‘Empire’ cast member alleges homophobic attack in Chicago

By DON BABWIN

CHICAGO (AP) — A cast member on the hit television show “Empire” alleged he was physically attacked by men in Chicago who shouted racial and homophobic slurs, police said Tuesday.

Police did not release the actor’s name but a statement from Fox, which airs “Empire,” identified him as Jussie Smollett, 36. Authorities said they are investigating the alleged attack as a hate crime. Smollett is black and openly gay.

It’s Boston vs. LA

Gay Men’s Chorus
Super Bowl Challenge

Submitted by BGMC

With the New England Patriots and Los Angeles Rams squaring off in the Big Game on February 3, the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus (BGMC) will perform “Please Come to ‘Beat L.A.’” said BGMC Executive Director Craig Coogan.

“This will be a great game between two amazing teams,” said Jonathan Weedman, executive director of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles. “But we’re shipping the musical arrangement for “I Love LA” to Boston today because the Rams are going to win!”

Both the Los Angeles Rams and the New England Patriots are among the National Football League’s most LGBTQ-friendly clubs. In 2014, the Rams drafted openly gay rookie prospect Michael Sam. In 2017, the Patriots signed one of its stars, scrapping the idea of a setback—and completely blew it.

Producers promised the show would go on but it really didn’t. The majority of the dress rehearsal from the night before was broadcast instead of really live. This is the very opposite of the show’s ethic “no day but today.”

The creators were unable to respond to Brennin Hunt’s broken foot, sending thetrer off into the distance to the moon.

Non-live Fox 'Rent' is 'No day but yesterday'

By MARK KENNEDY

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—Fox’s live broadcast of the rock musical “Rent” had a chance to show off the flexibility and work ethic of Broadway in the face of a setback—and completely blew it.

The musical about people living and dying in poverty with AIDS was unable to overcome a simple foot injury to one of its stars, scrapping the idea of going live and relying on prerecorded footage.

Producers promised the show would go on but it really didn’t. The majority of the dress rehearsal from the night before was broadcast instead of really live. This is the very opposite of the show’s ethic “no day but today.”

The creators were unable to respond to Brennin Hunt’s broken foot.

MA moves trans inmate to women's prison

BOSTON (AP)—Massachusetts prisons officials have for the first time moved a transgender inmate from a men’s prison to a women’s prison.

Court filings show that the 54-year-old inmate, who has lived as a woman and received hormone therapy for decades, was transferred in September from MCI-Norfolk to the state women’s prison in Framingham.

The prisoner’s lawyer, Jennifer Levi, tells The Boston Globe that she thinks it’s the first time a transgender inmate anywhere in the U.S. has been moved to a facility that corresponds to her gender identity.

The Department of Correction declined to comment on the case’s specifics, but said it acted in accordance with a new Massachusetts law designed to protect transgender inmates’ rights.

The inmate, whose name wasn’t disclosed, is serving a three- to four-year sentence for a nonviolent drug offense.

"Kevin, you’re not being attacked. You have to acknowledge what went on and acknowledge the pain of other people. That’s all anybody’s asking for. That’s it."

— Terry Crews on Kevin Hart’s assertion that he’s being attacked. As if...

find Billy Masters on page 6!
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24th Annual Taste of the South End
Brings Celebrated Chefs Together for AIDS Action Benefit
Submitted by AIDS Action

AIDS Action announces that tickets are now on sale for the 24th annual Taste of the South End. The South End’s premier food and wine event will take place Tuesday, March 19 at the Cyclorama of the Boston Arts Center. Attendees will enjoy small plate culinary creations from the top chefs in Boston’s favorite “foodies” neighborhood.

The popular event will also feature live cooking demonstrations, a diverse selection of wine, beer, and spirits to taste, and a silent auction.

Taste of the South End is from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Boston Center for the Arts Cyclorama, 539 Tremont Street in Boston. Tickets are $150; VIP admission is $200 and includes a tasting preview beginning at 6 p.m. Proceeds benefit AIDS Action. Tickets are available online: http://tasteofthesouthend.org/attend/

“Taste of the South End is fueled by food and wine lovers throughout Greater Boston who not only get to sample specialties from South End’s talented chefs, but can also ask questions about their favorite dishes,” said Scott Walker of the Taste of South End Host Committee. “The money raised by Taste of the South End supports AIDS Action’s vital work with people living with HIV as well as those who are vulnerable to infection. The average client of AIDS Action has an annual income of less than $10,000 a year, and causes, contributed a $100,000 gift to BAGLY.

The Big Game Challenge follows last fall’s 2018 World Series Challenge between the two choral organizations, which saw the Boston Red Sox defeat the Los Angeles Dodgers. Footage of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles singing “Sweet Caroline” is available here: https://www.facebook.com/BGMC1982/posts/10156833714539122.
Transgender military personnel in limbo over Trump plan

By DAVID CRARY
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—Long term, lawyers and activists battling to ensure that transgender people can serve openly in the U.S. military are convinced they will prevail. Short term, they are braced for anguishing consequences if the Trump administration proceeds with its plan to sharply restrict such service.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 5-4 vote Tuesday, gave the administration the green light to put the policy into effect even as legal challenges continue.

“I’m absolutely optimistic with respect to the long-term prospects,” said Sharon McGowan, legal director of the LGBT rights group Lambda Legal, which is pressing one of the lawsuits. “The question is: How long is the long term?”

McGowan and other activists see parallels between the battle and the 17-year saga involving the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that prohibited gay men and women from serving openly in the armed forces. After prolonged controversy and litigation—as well as the discharge of more than 13,000 military personnel—Congress repealed the Clinton-era policy in 2010, and gay service members were able to serve openly beginning in 2011.

LGBT rights activist Andy Blevins, who served in the Navy from 2007 to 2011, said he underwent three investigations related to “don’t ask” before he was finally discharged on medical grounds. He is now executive director of OutServe-SLDN, which represents LGBT personnel in the military and is engaged in the litigation against the Trump plan.

Blevins grows emotional in describing the “daily struggle” to keep his sexual orientation a secret before repeal of “don’t ask,” yet he suggested that currently serving transgender people face even tougher circumstances. They were told in 2016, in the waning months of the Obama administration, that they would be able to serve openly, then were jolted in 2017 when President Donald Trump tweeted his intention to ban all transgender people from the military.

“They were told it’s OK to be transgender ... then the rug is pulled out from under these dedicated service members,” Blevins said.

Yet he said activists have made major progress in convincing politicians and the public that the Trump plan is based on misinformation and prejudice.

“We have optimism that we’re going to win the war,” he said. “This is just a setback, a speed bump.”

OutServe-SLDN’s legal director, Peter Perkowski, is teaming with Lambda Legal lawyers on one of four lawsuits challenging Trump’s plan.

“Though he shares Blevins’ long-term optimism, he is wary of the outcome if any of the lawsuits reaches the Supreme Court, now with a solidified conservative majority thanks to the addition of Trump appointees Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.”

see MILITARY, page 7

Taste
Continued from page 2

AIDS Action’s services make it possible for many of them to remain healthy while dealing with life’s other challenges.”

“We always look forward to Taste of the South End. Mistral supports Taste every year and in March we’ll bring along our newest restaurant concept, Bar Lyon,” said Mark D’Alessandro, general manager of Mistral. “We look forward to seeing people old and new at Taste of the South End where we’ll enjoy delicious food from the many talented chefs and restaurants in the Boston area while helping raise critical funds for AIDS Action and the battle of wiping out HIV/AIDS forever.”

A partial list of participating eateries includes Bayani Bar + Refuge, Bar Lyon, Bar Mezzana, Boston Chops South End, Brownstone, Dota

Rent
Continued from page 1

even though examples from Broadway abound, including Andy Karl finishing a preview of “Groundhog Day” with the use of a cane in 2017 after tearing his anterior cruciate ligament. He was onstage when the show officially opened just 72 hours later.

The decision Sunday left the “Rent” cast marooned on Stage 16 on the Fox lot in Los Angeles until the finale, a disastrous idea that rightfully incensed anyone who loves live theater. To be honest, even in a rehearsal, the show lacked sustained sparks, despite an overenthusiastic audience.

The rock musical, by Jonathan Larson and inspired by the Giacomo Puccini opera “La Bohème,” celebrates survival among the artists and homeless of New York’s East Village in the early 1990s. Jason Sherwood’s sets were messy, scaffold-heavy spaces with little beauty, except the lovely Christmas tree made of recycled materials. Realistic snow fell, but the musical’s gritty language was excised.

The show shared DNA with the original 1996 Broadway production, including original director Michael Greif and original costume designer Angela Wendt. Original Broadway cast-members including Idina Menzel, Anthony Rapp and Taye Diggs—also showed up for a rollicking reprise of “Seasons of Love,” singing beside their successors, a very nice touch.

Tinaadeh nailed an awesome “Out Tonight” and was a great Mimi Marquez, but Jordan Fisher never seemed overwhelmed by playing Mark Cohen, though he rose to the occasion by the end. Hunt successfully lit live candles during re- seared and showed ability to hit his marks despite his bandaged foot while live but otherwise played his Roger with as much honesty as a husky villain in a Disney Channel teen show.

Brandon Victor Dixon sparkled as Tom Collins, proving again to be a supremely natural live performer. (He was an awesome Judas in “Jesus Christ Superstar Live!” and should be in every live broadcast show from now on, providing they are truly live.) Valentina from “RuPaul’s Drag Race” was a fine Angel Dumott Schunard but often lacked the nuance her doomed role requires.

Vanessa Hudgens deserves credit for just considering the role of Maureen Johnson—and doing the insane, manic “Over the Moon”—but did really well, particularly in the duet “Take Me or Leave Me.” Menzel, who originated the role, has nothing to fear about her legacy but kudos for Hudgens. And Keala Settle helped make the iconic “Seasons of Love” a highlight.

The heartbreaking choral “Will I?” was done with understated beauty—with audience members holding candles—and the big “La Vie Bohème” was a complex, if overly long, success. “Without You” movingly reminded us of the horror of AIDS. Creators clearly wanted to make the AIDS crisis more visceral but they took questionable liberties with the text and that’s not cool at all.

Choreographer Sonya Tayeh’s eclectic touches throughout were welcome (Angel’s death scene was an awesome froggy dream) and Wendt’s designs were flashy and grubby at the same time. (A cute touch was reflecting Anthony Rapp’s original multicolored scarf with Fisher’s striped sweater.)

The production is part of broadcast TV’s ongoing fascination with theater musicals, which kicked off in 2013 with NBC’s “The Sound of Music Live!” and includes such entries like “The Wiz Live!” and Fox’s “Grease Live!”

Their fate seemed to be in danger following the poorly rated 2017 production of “A Christmas Story Live!” but last Easter’s telecast of “Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert” was critically acclaimed and seemed to stem the ratings slide. But being live is not just important to this endeavor. It is at its very foundation—and “Rent” failed the test.

Break a leg, indeed.

Mark Kennedy is at http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits

Empire
Continued from page 1

According to a police statement, the actor was walking near the Chicago River downtown around 2 a.m. Tuesday when he was approached by two men who shouted at him, struck him in the face and poured an “unknown substance” on him before one of them wrapped a rope around his neck.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said that when officers first came in contact with Smollett, he still had a rope around his neck. While being interviewed by detectives, Guglielmi said Smollett told them that the attackers yelled he was in “MAGA country,” an apparent reference to the Trump campaign’s “Make America Great Again” slogan that some critics of the president have decried as racist and discriminatory.

The police spokesman added that the two men were wearing masks. Investigators have not found any surveillance video or witnesses from which they can put together a description of the offenders, he said.

Smollett was able to take himself to Northwestern Memorial Hospital. He was last reported in good condition.

Guglielmi also said the FBI is investigating a threatening letter targeting Smollett that was sent to the Fox studio in Chicago last week.

The hourlong drama “Empire” follows an African-American family as they navigate the ups and downs of the record industry. Jamal Lyon, Smollett’s character, is the gay, middle son of Empire Entertainment founder Lucious Lyon and Cookie Lyon, played by Terrence Howard and Taraji P. Henson, respectively.

Twentieth Century Fox Television and Fox Entertainment released a statement Tuesday in support of Smollett. “The entire studio, network and production stands united in the face of any despicable act of violence,” the statement read.

“Empire” co-creator Lee Daniels also voiced his support for Smollett in an Instagram video.

“You didn’t deserve, nor anybody deserves, to have a noose put around your neck,” Daniels said.

“You are better than that, we are better than that, America is better than that.”

California Sen. Kamala Harris, a 2020 Democratic presidential hopeful, knows Smollett personally and called the attack “outrageous” and “awful.”

“He is one of the kindest, most gentle human beings I’ve ever met,” Harris said Tuesday, adding that she’s still learning more details about the incident.

Smollett has been active in LBGTQ issues and he released his debut album, “Sum of My Music,” last year.

“Empire” is shot in Chicago and a Fox spokesman said the program is currently in production.

Associated Press writer Elana Schor contributed to this report from Washington.
Transgender people are in every facet of life— even prison.

Too often, however, because of physical and sexual assaults, and being housed in facilities according to their birth sex and not their gender identity, these inmates are not only serving time for their crimes, but they are also trying to survive their time while imprisoned.

Jane Doe, a 53-year-old transwoman of color, is trying to survive her time while serving time. And, it has not been easy for her. However, to her transgender inmates, Jane Doe has hit the jackpot. She just recently won her lawsuit against the Massachusetts Department of Correction to have her moved from the men’s prison, MCI-Norfolk to the state women’s prison, MCI-Framingham. Jane Doe has received hormone therapy for nearly 4 decades and has lived as a female since a teenager. However, when Jane Doe reported to prison in October 2016, she was told she’d be sent to MCI-Norfolk until she had genital surgery. Consequently, Jane Doe has had to endure transmisogynistic taunts, mocks of being a “wannabe woman” by both inmates and correctional officers. She has been humiliated while being forced to live, eat, sleep, shower and use the bathroom with male inmates. She had been strip-searched and exposed to men on a regular basis. For example, Jane Doe recalled an incident where “male guards forced her to stand, cuffed and naked for 30 minutes, in front of the open door to her cell, exposing her body to at least a dozen male prisoners who gawked and made crude sexual remarks about her breasts.”

In 2017, Jane Doe sued the state. The lawsuit proved that the Massachusetts Department of Correction discriminated against Jane Doe because she is transgender, violating of equal protection of the law as stated in the Fourteenth Amendment, and violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by refusing to relocate Jane Doe to a women’s prison, a vital part of her treatment for gender dysphoria.

Until 2018, when Governor Baker signed into law a new housing policy for transgender inmates which would enable them to choose which facility to be incarcerated in according to their gender identity, many states, Massachusetts included, have placed inmates in prison facilities according to their anatomy at birth. This insensitive act has put many transgender inmates in harm’s way. Hospitals caretakers, for example, were often confused as to where to send these patients after being discharged, many of whom were sent to hospitals for being both physically and sexually assaulted.

Before Baker’s bill last April allowing transgender inmates to choose their housing facilities, healthcare practitioners worried about their patients’ safety. Many have regularly reached out to me for answers and/or assistance.

“I am wondering if you might have any insight into a question....do you know how Massachusetts defines gender of transgendered inmates? If an individual is arrested and jailed while awaiting arraignment and is undergoing transition, are they jailed according to genitalia or by their identifying orientation?”

I know it is a huge question, but I was blindsided when caring for a patient who was assaulted while at Nashua St Jail. Patient was born male, transitioning to female. Has had facial feminization and breast surgery. However, due to having a penis is jailed with male inmates. And shares cell with a male. Her assault was by a male prisoner. After medical treatment, released in custody.

Alienated and isolated, transwomen like Jane Doe are often barred from forming close relationships with their fellow inmates and the correctional staff. This gives me pause, as I considered where middle age falls in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Growing up in the 1960s and ‘70s, my classmates and I watched the older Boomers have all the fun we couldn’t, and shake up our society through their participation in the civil rights movement, the protests against the Vietnam War, and Woodstock, where college students were grooving to the music while my prepun- cent friends and I could only listen to the album, tittering at the dirty words and wondering what we missed.

By the time I graduated from high school in the mid-1970s, Vietnam was over, at least in terms of America’s involvement, a failed experiment. We tipped into the ‘me decade’ and my classmates and I were right with them, focusing on getting high and then moving into high-powered careers, or at least a comfortable lifestyle. The biggest protest I saw during my college experience was when the Northwestern University administration said that they were going to raise our tuition to the staggering sum of $5,000 a year, or about $23,000 in today’s dollars.

Years, and then decades went by while I wasn’t paying attention. I remember the “greed is good” 1980’s, when some of my students at Boston University’s School of Management cited Gordon Gecko, the Donald Trumpish character from the movie “Wall Street” as her role model. While I cycled through a series of relatively low-paying jobs—special education teacher, career counselor, sign language interpreter, and semi-employed writer, my peers were fast-tracking, moving up their corporate ladders, buying houses, having kids. I didn’t have particularly high-status jobs, and I wasn’t getting rich. But I knew that as the Stones sang back in the ‘60s, time was still on my side.

Fast-forward 30 years and it is those kids, the Millennials, born roughly between 1981 and 2000, who have become the new Yuppies with their iPhones, their Snapchat and Instagram accounts, their penchant for text messaging, and their inability to talk on the phone. So, where does that leave me, leave us?

In 2016, the Pew Research Center cited Census Bureau projections, which predict that Millennials born between 1981 and 1996 (“Pew’s definition of the Millennial generation”) will outnumber Boomers sometime in 2019, as more young immigrants come into the country and the oldest Boomers, now past 70, continue to die off. The survivors, I suspect, are determined to stay active, vital, and not get old in a society that both fears and denies the final act. My generation believed, behaved, hoped that we could avoid the fate of our Depression-era parents, that we would be immortal, immune from the ravages of age.

But Father Time gives each of us our allotted share, and more of those ‘60s trendsetters I watched from the sidelines are checking out, no longer the focus of my peers, who are fast-tracking, moving up their corporate ladders, buying houses, having kids. I didn’t have part

There’s Hope in Heartland

By Jules Becker

Could “The Diary of Anne Frank” serve as a kind of unusual primer for learning English in a country as war-torn as Afghanistan? American foreign aid worker and teacher Getee thinks so in the affecting national new play network rolling world premiere "Heartland."

In Gabriel Jason Dean’s heartfelt combination of memory play and push-pull drama of personal conflict, the hope and peace-centered diary becomes a subtle metaphor for dialogue and understanding between East and West. Afghan refugee Nazrullah recalls the late Getee’s classroom lessons in English and enlightenment on his arrival at the Omaha home of her adoptive father Harold Banks with her copies of "The Diary."

At the same time, University of Nebraska comparative literature and Afghan studies professor Banks reaches a wrenching war of words with Nazrullah about a United States-funded textbook plan (an actual 1986 University of Nebraska-Omaha project sponsored by the US Agency for International Development) ostensibly meant to help Afghan citizens but now regarded as harmful to them.

Language, love and loss factor vividly in Dean’s haunting play, staged with captivating intimacy by New Repertory Theatre in the Black Box Theatre at the Mosesian Center for the Arts.

As Nazrullah recalls in rich flashback scenes to Harold, Getee was using the diary along with a dictionary to teach English at the Afghan girls’ school where she was killed during an attack by the Taliban. She even gave Nazrullah—with whom she was falling in love—his own copy of the diary and the dictionary.

With the invaluable assistance of translator Humara Ghilzal, Dean gives the remembered language learning great immediacy by having Nazrullah make significant use of the Afghan Persian language called Dari. Dari words sometimes join English ones in a reflection of the love that was growing between Getee and Nazrullah. Poet Nazrullah intriguingly alludes to 13th century poet and Sufi Afghan poet-mystic Rumi, who was believed by many researchers to have had an intense relationship with his beloved teacher Shams.

There is also a curious recollection about Getee and Harold eating at a Golden Buddha restaurant at Christmas time, (at the risk of stereotyping) something often done by Jews (and clearly Banks is not identified as Christian or Muslim).

Clearly the three are characters (Getee in several flashbacks) in search of acceptance, common language and shared perspective.

This attempt at linguistic respect between Getee, Nazrullah and the (unseen) schoolgirls was sabotaged by the attack and American complicity. In a revelation of responsibility with affinity to the father’s guilt about the manufacture of munitions that resulted in the death of a World War II-fighting son in Arthur Miller’s "All My Sons," Banks agonizes about his assistance in the creation of the unprecedented anti-Soviet and pro-Jihad textbooks that clearly encouraged the deadly actions of the Taliban. Will Nazrullah and Banks arrive at a peaceful moment of truth? Dean seems hopeful but purposely ambiguous here.

Still, “Heartland” has enough feeling for the most demanding theatergoer. Director Bridget Kathleen O’Leary captures the fire and complexity of each character. Ken Baltin has Harold’s profound world weariness and vulnerability as well as his undying fury vis-à-vis the world. Caitlin Nasema Cassidy finds all of the personality and dynamism that clearly drew Nazrullah to her. Shawn K. Jain catches Nazrullah’s arresting attitude and his contrasting pathos.

High points include the striking word exchanges between Cassidy and Jain and Baltin’s touching inner conflict in the late going. Afsoon Pajoufar sharply evokes the dominant atmospheric setting with handsome carpets.

Anne Frank wrote with great optimism about humanity despite her own situation. Dean may question the rightness of such hope, but New Rep’s heart-rich “Heartland” gives theatergoers welcome food for thought about friendship and love.

New York enacts law to ban transgender discrimination

By DAVID KLEPPER

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—New York state added gender identity and gender expression to the state’s anti-discrimination law Friday, making it illegal to deny people a job, housing, education or public accommodations because they are transgender.

Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the measure into law in Manhattan at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Center. He also signed legislation prohibiting conversion therapy for minors, in which a therapist tries to change a young person’s sexual orientation.

Both bills passed last week after being blocked for years in the state Senate by Republican lawmakers. That changed when Democrats won control of the chamber in November.

The anti-discrimination bill adds gender identity and gender expression to the existing law banning discrimination based on gender, age, religion, race or sexual orientation.

“This, my friends, is New York at its best,” Cuomo said to an audience of supporters as he prepared to sign the measure.

Cuomo issued an executive order in 2015 adding gender identity to the state’s anti-discrimination rules. Supporters wanted the change made in statute, since Cuomo’s executive order could be rescinded by a future governor while the entire Legislature must vote to repeal a statute.

“These laws will literally save lives, and their passage would not have been possible without the tireless work of advocates and allies across New York over the last decade,” said Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign.

Cuomo had also used his executive authority to prohibit insurers from covering any therapy involving conversion therapy for minors. The new statute goes further by fully outlawing it for young people. The practice has already been condemned by leading psychiatric and psychological associations.

New York is the 15th state to ban conversion
Bryan Singer

Dina Lohan

Ruth Bader Ginsberg

Billy Masters

Continued from page 1

In about two weeks, your beloved Billy will turn 50. Yes, I know what you’re thinking: “Only 50? It seems as if he’s been around forever!” That’s true—when I started this column, gay publications were flourishing. Now, well, the sweet smell of death is in the air. Perhaps that’s why I’m pondering my mortality. But there could be a deeper reason stemming from my time as a student at the prestigious American Academy of Dramatic Arts in NYC. Before all those “Law & Order” shows, “Unsolved Mysteries” employed scores of actors in NYC—including many of my classmates. Most were cast as corpses in dramatic reenactments, and I wanted in. Despite numerous submissions, I never even got an audition and developed a complex. Could it be that nobody in New York City wanted to see me dead? I got my answer a few years later when an ex considered taking out a hit on me—but that’s neither hither nor yon. The point is, “Unsolved Mysteries” is poised for a reboot courtesy of Netflix. So I once again live in hope of being a victim of a violent crime. But the way things are going, I may simply die of old age.

Here’s an unsolved mystery—why does Fox News want to kill off our divas? When Aretha died, they ran a photo of Patti LaBelle. During a live telecast of “Fox and Friends” last week, they ran a graphic of Ruth Bader Ginsburg with her year of birth (1933) and a purported year of death as 2019. Wishful thinking, Fox! Host Steve Doocy later said, “A technical error in the control room triggered a graphic of Ruth Bader Ginsburg with a date on it. She...uh, we don’t wanna make it seem, anything other than that was a mistake. That was an accident. We believe she is still at home recovering from surgery.” Yet someone has the finished graphic ready in the control room...just in case. BTW, the Ruth Bader Ginsburg documentary got an Oscar nomination. HA!

It was both a good and bad week for Queen—the band. The film “Bohemian Rhapsody” garnered five Oscar nominations. But once again, issues surfaced regarding Bryan Singer—who ultimately directed about 99.9 percent of the flick. The renewed interest was courtesy of a lengthy piece in “The Atlantic” which, according to Singer, “rehashed claims from bogus lawsuits filed by a disreputable cast of individuals willing to lie for money or attention. And it is no surprise that, with ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ being an award-winning hit, this homophobic smear piece has been conveniently timed to take advantage of its success.” Singer’s lawyer says that the auteur “categorically denies ever having sex with, or a preference for, underage men.” What I found amusing is that the article in question was commissioned by “Esquire”...but they refused to run it after it had been fact-checked!

I always believe people are innocent until proven guilty—unless I don’t like them, in which case facts are completely irrelevant. Apparently, facts aren’t important to lots of people out there. Someone posted on Brian May’s Instagram account that he should unfollow Singer. May responded, “You need to look after your own business and stop telling me what to do. And you need to learn to respect the fact that a man or woman is innocent until proven guilty.” Users on social media came down on the Queen guitarist for defending an alleged sexual predator. This led May to issue an apology. He said, in part, “I am mortified to discover the effect my words produced. I had no idea that saying someone was innocent until proven guilty could be interpreted as ‘defending’ Bryan Singer. I had absolutely no intention of doing that. I guess I must be naïve, because also it has never occurred to me that ‘following’ a person on Instagram could be interpreted as approving of that person. The only reason I followed Bryan Singer was that we were working with him on a project. That situation came to an end when Mr. Singer was removed during the shooting of the film, but I suppose unfollowing him never occurred to me as a necessity. Now, because of this misunderstanding, I have unfollowed.”

I am not a devotee of “Big Brother” but, I must confess, I got hooked when my pals Marissa Jaret Winokur and Ross Mathews competed on “Celebrity Big Brother” last year. When I saw this year’s crop of “celebrities”, I knew I’d tune in. After week one, here are my thoughts. First, in what other group would Ryan Lochte be considered “the brains”? I was perplexed when he kept talking about wanting to evict Diana. Who the hell is Diana? Turns out, he meant Dina—as in Lohan! Then Ryan formed a ride-or-die alliance with our own Jonathan Bennett—who ultimately took the fall for Lochte’s bad decisions. But here’s the most important thing I learned—who knew Bennett has a severe issue with flatulence? That’s the real value of these shows. Sitting at home, you think you’d want to be Bennett’s boyfriend. But I bet after one night of him farting away in bed, you’d be done! The nightly “After
Singapore says American leaked 14,200 HIV records

By ANNABELLE LIANG
Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP)—Singapore’s health ministry accused an American on Monday of stealing and leaking the records of 14,200 people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, before January 2013.

It said Mikhy K. Farrera Brochez recently put the official records of 5,400 Singaporeans and 8,800 foreigners online. These included HIV test results, names, identification numbers, phone numbers, addresses and other health information, it said.

“The president of the United States is my commander in chief. I do my job to the best of my ability every single day and will do that as long as I’m able to,” she said.

Meanwhile, Perkowski said, transgender people seeking to enlist are frustrated by legal uncertainties, while currently serving trans personnel are worried about their job security.

“There’s a certain segment of the court that’s kind of hostile to our issues in the LGBTQ community,” Perkowski said. “Beyond that, I don’t make any predictions.”

Among those active-duty trans service members is Megan Winters, 30, a plaintiff in the Lambda-Outserve lawsuit who has been in the military almost six years. She formerly served with the ministry’s National Public Health Unit from March 2012 to May 2013, had access to the confidential information, it added.

She has a lot to say... so do her guests

WEEKDAYS
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with Sue O'Connell

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THE TAKE
WITH SUE O'CONNELL

SHE HAS A LOT TO SAY... SO DO HER GUESTS

WEEKDAYS @7 & 8 PM

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"They're telling Katie, you're unfit to die for this country," McGowan said. "I can't think of a more offensive thing to say to someone willing to put their life on the line."

For LGBT rights leaders, Trump’s proposed ban is only one of several attacks on transgender Americans. They also cite a Justice Department memo concluding that civil rights laws don’t protect transgender people from workplace discrimination and the scrapping of Obama-era guidance encouraging school officials to let transgender students use bathrooms of their choice.
therapy for minors. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity.

GLAAD announces nominees for 30th annual media awards

PARK CITY, Utah (AP)—GLAAD is honoring video games for the first time during its 30th annual GLAAD Media Awards.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer advocacy group Friday announced 151 nominees in 27 categories for what the group says are fair, accurate and inclusive representations of LGBTQ people and issues.

GLAAD says it added the video game category partly to “leverage the gaming community to grow LGBTQ acceptance.” The nominees are: Assassin’s Creed: Odyssey, The Elder Scrolls Online: Summerset, Guild Wars 2: Path of Fire, Pillars of Eternity II: Deadlight, and The Sims Mobile.

GLAAD removed “Bohemian Rhapsody” from consideration after an article in The Atlantic alleged predatory behavior by director Bryan Singer. Singer has denied the claims.

The award ceremonies take place March 28 in Los Angeles and May 4 in New York.

Psychotherapist challenges Maryland’s conversion therapy ban

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP)—A Virginia-based psychotherapist is suing to overturn Maryland’s ban on conversion therapy for minors, saying it prevents him from taking clients with an “unwanted same-sex attraction.”

The Baltimore Sun reports Christopher Doyle filed a federal lawsuit Friday, arguing the ban adopted last year violates his rights, as well as clients’ rights “to prioritize their religious and moral values.”

The American Psychological Association opposes therapy seeking to change sexual orientation, saying it doesn’t work and can cause harm.

Meagan Simonaire is bisexual and made headlines when the then-delegate opposed her state’s same-sex adoption and marriage laws and denied treatment for the medical needs of her family.

The exemption was needed because a regulation from President Barack Obama’s administration prevents publicly licensed and funded foster care agencies from serving specific religions.

The waiver issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will allow Greenville’s Miracle Hill Ministries to continue as a state-supported foster care agency.

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The waiver issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will allow Greenville’s Miracle Hill Ministries to continue as a state-supported foster care agency.

Children’s Rights. The group has successfully sued South Carolina over its foster care system for placing too many children in institutions, taking children too far away from their biological families and denying treatment for the medical needs of foster children.

McMaster has said he would have asked for a waiver for a Jewish or Muslim organization because he said the issue isn’t Christianity but the constitutional protection of religion.

Austin police investigating attack on couple as hate crime

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Police in Austin say they’ve opened a hate-crime investigation into a weekend attack that resulted in a gay couple being hospitalized.

Investigators are checking surveillance video in the downtown area to identify a group of men they say beat Spencer Deehring and Tristan Perry early Saturday after the couple left a nightclub.

Deehring says the two were holding hands when a passing man made a derogatory comment. The two responded and Deehring says up to five men then attacked them.

He says he sustained a concussion and lacerations and that Perry suffered internal bleeding, a concussion and a broken nose.

Police say no suspects have yet been identified.

West Virginia city to add LGBTQ to list of protected groups

BECKLEY, WV. (AP)—Another West Virginia city has voted to add “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to its list of protected minorities.

The Register-Herald reports the Beckley Common Council voted 4-2 Tuesday to add LGBTQ discrimination protections to the city’s code.

Mayor Rob Rappold asked the city council in November to consider an ordinance prohibiting housing and employment discrimination against those who identify as LGBTQ. A similar measure was proposed in 2014 and tabled amid community opposition.

Councilwoman Janine Bullock opposed the measure Tuesday and motioned for the council to consider allowing religious business owners and employers to be exempt from the policy. Churches already are exempt.

City attorney Bill File said Bullock’s motion needed to be seconded for the council to consider it. No one seconded the motion.


Los Angeles group buys gay resort in Oklahoma City

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—An Oklahoma City hotel that bills itself as the largest gay resort in the Southwest has new out-of-state owners. Twenty states and the District of Columbia have laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity.

A federal judge granted a 30-day timeout Thursday for negotiations between the American Civil Liberties Union and Attorney General Dana Nessel.

During the fall campaign, Nessel told The Associated Press there’s “no viable defense” to a 2015 law signed by then-Gov. Rick Snyder. The law says faith-based groups can refuse to provide certain services if they conflict with their beliefs and still get tax dollars.

Nessel, who is a lesbian, said the only purpose is discrimination.

Groups such as Catholic Charities and Bethany Christian Services are paid by the state to place children from troubled families with new families.

South Carolina group can deny gay couples as foster parents

By JEFFREY COLLINS

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—The federal government agreed Wednesday to allow federally funded foster care agencies in South Carolina to deny services to same-sex or non-Christian couples.

The waiver issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will allow Greenville’s Miracle Hill Ministries to continue as a state-supported foster care agency.

As part of the waiver’s requirements, any family that Miracle Hill does not allow to take care of foster children must be referred to other agencies or the state Department of Social Services.

The exemption was needed because a regulation from President Barack Obama’s administration prevents publicly licensed and funded foster care agencies from serving specific religions.

The waiver request said Miracle Hill Ministries is responsible for up to 15 percent of foster care placements in the state.

As Americans, our fundamental right to practice religion, regardless of our faith, will not be in jeopardy under this administration,” McMaster said in a statement.

Gay rights groups and non-Christian religious groups opposed the waiver, saying it would cut down on the number of people willing to be foster parents and allows public money to take away rights.

“Let’s call this decision what it is: state-sanctioned and government-funded discrimination,” said Christina Wilson Remlin, lead lawyer of Children’s Rights. The group has successfully sued South Carolina over its foster care system for placing too many children in institutions, taking children too far away from their biological families and denying treatment for the medical needs of foster children.

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Pope seeks to end stigma of AIDS with visit to church home

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JUAN ZAMORANO Associated Press

PANAMA CITY (AP)—Pope Francis is wrapping up his first trip to Central America with a final World Youth Day Mass and a visit to a church-run home for people living with AIDS.

Francis’ meeting Sunday with HIV-positive residents of the Casa Hogar El Buen Samaritano is likely to send a strong message in Panama, where the virus carries a stigma.

Many had spent the night there after Francis celebrated a vigil Saturday night, the culmination of a busy day that included a luncheon with 10 young pilgrims representing each of the continents. The Vatican described the luncheon as familiar and festive, and the young people said they were surprised at Francis’ informality and interest in their questions.

Brenda Noriega, a Mexican-born youth minister from San Bernardino, California, said she told Francis that the sex abuse scandal in the United States was a “crisis right now we cannot avoid talking about.” She said Francis called abuse a “horrible crime” and assured her that the church was committed to supporting victims.

She said Francis also stressed the need for prayer, noting that he sent U.S. bishops on a retreat with his own preacher earlier this month ahead of his big summit on abuse prevention in February at the Vatican.

“For me as a youth minister, that means a lot,” Noriega told reporters after the luncheon. “Youth ministers, we have been with people who have been angry but sometimes we forget about prayer. We react too easy and too fast. So I think what His Holiness is telling us and the church is to first pray, build community and not forget about accompanying.”

It was the first time the abuse scandal has come up publicly during Francis’ four-day visit to Panama. The abuse scandal hasn’t erupted publicly in Central America in the same way it has in the U.S., where the Catholic hierarchy is facing a crisis in confidence over its decades-long failures to protect young people from priests who rape and molest children.

During the luncheon, held on the campus of Panama City’s main seminary, the guests peppered Francis with questions.

Palestinian pilgrim Dana Salah said she asked Francis about the flight of Christians from the lands of Jesus’ birth. She said the pope assured her “Palestine will always remain the land of Jesus.”

Emilda Santo Montezuma, an indigenous Panamanian, said she spoke to Francis about the environment and the rights of indigenous peoples—two issues particularly dear to Francis’ heart which will be the focus of a meeting of Amazonian bishops at the Vatican later this year.

Francis’ support, she said, would embolden indigenous people to fight for their rights.

“It fills me with a lot of strength and to say to young people that we can do a lot, and more than we have done,” she told reporters.

Greek bishop convicted over comments attacking gays

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—A Greek court has convicted a prominent Orthodox Church official of violating laws against racism and abusing his office over an anti-gay blog posting.

Amvrossios, Bishop of Kalavryta and Aigialeia in the southern Peloponnese region, received a seven-month sentence, suspended for three years.

Amvrossios urged readers in his 2015 posting to "spit upon" homosexuals, adding: "They are not human beings, they are rejects of nature."

The three-judge court in the southern town of Aigio unanimously found against the bishop, who is one of the most conservative in the powerful Church of Greece. A lower court had acquitted him, but the case was appealed.

Lawyer Kleio Papandoleon, representing a group of citizens seeking legal action against the bishop, hailed Monday’s ruling, saying it set limits to "inflammatory and racist speech."
Masters
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Dark” edition of the show frequently finds the celebs playing endless hours of poker. When Ryan described Jonathan’s hand as a “possible straight”, Bennett quipped, “Not since college”. Bada-bing!
The long-discussed stage musical based on the film “Magic Mike” is inching closer to a reality. And I’m sure it’s just happenstance that this show will make its world premiere in my native Boston—it’s slated to debut at the gorgeous Colonial Theatre on November 30, 2019. “Magic Mike: The Musical” is being written by Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey, who wrote the Broadway musical “Next to Normal”. It’s now been revealed that the show will focus on the background of the characters—how they became the people we saw in the first “Magic Mike” flick. Channing Tatum explains: “The idea that seven years later a Pulitzer Prize-winning creative team would be making a full-fledged musical prequel is definitive proof that God loves strippers. I couldn’t be more excited about the next chapter in the ‘Magic Mike’ story.” So, lemme get this straight—there’s a new musical being developed about how young guys got into stripping? Could someone see if Bryan Singer is available to direct? There’s been lots of buzz about Michael Jackson. First was news of “Don’t Stop ‘Til You Get Enough”, a stage musical based on his life which will debut at the Nederlander Theatre in Chicago on October 29th. Then there’s the new documentary which premiered at Sundance. “Leaving Neverland” clocks in at four hours and shines a light on the accusations of Jackson sexually abusing young boys. There are two main subjects. James Safechuck says that Jackson often gave him jewelry in return for “engaging in sexual acts”—one of which was a wedding ring he was given during a “mock wedding”?: Choreographer Wade Robson says that Jackson once told him, “You and I were brought together by God”—and then tried to anally penetrate him when he was 14! Striking back, the Jackson camp points out that both Robson and Safechuck previously testified that Michael never did anything inappropriate. Since then, both filed unsuccessful lawsuits against the estate. Ultimately, the major star was the show itself; and the production. Set on a sprawling soundstage, the camera work integrated the live audience seamlessly. And there were little touches I appreciated—including a laugh at the expense of Mark’s original sweater. While the cast was uniformly adequate for a TV adaption miked within an inch of its life, I’ll focus on the positives and send kudos out to two people. First, the fabulous Valentina as Angel. The role was performed spectacularly, even if the singing was undesirably weak. The all-around MVP (including vocals) was Brandon Victor Dixon as Tom Collins. In all in, I expected nothing less—or, for that matter, more.

Could it be that a star of stage, (small) screen, and song has had just a wee too much plastic surgery? And on one so young. Alas, for some people, it’s perfection or nothing at all. While the body of work is flawless in that cloned way, the face seems somewhat frozen. Below the belt…well, the first cut was definitely not the deepest.

When we’re being a little snippy, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. Yes, we kicked off this column with a blatant reminder of Billy Masters’ birthday—February 13th. But last week I was celebrating the birth of the diva of all divas, my Play Mama, Jenifer Lewis. I’ll tell you all about her show next week. In the meantime, be sure to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that’s just a little wicked. And if you’ve got a question, dash it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before someone pays to see me stiffer than usual! Until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.

Monroe
Continued from page 4

tody of sheriff’s dept, back to Nashua Street,” the healthcare worker wrote to me.

Now, if this were a victim of domestic violence, I would have discussed safety with her. However, when I approached it in that manner “are you safe returning to your situation?” I was met with states of incredulosity by the guards. I was “assured,” the person with whom “the subject had a disagreement” was moved to another unit and would no longer be in contact. They refused to comment on whether “the subject” (never using pronoun “she”) would be celled with another male.

Patient added “of course I will, no one cares about my safety.”

Hopefully, with the new housing policy for transgender inmates in Massachusetts, there will be a precipitous decline in assaults against them. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, unwanted sexual activity with other inmates is 10 times higher with transgender prison and jail inmates although they make up a small percentage of inmates. Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition (MTPC) have for years been advocating for trans prisoners with state and local governments to assure these inmates are treated with dignity by allowing trans-related healthcare, appropriate attire, trans-related legal and educational books, to name a few.

Jane Doe is serving a three-to-four year jail sentence for a nonviolent drug offense. She will serve her remaining time in MCI-Framingham, the women’s facility. For Jane Doe, it was not only a fight for her life but her dignity, too.

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