazier danced to "Come On—a My House". But not the **Rosemary Clooney** version. This rendition was sung by **Della Reese**. Who knew? For more useless bits and bobs, check out www.BillyMasters.com — the site that'll give you more than candy. If you have a question, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I plan my next trip to the UK. So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Barbra Streisand's Book.

Photo courtesy of BBC.

Layton Williams & Nikita Kuzmin

Photo via bobbybrazier, Instagram.

Bobby Brazier

Mombian

Continued from page 5

by Jyoti Rajan Gopal, illustrated by Svabhu Kohli (Levine Querido), about Rajasthani drag performer Queen Harish; "To See Clearly: A Portrait of David Hockney," by Evan Turk (Harry N. Abrams); "Jovita Wore Pants," by Aida Salazar, illustrated by Molly Mendoza (Scholastic), about gender creative Mexican revolutionary Jovita Valdovinos (also available in Spanish); and "Hope for Ryan White," by Dano Moreno, illustrated by Hannah Abbo (Albert Whitman).

Community and social issues come to the fore in "The Wishing Machine," by Jonathan Hillman, illustrated by Nadia Alam (Simon & Schuster), about a nonbinary child and their mom facing housing insecurity but finding strength in each other; and "Can We Please Give the Police Department to the Grandmothers?" by Junauda Petrus, illustrated by Kristen Uroda (Dutton), which envisions police salaries given to grandmothers who cruise the streets in "badass" vintage automobiles, offering help and hope. Two of the "grandmas" have beards, although their identities are unspecified.

For pure fun, try: "You Need to Chill!" by Juno Dawson, illustrated by Laura Hughes (Sourcebooks Jabberwocky), in which a girl wittily answers peers who wonder what happened to her brother, now in her true identity as a trans girl; "Oh No, the Aunts are Here," by Adam Rex, illustrated by Lian Cho (Chronicle), about a bevy of aunts (including one with a masculine appearance and unspecified identity), ready to overwhelm with hugs and gifts; "Princess Pru and the Ogre on the Hill," by Maureen Fergus, illustrated by Danesh Mohiuddin (Owlkids), about a girl with two dads who befriends a fearsome ogre; "Pirate Glitterbeard," by Larissa and Oksanna Crawley (Rebel Mountain Press), about a gender creative pirate and his equally fabulous crew; "Cinderella and a Mouse Called Fred," by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky (Anne Schwartz), a reimagining that changes the gender of Cinderella's beloved; and "Cinda Meets Ella: A Fairly Queer Tale," by Wallace West (Little, Brown), another retelling, where a mysterious, nonbinary rider catches Cinda's eye.

Finally, "David Atherton's Baking Book for Kids: Delicious Recipes for Budding Bakers," by gay Great British Bake Off winner Atherton, illustrated by Stonewall Award-winning Harry Woodgate (Candlewick), has tasty recipes and includes images of gender creative and gender ambiguous children on its pages.

For longer reviews and books I didn't have space for here (including middle grade titles and ones for grown-ups), visit my Database of LGBTQ Family Books (mombian.com/database).

May you give thoughtfully and receive graciously, and may all your holidays be full of love.

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 1,400+ LGBTQ family books.

Remembrance

Continued from page 1

and international movement and day of mourning for the transgender people we have lost in our community.

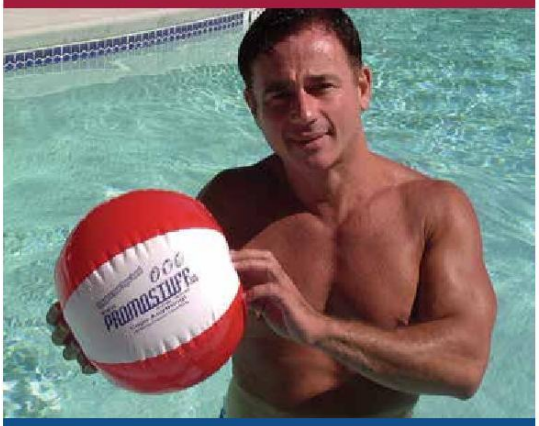
Join Trans Resistance MA, Maassacshuetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC), Transgender Emergency Fund (TEF), The Network/La Red, the Office of the Mayor for LGBTQ Affairs, and the Equity Fund of the Boston Foundation for this year's TDOR.

The event will include speeches by local activists, performances, and time to gather in community and share a meal.

This event will have ASL interpreters and mental health counselors for support.

Donations collected at the event will go to the Transgender Emergency Fund of MA and Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program, as we believe basic needs are the first way to support trans people in Boston.

HOT IDEAS



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