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Maura Healey Shatters Lavender Ceiling



Gubernatorial candidate and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey addresses the audience at a watch party, Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2022, in Boston. (Source: Chris Christo/The Boston Herald via AP)

By Steve LeBlanc, with additional reporting by Bay Windows Staff

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey won the Democratic nomination in the Massachusetts gubernatorial race on Tuesday night. If Maura Healey wins in the November 8 general election, she would become the first out lesbian governor in U.S. his-

tory, and the first lesbian or gay Massachusetts governor, and first elected female governor. Healey made history in 2014 when she became the nation's first out LGBTQ state attorney general.

Healey will face Geoff Diehl, a former state representative endorsed by former President Donald Trump, has

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Worcester Pride

www.prideworcester.org

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

PRIDE CELEBRATION AT NEW ENGLAND BOTANIC GARDEN

4:00 PM - 8:30 PM

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, 11 French Drive, Boylston

BEYOND ACCEPTANCE QUEER YOUTH PROM (11-17)

SWAGLY Youth Group presents Beyond Acceptance Queer Youth Prom at The White Room.

Beyond Acceptance Queer Youth

Prom will be a queer youth dance for ages 11—17 years old. The prom is a part of the Worcester Pride week of events. This event seeks to provide a brave space to celebrate all queer identities and embrace queer youth in a supportive and loving community pride event.

4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

The White Room, 138 Green Street, Worcester

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Cruising Through Parenthood

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer



Photo of Regnbogagatan (Rainbow Street) in Reykjavik, Iceland. Photo by Dana Rudolph.

My spouse Helen and I recently returned from a trip to Iceland with Olivia Travel, a company catering to LGBTQ women. We'd been on two trips with them before, the last when our son was six months old. He's now in his second year of college. I've therefore been reflecting on lessons about family and parenting that I've learned from each of those voyages.

The earlier cruise was a big step. For the first six months of our son's life, either Helen or I was with him during his every waking hour, even when we would rather have been

asleep. Tired as we were, though, the idea of ever being apart from him felt strange. Still, we knew we needed a break, and my parents were more than willing to watch their only grandchild for a week. They were happy, he was spoiled, and we got to unwind and come back refreshed. I also think it helped him start learning how to be in different environments and to be apart from us (in the care of other responsible adults) without worry—healthy skills to develop.

see MOMBIAN, page 7



Saving democracy from 'bothsidesism'

Truth is on one side, sedition and lies on the other

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

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy provoked mirth on September 1, in a prebutter of President Biden's speech on threats to democracy, with a botched attempt to sound Lincoln-esque: "The electric cord of liberty still sparks in our hearts." Call it his Thomas

Edison Paine moment. McCarthy was like Shemar Moore in the Paycom "unnecessary action hero" commercial, minus the talent, sex appeal, and a point.

Biden spoke with conviction and clarity about what is at stake in this country. He nailed the MAGA Repub-

licans for insisting that either they win or they were cheated.

The president spoke outside Philadelphia's Independence Hall. He condemned white supremacists. On MS-

see ROSENDALL, page 5



The Geopolitics of being Brittany Griner

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

WNBA All-Star Brittany Griner was arrested a week before Russia invaded Ukraine. On February 17, the Russian Federal Customs Service detained Griner at Sheremetyevo International Airport for allegedly

transporting cannabis-derived vape cartridges in her luggage, and was charged with drug smuggling.

Griner said she had no recollection of packing the cartridges and told the judge, "I made an honest mistake,

and I hope that in your ruling that it doesn't end my life here." As a strategy, Grinner pleaded guilty to the charges to expedite her trial, hoping it would

see MONROE, page 4



"You've touched our hearts and minds to be our authentic self, to use our voices, to dream big. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially for women and women of color. Most of all, thank you for sharing your journey with every single one of us. We love you, God bless you, and guess what? You're just beginning!"

—Billie Jean King to Serena Williams at the US Open.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Worcester Pride

Continued from page 1

SAFE HOMES DANCE OF THE DECADES (18-23)

Safe Homes presents Safe Homes Dance of the Decades at Open Sky Community Services.

In partnership with SWAGLY's Beyond Acceptance Youth Prom, Safe Homes will be offering a compatible program for participants ages 18-23.

This event is free of charge for folks!

Come dance the night away dressed to impress with fashion inspo from your favorite decade! Will you groove the night away in groovy 70's wear, or make the Spice Girls jealous with your fabulous 90's fits? Pick a decade of your choosing, and feel free to enter our "Category Is:" contest for the chance to win free prizes.

Also featuring a drag show with a surprise Queen! Snacks and beverages will be provided.

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Open Sky Community Services, 4 Mann Street, Worcester.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

LOVING KINDNESS MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

The HeartWell Institute, 1015 Pleasant Street, Worcester

QUEER AF: ART + FASHION FUNDRAISER (18+)

Love Your Labels presents Queer AF: Art + Fashion Fundraiser at the Palladium.

You Better Worcester, Gurl!—The "Met Gala" of Massachusetts is in Worcester on Friday, Sept. 9.

Queer AF: Art+Fashion is an iconic nightlife event in New England featuring queer+ fashion, music, drag, performance art, and more.

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Palladium, 261 Main Street, Worcester

QUEER AF AFTER PARTY: THE FLOATING DANCE FLOOR (21+)

Love Your Labels presents Queer AF After Party: The Floating Dance Floor at the Palladium.

Our after-party is reviving the 1970s Worcester, queer women-led pop-up disco, The Floating Dance Floor*. The party starts at 10 PM where we'll have a DJ entertaining with disco and more to keep guests on the dance floor past midnight.

All ticket types include access to The Floating Dance Floor for 21+ guests.

*The Floating Dance Floor is an homage to a lesbian-led effort in 1970's Worcester where women created a dance party that would move from place to place around the city. This event was created to provide a more inclusive space for queer women+ in a nightlife scene often prioritizing gay cis-men. This is our 2022 take on that mission: a truly inclusive and celebratory space for all genders, sexual identities, and bodies.

10:00 PM, Palladium, 261 Main Street, Worcester

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

PRIDE WORCESTER FESTIVAL

The Queer Coalition of Greater Worcester presents the 2022 Pride Worcester Festival in Downtown Worcester (50 Franklin Street).

This year's afternoon/evening downtown Pride

festival is on Saturday, September 10 from 2-7 PM at 50 Franklin Street, Worcester, MA. The festival will welcome a variety of LGBTQIA+ artists, makers, and crafters coordinated by Creative Hub Worcester, as well as a stage outside with performances and speakers coordinated by Queer the Scene, a youth activity zone in the JMAC (12-3 PM) coordinated by SWAGLY and Safe Homes, local participating restaurants, and more.

2:00 PM - 7:00 PM, Downtown Worcester, 50 Franklin Street, Worcester

PRIDE T-DANCE (21+)

Dance Away Sound Productions presents Pride T-Dance at Pregamers Sports Bar & Grill.

With Guest DJ Lady Ly

\$15 Cover (21+)

Pregamers Sports Bar & Grill

65 Green Street, Worcester

MB LOUNGE BLOCK PARTY (21+)

MB Lounge presents MB Lounge Block Party. 21+ EVENT

\$15 Cover Charge

7:00 PM

MB Lounge, 40 Grafton Street, Worcester

COMEDY IS A DRAG (21+)

Serenity Jones & Victoria Queen present Comedy is a Drag: Birthday Edition at One Eyed Jack's.

2 Shows: 7 PM & 10 PM

One Eyed Jack's

433 Park Avenue, Worcester

DEITY

Studio X presents Deity at the BrickBox Theater (JMAC Worcester).

An aerial dance revue comprising of local talent and oddities. Immerse yourself in a cirque style event with pole dancing, aerialists, drag & more!

This sultry styled event is intended for a mature audience but all ages are welcomed.

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM

One Eyed Jack's, 433 Park Avenue, Worcester

YOUTH PRIDE MOVIE NIGHT (11-23)

Safe Homes presents Youth Pride Movie Night (11-23) at AIDS Project Worcester.

Come join us for a LGBTQIA+ youth movie night! The movie playing is "The Half of It" (PG13).

This event is for youth ages 11-23

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM

AIDS Project Worcester

165 Southbridge Street, Worcester

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

PRIDE SUNDAY SERVICE

First Baptist Church presents Pride Sunday Service.

First Baptist Church will fill the Sanctuary with song, prayers, praise, and worship of the God who loves and embraces all at our first Pride Festival Worship service. Wear what you're comfortable in—drag and Birkenstocks both welcome!

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

First Baptist Church, 111 Park Avenue, Worcester

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Gays hail Singapore sex-ban repeal, see long way to equality

By Toh Ee Ming and Eileen Ng
Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP)—Singapore’s gay community Monday hailed a plan to decriminalize sex between men as “a triumph of love over fear” but warned there is still a long way to equality and new bans on same-sex unions could entrench discrimination against them.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong caught many by surprise when he announced in his National Day Rally speech Sunday that the government would repeal Section 377A of the Penal Code, a colonial-era law that made sex between men punishable by up to two years in jail.

Since 2007, when Parliament last debated whether to repeal Section 377A, its position was to keep the law but not enforce it. But Lee said societal norms have shifted considerably and many Singaporeans will now accept decriminalization.

Lee, however, vowed the repeal will be limited and not shake Singapore’s traditional family and societal norms including how marriage is defined, what children are taught in schools, what is shown on television and general public conduct.

He said the government will amend the constitution to “safeguard the institution of marriage” and prevent any constitutional challenge to allow same-sex unions.

More than 20 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups—including Pink Dot SG that organizes an annual rally that attracts thousands of supporters—said the repeal was long overdue to show that “state-sanctioned discrimination has no place in Singapore.”

They called it a “hard-won victory, a triumph of love over fear” that will finally enable victims of bullying, rejection and harassment to heal. However, the groups said the repeal was merely “the first step on a long road towards full equality for LGBTQ people” amid other areas of dis-

crimination they face at home, in schools, workplaces, and in housing and health systems.

They expressed disappointment with the government’s plan to introduce further legislation or constitutional amendments to ban same-sex unions that signal LGBTQ people as unequal citizens.

Such a decision will “undermine the secular character of our constitution, codify further discrimination into supreme law and tie the hands of future Parliaments,” they warned.

Religious groups were guarded in their reaction to Lee’s comments, saying the changes mustn’t hinder their religious freedom to articulate views on public morality nor cause any “reverse discrimination” on those who doesn’t support homosexuality.

Christian and Muslim groups said heterosexual marriage must be protected in the constitution before Section 377A is repealed and that there should be no further liberalization of policies.

“We seek the government’s assurance that the religious freedom of churches will be protected as we continue to teach against same-sex sexual acts and highlight such acts,” the National Council of Churches said in a statement. Pastors and church workers must be protected from charges of “hate speech” and not be compelled to adopt solely “LGBTQ-affirming” strategies in their counselling, it said.

The council expressed concerns the repeal could lead to LGBTQ culture expanding and called for redress for Christians who face “reverse discrimination.”

The Alliance of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of Singapore, which represents over 80 local churches, was more blunt, calling it a “an extremely regrettable decision.”

“The decision to remove a moral marker as weighty as S377A signals a rewriting of accept-

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A Quest for Perfection

By Jules Becker
Contributing writer

Dominique Morisseau is a talented playwright as enamored of her native Detroit as the late great August Wilson of his Pittsburgh. She has called her own three-play cycle (Wilson's, of course, ten plays) "The Detroit Project." Like Wilson, Morisseau is significantly concerned with such enduringly troubling issues as racial tension, discrimination, unfair employment, gentrification and deferred dreams. Area theatergoers may remember her strong play "Skeleton Crew" (the third play in the cycle and a 2022 Tony Award nominee) rivetingly staged by the Huntington Theatre. "Paradise Blue", the middle work ("Detroit '67," the first play, as yet unseen by this critic), may not be as thematically focused as auto plant-centered "Skeleton Crew," but a fine Gloucester Stage Company cast is making Morisseau's often poignant dialogue and affecting characters continuously involving.

"Paradise Blue" opens promisingly enough at the appealingly funky late 1940's Paradise Club—kudos to Janie Howland's well-detailed scenic design and Toni Sterling's evocative lighting—in the Black Bottom area of Detroit. Trumpeter Blue means to keep "the only jazz spot in town" open and thriving despite the racism-driven gentrification push of the (unseen) mayor at the expense of the area's blacks. His girlfriend Pumpkin, who cleans the club, gains inspiration as a reflective woman from the poetry of Harlem Renaissance poetess Georgia Douglas Johnson (1880-1966)—especially her 1918 collection "The Heart of a Woman" in which she finds particular validation.

Monroe

Continued from page 1

open dialogue about a possible prisoner exchange and it'd be her get-out-of-jail card.

Also, a guilty plea might give Griner a lesser sentence and avoid retribution from prison guards while detained. Griner's attorneys have filed an appeal for her nine-year sentence as she serves time in a "gulag-like labor camp." Tragically, Brittany has become a geopolitical pawn for both Russia and the U.S., highlighting Putin's ruthlessness and America's hypocrisy. And, her problems are compounded by being a Black queer woman.

Why is Brittany in Russia?

Many have questioned why Griner was in Russia in the first place. But the answer is simple: U.S.'s persistent and systemic gender pay gap affects women in every profession. Griner being in a Russian prison is a direct consequence of the gender-pay disparity, even in professional sports.

Since 2016, Griner has played for the Russian oligarch-funded UMMC Ekaterinburg team. The gender salary gap between the WNBA and NBA players is insulting, forcing female players to compete overseas during the off-season to play in Europe, earning them four to five times their U.S. salaries.

The revenue disparity highlights the following: the lack of money poured into women's basketball, unlike in Russia and other European countries, and female players' dependence on supplemental work rather than compensate these professional athletes appropriately.

Geopolitical pawn

Griner is no stranger to Russian basketball enthusiasts. But the deafening silence from the UMMC Ekaterinburg team is hypocritically revealing on many fronts. And Griner's intersectional identities place Griner in the wrong place at the right time during Putin's war against Ukraine.

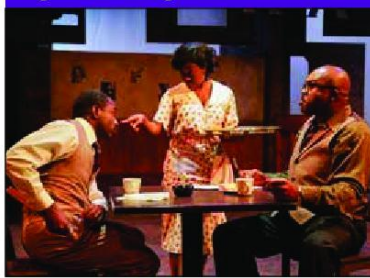
P-Sam, the strong-willed drummer of Blue's band, heartily endorses Pumpkin's independent thinking even though his love for her is unrequited. At the same time, he seeks the solo time that Blue refused to give the quartet's now departed bassist and questions the obstinate trumpeter's seriousness about the band and the club. Pianist Corn, Blue's best friend, observes that people may not be able to afford the club's ticket prices but tries to be a kind of peacemaker between Blue and P-Sam.

That fragile peace receives a serious jolt with the entrance of an alluring woman named Silver, who rents a room above the club. A very self-confident woman with her own agenda, she looks into the possibility of acquiring the Paradise. Still, Silver does encourage Pumpkin to fulfill herself. Complicating that fulfillment are bruises apparently at the hand of Blue and the "demons" plaguing the trumpeter who as a child saw his father kill his mother.

Eventually the play's conflicts reach a fever pitch, but Morisseau opts for an ending that does not seem convincing. By contrast, her "Skeleton Crew" delivers a kind of knockout punch of resolution for its strikingly vulnerable characters. At the same time, the latter play does more with the threat of its plant's foreclosure than "Paradise Blue" does with the perils of gentrification.

Fortunately, co-directors Elise Joyner and Logan Pitts dodge the perils of the play's unresolved second act tensions with satisfying pacing and the contributions of the stellar cast. Destiny Deshuan Washington is commandingly heartfelt and conflicted as Pumpkin. Her affecting declamation of Johnson's pre-feminist poetry will have many audience members searching out the Harlem Renaissance spokeswoman's collections. Durrell Lyons

Paradise Blue, Gloucester Stage,
through September 18. 978-281-4433
or gloucestersstage.com.



Darian Michael Garey, Destiny Deshuan Washington and Dereks Thomas in "Paradise Blue" at Gloucester Stage Company. (Courtesy Jason Grow)

captures Blue's ambition and Alpha male demeanor and does his best with dialogue that needs to do more with the trumpeter's inner torment.

By contrast, Darian Michael Garey has all of P-Sam's understandable rage as well as his tenderness with Pumpkin. Dereks Thomas moves from singular restraint with Blue to telling openness with enticing Silver. Alexandria Danielle King balances Silver's slither with her nonsense candor. A particular highpoint is the unusual mentoring Silver provides Pumpkin about dealing with men—here a dynamic virtuoso turn for King and Washington.

Blue seeks 'love supreme,' a moment of perfect harmony. Morisseau achieves such a moment in "Skeleton Crew" if not in "Paradise Blue." Even so, the superb Gloucester Stage cast members—to borrow from Corn—do play for their souls.

will happen to the goals of reproductive justice, marriage equality, our right to same-gender intimacy, and the fight to combat over 300 anti-LGBTQ+ legislation bills in 28 states this year alone.

Russia likes to exploit tensions of race and racism in America, especially when it can expose America's hypocrisy as a paragon of democracy on the world stage. It's clear that Brittany is wrongly detained in Russia. However, regarding the number of wrongful convictions, the U.S. leads all nations. The U.S. incarcerates Black and brown people at five times the rate of whites. Over 2400 people have been exonerated in the United States since 1989.

Who wins the get-out-of-jail card?

Rev. Al Sharpton has asked Biden to arrange for him and a group of faith leaders to meet with Grinner. Former NBA player Dennis Rodman said he was going to get her. Their hopes have not panned out. Griner, however, is not the only American who's run afoul of Russia's strict drug laws. Last year, Maryland teacher Marc Vogel, 60, was sentenced to 14 years for entering with medical marijuana to treat chronic pain.

In 2018, former Marine Paul Whelan, 52, was sentenced to 16 years on suspicion of spying, and there are others. Is Brittany a good political bargaining chip? Biden needs the black vote for re-election and must uphold his promise to black America. But what will it do for our fraught race relations here?

Moreover, a prisoner swap might encourage more hostage-taking. No trade, Griner might languish in a Russian prison. Griner's imprisonment has highlighted Russia's and America's ongoing power struggle. Also, her marginalized intersectional identities in America—race, class, gender, and sexuality—have highlighted the reason why she's over there in the first place.

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Healey

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won the Republican nomination for Massachusetts governor over businessman Chris Doughty, who was considered the more moderate candidate in the race.

At her victory party Tuesday night before the GOP race was called for Diehl, Healey told cheering supporters that regardless of which candidate emerged as her opponent, "We know he'll be out of touch with the values we stand for." Speaking of both candidates, she added, "They'll bring Trumpism to Massachusetts."

Diehl, the favorite among state Republican Party delegates, has ties to Trump stretching to 2016, when he served as co-chair for Trump's presidential campaign in Massachusetts. Diehl has also opposed COVID-19 protocols and hailed the Supreme Court ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Diehl has come to embrace Trump's false claims that he won the 2020 election. Diehl said last year that he didn't think it was a "stolen elec-

tion" but later said the election was rigged, despite dozens of courts, local officials and Trump's own attorney general saying the vote was legitimate. Doughty, meanwhile, has said he believes President Joe Biden was legitimately elected.

Mayor Annise Parker, President & CEO of LGBTQ Victory Fund, issued the following statement about her win:

"As attorney general, Maura has used the power of the legal system to fight the opioid epidemic, protect our environment, safeguard LGBTQ rights and so much more. She knows how to disrupt the status quo and get real change done on behalf of her constituents. As governor, we are confident she will leverage this experience to help create a more just future for all Massachusetts residents, especially LGBTQ kids who've felt the brunt of anti-LGBTQ attacks this year. Her success tonight is a clear sign that our collective perseverance and grit will ultimately win out over the wave of intolerance sweeping our country."

Currently there are two out LGBTQ governors, Kate Brown in Oregon and Jared Polis in Colorado. Out lesbian Tina Kotek is running for governor in Oregon.

Rosendall

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NBC afterward, presidential historian Michael Beschloss mentioned Lincoln's 1858 "House Divided" speech in which he said, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free." Republicans, meanwhile, objected to Biden having military officers standing behind him, though their Glorious Leader Trump did the same thing.

A heckler with a bullhorn offered a crude underscoring to Biden's speech. One of Biden's best moments was when he acknowledged the heckler and said he was "entitled to be outrageous." This contrasts starkly with Trump, who has encouraged supporters to "beat the crap out of" protesters at his rallies.

The insurrectionists cling to the tribalist belief that for them to be blessed, others must be damned. They play the politics of scarcity and resentment. It's not that they think Trump is virtuous. It's that they regard him as The Anointed One whose sins consequently do not matter. The so-called Christian nationalists would replace the rule of law with theocratic bullying in no way rooted in the Gospel.

As Biden noted, you cannot support insurrection and be a patriot. The American way requires respect for the results of free and fair elections. The will of the voters must not be thwarted by suppression and nullification or by people like Justice Sam Alito who feel entitled to impose a medievalist perspective regardless of its unpopularity.

The threat to our republic is about one faction's presumption more than policy. The problem with Sen. Ted Cruz is that he is an unscrupulous opportunist. Sen. Lindsey Graham is a coward who overcompensates with viciousness. Sen. Ron Johnson thinks rich people like him should run everything.

These people are pretenders. They ignore the wisdom of recently deceased author Barbara Ehrenreich, who wrote, "When someone works for less pay than she can live on ... she has made a great sacrifice for you.... To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else."

Sen. Rand Paul cares no more about the work-

ing poor than his fellow partisans in Mississippi care about the residents of Jackson, whose infrastructure the Republicans who run the state have long neglected because Jackson voters are mostly black Democrats. Paul is interested in the Covid pandemic only as a pretext to push wild conspiracy theories and demonize Dr. Anthony Fauci—America's top epidemiologist, whom George W. Bush awarded a Presidential Medal of Freedom and who now requires a security detail because of death threats Paul has provoked.

The petty motives threatening our freedoms include racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and a desire to exploit and persecute. It is only because transgender people are convenient scapegoats that Florida's tyrannical Governor Ron DeSantis demonizes them.

Republicans, like bank loan officers, prefer giving help to those don't need it—while pretending their own silver spoons are the fruit of rugged individualism. Rather than lift up the downtrodden, they use them to foment fear.

Another obstacle for Democrats trying to govern is the bothsidesism of many in the news media. For example, Chris Licht, the new CEO and chairman at CNN, wants the network to be politically neutral. On August 24, Brian Stelter of CNN quoted Carl Bernstein saying that "the truth is not neutral." The following week, Stelter's colleague John Harwood said, "The core point Joe Biden made about a threat to democracy is true. [As journalists], we're taught not to take sides in honest disagreements between parties. But these are not honest disagreements. The GOP right now is led by a dishonest demagogue." Stelter and Harwood are now gone from CNN.

In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2020, President Biden said, "We will choose hope over fear, facts over fiction, fairness over privilege." This is what he has done. Democrats need to tout their accomplishments for ordinary Americans, reject bothsidesism, and clinch a blue wave in November.

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

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billy masters

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Where were you 25 years ago? I had just moved into my sumptuous Beverly Hills-adjacent abode. And I know this because I moved in the same week ABC debuted “The View”. I also remember when my bed was delivered—the day **Princess Diana** was killed in that car crash. And I know this because I watched the funeral from that vantage point with a certain sexy pharmacist I was dating (I would have done him for the pills alone). What can I say? Funerals make me hot! Remember that the next time you invite me to give a eulogy!

Reports of the passing of the Summer of '22 have been greatly exaggerated. Despite accepting that fall was upon us, I stubbornly needed one last hurrah. Back to Provincetown I went—damn the chill in the air and those elongated shadows. My last official outing was seeing **Steven Brinberg's** “Simply Barbra” at the Provincetown Art House (PtownArtHouse.com). As always, Brinberg is a delight replicating every vocal inflection, tic and nuance of the diva. But he doesn't stop with Streisand—he evokes at least a dozen other luminaries, including **Eartha Kitt**, **Bette Davis**, **Ethel Merman**, **Lena Horne**, **Bea Arthur**, and even the great **Anthony Newley**. A highlight was his tribute to “Hello, Dolly!”, which turned into a duet...and then a trio. You have to see it to believe it. The special guest appearance of crooner **Nicolas King** was just the icing on an already rich cake. Check him out if he comes to your locale—the full schedule is at SimplyBarbra.com.

I was both tickled and humbled by the many people who came up to me after the show to say they're fans of the column or of “Billy Masters LIVE” (we're currently on a hiatus). It really touched me—which also happened later at V&V's underwear party. Come to think of it, I was also tickled there...among other places.

Another way to know the summer is coming to a close is when the U.S. Open takes place. This year's festivities took several bizarre turns—the most staggering being when fans cheered the appearance of **Beyoncé**. Except it wasn't Queen B—it was **Laverne Cox**! Allegedly, people made the mistake because she was wearing a mask. Yeah, and when I have on a mask, I'm often mistaken for **Brad Pitt**!!! The mistaken identities did not end there. Days later, **Dionne Warwick** appeared courtside—and was ID'd by the announcer as **Gladys Knight**! I'm not sure which diva should be more insulted. Feisty Auntie Dionne decided to Tweet about it. “Hi, I'm Gladys Knight...and instead of taking that midnight train to Georgia, I won't walk on by but will say a little prayer for you.”

By the time this column comes out, **Lea Michele** will be hitting Broadway—and perhaps several lesser Ziegfeld Girls! The diva has already reared her perky little head by insisting that “Funny Girl” add a song which was only in the film. Lea will warble “I'd Rather Be Blue” in the first act. Fans (I know you're out there) tell me she's been singing “My Man” in her live shows—and bemoaning that it is not in this revival. I predict it's just a matter of time.

Since many of you have asked, **Varla Jean Merman** is recuperating comfortably. As you'll recall, she had a mishap with a Tic Tac which resulted in major surgery—don't you hate when that happens? We have more details to share. The Merm suffered a complete detachment of her quads at the tendon and fractured her kneecap. While it's easy to knock the old girl over, it's hard to keep the old girl down. After taking a week off, she is returning to finish out the season at Provincetown's Crown & Anchor. “The show must go on! Honestly, I need to laugh now more than anyone at this time...even if I'm in a wheelchair.” Oh, yes, you read right—wheelchair! Dash down to Ptown to see the newly revised “Varla

Jean is Ready To Blow...On Wheels”. I predict these will be shows you'll be able to tell the kids about for years to come. Grab a ticket (if you can) at OnlyAtTheCrown.com.

Like a fungus (and, trust me, this is an apt comparison), **Britney Spears** is suddenly everywhere. First there is that revolting recording, which **Miss Elton** is probably writing off as a charitable contribution. Then there's that voice memo that she released “by mistake”—and later deleted after everyone already saved it. To her credit, Brit sounds remarkably lucid and almost like someone who scored at least triple digits on her SATs. After she declined a sit-down with **Oprah** (so she's smarter than that Markle chick), the British ITV network decided to do their own documentary—and got her estranged sons to talk! **Jayden** said, “I love you a lot. I hope for the best for you. Maybe one day we can sit down like this and talk again.” Britney posted a lengthy response on Instagram. It included this: “My love for my children has no boundaries and it deeply saddens me to know his outcry of saying I wasn't up to his expectations of a mother...and maybe one day we can meet face to face and talk about this openly!!!!” So there!

Jesse Tyler Ferguson just married his “Modern Family” niece **Sarah Hyland**. Well, he didn't marry her—he's still with his dashing hubby, **Justin Mikita**. But Sarah finally married beau **Wells Adams** (from “The Bachelorette”). And her onscreen dad, **Ty Burrell** was slated to officiate. Then, 12 days before the big event, Ty had one of those pesky “family emergencies” and had to cancel. As Jesse describes it, “I was honored to do it. Very happy to understudy Ty Burrell.”

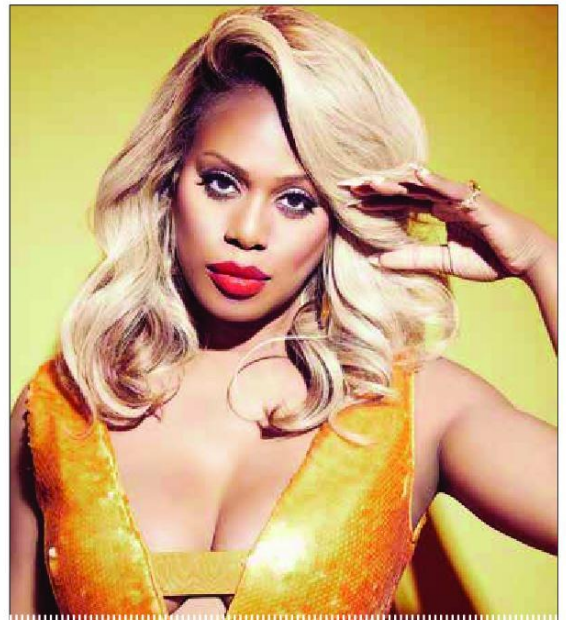
The cast of “My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3” just completed filming in Greece. This time around, **Nia Vardalos** is not only acting, writing, and producing, she's also directing! It is slated to be released next spring.

Obviously the father of the bride will be **John Corbett**. And that's not the only role Corbett is revisiting. He'll turn up in the second season of “And Just Like That...” Whether this will be a major storyline with Aidan rekindling his romance with Carrie or more of a cameo remains to be seen.

Our “Ask Billy” question came from Henry in San Francisco: “I just saw some pics of **Luke Evans** and a guy hotter than him on vacation. Who is he? And is it serious?”

Luke was recently in Ibiza with the very sexy and strapping Spaniard, **Fran Tomas**. But this is not a new relationship—the couple has been together for about a year. And, yes, Fran is unbearably hot—if you like that good-looking, muscular Latin type. Of course, Luke is no slouch in that department. While Fran is a bit buffer, Evans is more ripped—quite an accomplishment for someone a decade older! Fran works in architecture and design, with a background in real estate and construction. And he clearly has lots of free time to globe-trot with the hunky Evans. To see some sexy snaps, check out BillyMasters.com.

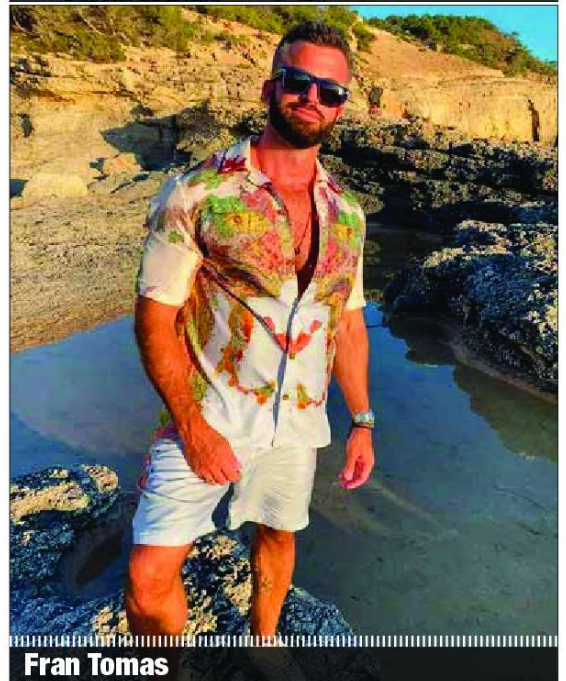
When I'm looking forward to the next celebrity funeral, it's definitely time to end yet another column. With the temperature starting to dip, I'm winging off to Europe. While I would have joined Luke and Fran in Ibiza, I really don't like all that spitting. Instead, I'll start out on an undisclosed Greek Isle, and then off in a former Eastern Bloc land scouting Bel Ami types. In fact, this may be a country that blocks www.BillyMasters.com—the site that's been known to enjoy a foreign tongue or two (typically at the same time). If you'd like me to find you a slot, write to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Stavros and I dry off. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Laverne Cox



Britney Spears



Fran Tomas

Mombian

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The trip also helped Helen and I remind ourselves that our parenting had to be built on a solid relationship between us. While we did have to change some things about our lives when we became parents (it was harder to dash off and travel without some serious planning, for example), we didn't want to completely give up the things we enjoyed doing as individuals or as a couple. We tried to make time for them, even if our parental responsibilities had to come first.

As our son grew older, we found ways of sharing our love of travel with him as well. I heartily recommend early travel with kids, if possible, to get them used to different routines and places, whether it be in a grandparent or other relative's home, a hotel, or a camping tent. Yes, traveling with young ones can be a hassle (with different hassles at different ages), but it offers them invaluable lessons about adaptability, meeting new people, and experiencing different ways of doing things.

We therefore traveled a lot as a family as our son was growing up. Occasionally, he would again stay with my parents while Helen and I went out for a day or an evening, but really, we enjoyed traveling with him so much that all our longer trips were as a trio. Some of them were with other queer families, which offered an immediate sense of community and com-

fort; others were to places full of many types of families—amusement parks and national parks, museums, historic sites, campgrounds, and more, near and far.

Then, suddenly, our son was off at college and Helen and I were on our own once again. Some friends were going on the Olivia cruise and invited us along. We said yes without hesitation.

It was different planning our itinerary around just the two of us and not having to consider what our son would like to do. Not that I resented doing so when he was with us—but there was a certain kind of flexibility now that we were going somewhere as only a duo.

I also hadn't realized how much I'd missed the company of queer women after two years of pandemic isolation. Yes, I am connected with many online, but being on a boat with 300 of them was even more glorious. On this trip, most of the travelers were over 50; our previous cruise (to the Caribbean) had skewed younger, but we were younger then, too. Unsurprisingly, there were other parents (and grandparents) among our current shipmates, and we swapped stories of family creation and child raising. The entertainers on board celebrated our queer lives, made hilarious yet affirming in-jokes, and underscored that despite the many challenges our community still faces, there is also joy and laughter and song.

Even as we reveled in our couple time, however, I found myself thinking about how much our son would enjoy some as-

pects of the trip. Not so much the part about being with a bunch of older queer women (Helen and I are enough for him)—but the sights we saw and the food we ate. I missed his observations about what we encountered and his excitement about exploring new things, and looked forward to showing him our travel photos.

Being a parent means always having part of one's brain dedicated to thinking about one's child(ren), though, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Additionally, having grown kids means the sweet tension of being happy that our kids are making lives for themselves, even as we long for the days of our family adventures. The two are not mutually exclusive, of course, though family times are more often confined to holidays and bound by scheduling complications.

This was the first big trip Helen and I had taken since our son left home, so perhaps I was feeling particularly nostalgic. We were hardly the only ones with grown children on the cruise, though, which was a comfort—and reminded me of just how long we queer families have existed. When our children have flown, we can find community among other parents also tending their rainbow nests—which are never really empty, but full of memories and love.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books, music, and more.

Singapore

Continued from page 3

able sexual relationships, and celebrates homosexuality as being characteristic of a mainstream social environment," it said.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore said the church is not seeking to criminalize the LGBTQ community but to protect the family and marriage and its rights to teach and practice on such topics unhindered.

Singapore's top Islamic leader, Mufti Nazirudin Mohd Nasir, said the repeal

was a "tough balancing act" and steps to preserve traditional values were crucial.

"Even as we hold on to different values, aspirations and orientations, I don't think we should let hate and contempt for differences to win," he told Channel News Asia.

Section 377A was introduced under British colonial rule in the 1930s. Version of the law remain in other former British colonies, including neighboring Malaysia.

But laws have liberalized in recent years in Asia. India's top court decriminalized gay sex in a 2018 ruling. Taiwan became the first Asian government to legalize gay

marriage in 2019, and Thailand recently approved plans allowing same-sex unions.

National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser said the repeal could set the scene for future challenges to the constitution.

"On the surface, it does look like one step forward, two steps backward, but my sense is that the repeal could be seen as a foot in the door, which could pave the way to future challenges to the constitution on the current definition of family and marriage," Tan said.

Ng reported from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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