California pardons gay civil rights leader in new initiative

By DON THOMPSON
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) A civil rights leader who was gay and a confidant of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was posthumously pardoned by California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who also announced Wednesday what may be the nation’s first process for forgiving those convicted under outdated laws punishing homosexual activity.

Bayard Rustin was a key organizer of the March on Washington in 1963 where King gave his seminal “I Have a Dream” speech. He also helped plan other nonviolent protests and boycotts to end racial discrimination. Newsom pardoned Rustin for his arrest in 1953.

New Kids’ LGBTQ-Inclusive Shows, Books, and Music

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

One of the most frequent questions I hear from other LGBTQ parents is “Where can I find LGBTQ-inclusive books, shows, and music for my kids?”

Here are some recent additions across several different kinds of media—while there still isn’t as much as we need, there might be more than you think.

The 2020 Rainbow Book List is the 12th annual list compiled by the Rainbow Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA), intended to help young people find "quality books, shows, and music featuring LGBTQ+ identities and narratives.

The scramble for black votes

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Every Democratic presidential hopeful wants my vote. As an African American woman voter, I’m part of the powerful voting bloc the DNC chair, Tom Perez, calls the “backbone” of the party. However, they’ll need to earn it.

During the N.H. Democratic Presidential debate, the subject of race and racism was front and center, and there were no winners. Instead, the debate highlighted the work all the white candidates need to do to win over black voters.

"Thank you. I will drink until next morning."

– Bong Joon-Ho, winner of Best Director for "Parasite".
The phone rings, or buzzes. It’s early afternoon on a weekday and as I am semi-retired, I’m thinking about the list of things I could/should do today, which might include taking a nap. Because as unproductive as I currently am, I am also quite exhausted. My brother rarely calls me; we usually text when dealing with our mother’s increasingly frequent health crises.

I see his name, Dale, pop up on my phone and instantly I’m awake, the idea of an afternoon nap forgotten. I’m hoping this is just routine; my mother had heat and arranging her to see her doctor the following Monday. (She tends to get sick on the weekends).

A few days later, after I’d returned to Boston, her mild cough had turned into pneumonia, flu and sepsis, and she was admitted to her local hospital. After about a week, she was transferred to rehab at a nearby nursing home—still weak, and on still on heavy IV antibiotics. Then my mother returned to the rehab center—same facility, same room—and I began to relax a bit. Last week I listened in on a conference call with the PT, OT, nurse, and social worker at the facility and heard that my mother was doing well, and due to go home in just two weeks.

Each day her voice is stronger and she sounds more like herself. I check out fares to Cleveland and look at options to fit my part-time teaching schedule, so that I can be with her when she returns to assisted living. I’m hopeful that after two difficult months, she will be able to return to her daily routine, going to a few programs, eating dinner with her table-mates at 5:30—the same three people at the same time every day, and reading in her small apartment for hours on end. (My mom always enjoyed reading and though her short-term memory is mostly gone, she still enjoys the act of reading in the moment, a way to pass the time).

I allow myself to look forward to the trip and start to feel grateful for my mother’s resilience and the fact that she is still here, even if parts of her are missing. (I call several of my mother’s few remaining friends, including an old high school and college classmate who has known her for 80 years. He tells me how taking her to dinner has become difficult; she forgets that he is coming to pick her up).

knowledge that she’s bouncing back, all 91 years/100 pounds/m moderate memory loss and all, has allowed me to relax a bit. Still, I’ve felt drained ever since my visit to Cleveland in early December, when the heat in my mother’s assisted living apartment went out, and my mom immediately developed a cough. I was in town to do a book talk and teach a writing workshop, but now I was engaged with procuring space heaters and making sure my mother had heat and arranging her to see her doctor the following Monday. (She tends to get sick on the weekends).
More selective are the ALA's 2020 Stonewall Book Awards for LGBTQ-inclusive children's and young adult books, part of the Youth Media Book Awards for LGBTQ-inclusive children's and young adult fiction for toddlers through young adults, including 10 picks "of exceptional merit." Find it (along with previous years' lists) at glbtrt.ala.org.

The 2020 awards included When Aiden Became A Brother, by Kyle Lukoff and illustrated by Kaylan Juanita (Lee & Low), a joyous picture book about a biracial (Black and South Asian) transgender boy awaiting the birth of his new sibling; and The Black Flamingo, by Dean Atta (Hodder), a young adult story about a gay teen named Jam: Like a Love Story, by Abdi Nazemian (Balzer + Bray/Harper Collins), a young adult novel about three teens in New York City in 1989; and The Best at It, by Maudlin Panchely (Balzer + Bray/Harper Collins), a middle-grade story about an Indian American boy in Indiana who is trying to assert himself and counter bullies by finding what he is best at.

In the world of music, Grammy-nominee Alastair Moock's latest children's album, Be a Pain: An Album for Young (& Old) Leaders, aims at inspiring the next generation of leaders and activists in many areas of social justice. Like his 2015 All Kinds of You and Me, this new album is LGBTQ inclusive. In "What Is a Leader?" Moock invites listeners to reflect, "Is a leader a man or a woman? Are they LGBTQ? What color would their skin be? Does a leader look like you?" And the titular song, "Be a Pain," tells of Harvey Milk's election win despite people telling him, "You can't, because you're gay."

The album features guest spots from a diverse group of musicians, several of whom are queer. Moock himself is the father of a nonbinary child and their twin. He's now crowdfunding to finish the album, but will also use the funds to offer free CDs and enrichment programs for underserved schools. The album, a blend of folk, bluegrass, and blues, should be available for pre-sales later this month. Visit moockmusic.com for details.

Season 2 of Netflix's animated series for preschoolers, Chip and Potato, has introduced a two-dad family to its cute anthropomorphic world. The series revolves around the adventures of Chip, a young pup, and her secret friend Potato, a mouse whom Chip pretends is a stuffed animal. In Episodes 8 and 10 of Season 2, we meet new neighbors Roy and Ray Razzle, two dad zebras, and their baby twins. Chip and her parents treat them just like any other family.

Additionally, Rainbow Forest School, where Chip goes to kindergarten, is decorated with rainbows everywhere, though this feels simply colorful rather than intentionally queer. Notably, though, the two side-by-side restrooms at the school, which appear in the very first episode of Season 1, are both marked with identical rainbow-colored circles and the image of a toilet in the center. We see them first as the teacher is taking the students (who appear to be of different genders) on a tour. "And those are the bathrooms you will use!" he declares. I see no other way to interpret that but as gender roles. The show has also posted Pride Month messages on social media.

Shows for somewhat older children, like Steven Universe and She-ra and the Princesses of Power, have included ongoing LGBTQ characters for some time; it is great to see shows for preschoolers also doing so. Other inclusive shows for the very youngest age group include: The Brave Knight (Hulu), about a girl with two dads; Pete the Cat (Amazon), whose character Sally Squirrel has two dads; and Bug Diaries (Amazon), whose character Worm has two moms.

Is it too much to hope for a Pride Parade down Sesame Street in the future? Dana Rudolph is the creator and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for BTQ parents.
Hawaii legislators advance bill to create LGBTQ commission

HONOLULU (AP) Hawaii state legislators have preliminarily approved a bill that would create a commission to address issues concerning the LGBTQ community. A House committee voted 6-1 Wednesday to advance the bill that would create the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus Commission, the Honolulu Star-Advertiser reports.

“It’s not always easy to pass a bill on the first attempt, and we&fr9;re hoping that people will understand it and get behind it. We&fr9;m just happy that there’s a discussion so people can know that government is not just taxes and making bills,” Democratic state Rep. Ryan Yamane said. “My hope is that it moves forward, but the reality is that bills like this are tough to pass.”

The proposed commission would identify issues such as discrimination or violence and ensure there are efforts to research, plan and advocate for the population, including people who identify as neither male or female, identify as both or are questioning their identity, state legislators said. The commission would also recommend government actions that would promote equal treatment and opportunities, and educate members of the community about their political rights, legislators said.

If the bill becomes law, it would be the first commission of its kind in the state, supporters said. The lone vote against the bill came from Republican state Rep. Gene Ward. It is unclear how much the commission would cost.

The chairman of the Democratic Party of Hawaii’s LGBT Caucus said there are no statistics on LGBTQ discrimination and violence in Hawaii, but he alleges he was verbally and physically attacked in the state for being openly gay.

“My favorite are the death threats I get when my name appears in the media too much on certain topics.” Michael Golojuch Jr. said in an interview.

Indianapolis Council has historic number of LGBTQ member

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) Four members of the Indianapolis City-County Council openly identify as members of the LGBTQ community, which is the most ever for the legislative body, according to a published report. Newly-elected member Ali Brown, who is bisexual, said none of the candidates won in November for that reason.

“None of that was part of (anything) groundwork or anything like that,” Brown told the Indianapolis Star in a story published Sunday. “It was just something that was.” But LGBTQ advocates hope it means their concerns are better heard.

“The only expectation we have is that they listen to our community and provide a voice to the issues important to our community,” said Chris Handberg, executive director of Indy Pride. “Whereas in the past, we have not had easy access to lawmakers and politicians and leaders to be able to provide some of that.”

The candidates were elected as part of a Democratic wave on the council. Indiana’s legislature is overwhelmingly Republican. Zach Adamson was the first openly gay man on the council. He was first elected in 2011 re-elected in November. The others elected for the first time were Brown, Keith Potts, who is gay, and Ethan Evans, who is bisexual.

First female, lesbian leads Michigan Episcopal diocese

DETROIT (AP) The Michigan diocese of the Episcopal Church has its first female and openly lesbian bishop. The Rev. Bonnie A. Perry was consecrated and ordained Saturday during a ceremony in the Detroit suburb of Dearborn.

She was elected last June at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Detroit. Perry was expected to be formally welcomed and seated Sunday at the church.

The Rt. Rev. Mary Glasspool was the church’s first lesbian bishop in 2010 in Los Angeles, according to the Episcopal Church. The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris became its first female bishop when she was ordained in 1989 in Massachusetts. The Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson became the Episcopal Church’s first openly gay bishop in 2004.

Perry said Friday during a news conference at the Detroit church that she is aware of what her election as bishop means to others. “If you look at scripture, Jesus said absolutely nothing about homosexuality,” she said.

“And over and over and over again, we see Jesus always being with people who were perceived by other folks to be on the margin, to be outsiders or less than or not worthy.”

She succeeds the Rt. Rev. Wendell Gibbs as the Michigan diocese’s bishop. Gibbs retired in December. The Diocese of Michigan was formed in 1836 and has 75 congregations and more than 16,000 baptized members in the state’s southeastern region. There are three other dioceses in Michigan.

Bank now says it will continue support of Florida vouchers

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) A bank has reversed itself and says it will continue supporting a Florida private school voucher program, despite reports that some schools in the program discriminate against LGBTQ students.

After reviewing the program, Ohio-based Fifth Third Bank said in a statement that it believes it can continue to support the vouchers.

The bank said the continued support was conditioned on two changes. The bank will require an annual meeting with the school voucher program’s leaders. The bank also wants the program to create a “roadmap” that will help families of students receiving the state scholarships to better understand the policies of the schools they are choosing.

“The roadmap will include identifying issues parents may wish to consider in choosing a school and informing parents about how they may access school-specific information or policies,” said the statement from Fifth Third Bank.

The decision comes after an Orlando Sentinel investigation last month found that 156 private Christian schools with anti-gay views educated more than 20,800 students with tuition paid for by state scholarships. Of those, the report said, 89 refused to admit LGBTQ students or would expel them if their sexual orientation or gender identity were discovered.

The investigation also found that many companies with pro-LGBTQ policies had donated to the program in exchange for write-offs on their state tax bills. Among them was Fifth Third Bank, which contributed $5.4 million in 2018 to the program.

After the investigation was published, Fifth Third Bank sent a tweet to a Florida lawmaker saying it would stop contributions to the program “until more inclusive policies have been adopted by all participating schools to protect the sexual orientation of all our students.”

Wells Fargo said more than a week ago that it would pull its support for the school voucher program. Florida Department of Education spokeswoman Taryn Fencke said in a recent email that the agency hadn’t been notified of any cases where a student had been denied entrance or expelled from a school based on their sexual identity.

“Rather, the article is intentionally blurring the line between the faith-based background of some schools, freedom of speech, and trying to suggest that those are equivalent to discrimination,” Fencke said.

Lesbian Seattle mayor launches bid for reelection

SEATTLE (AP) Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan has begun a 2021 reelection campaign. The campaign committee “People for Jenny Durkan” registered this week with the Washington state Public Disclosure Commission, The Seattle Times reported.

The mayor hinted in recent weeks that she would be making an announcement. The time for candidates to actually file for Seattle&fr9;39;s 2021 elections is still over a year away but registering a campaign committee will allow Durkan to start raising money.

While I have formally opened my re-election campaign to continue to serve as mayor, I know my most important job is staying focused on delivering results for the people of Seattle and continuing to make progress for our city,” Durkan said in a statement on her campaign website.

Elected to a four-year term in 2017, Durkan took office early due to Ed Murray’s resignation from office amid sexual-abuse allegations.

Durkan, who said she was the first openly gay person to become a U.S. attorney, was the first woman elected Seattle mayor since 1926.
State of the Union

Pandering or polarizing?
By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

The president's list of special guests for his State of the Union address Tuesday night (February 4) included the brother of a bisexual high school student who committed suicide last year after he was bullied over his sexual orientation. The White House press release did not mention that the high school student, Channing Smith of Tennessee, was bisexual or that he was bullied over his sexual orientation. The president did not share his story with the nation or even acknowledge his brother Joshua's presence at the event.

Joshua's presence at the event. share his story with the nation or even acknowledge his brother he was bullied over his sexual orientation. The president did not outed on social media.

Given how easily discussions on controversial topics can deteriorate into vituperative exchanges, I want to be clear that if my criticisms do not apply to you, then I am not talking about you. For example, there are some radical lesbians who are viciously hostile toward trans women, deny their legitimate existence, use their "dead names" (pre-transition names), and deliberately use the wrong pronouns for them. If this does not apply to you, then please understand that I am not talking about you.

The sad fact is that anti-transgender intolerance makes for some strange political bedfellows. Many TERFs have aligned themselves with right-wing evangelical figures and organizations to advance their anti-trans agenda.

Transphobes are moving beyond "bathroom bills" and bans on military service. As Dr. Jack Turban writes in The New York Times, "In South Dakota, the House recently passed a bill that would fine or even imprison pediatricians who provide gender-affirmative care to patients under 16."

Trans women are not “men in dresses.” That affront is not supported by the science, which was advanced enough to find its way into Obama-era DOJ court filings.

Inherent in the role of an ally, as someone supporting justice for trans women not “men in dresses.” That affront is not supported by the science, which was advanced enough to find its way into Obama-era DOJ court filings.

Trans erasure in our midst
The impulse to suppress difference threatens us all

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

The acronym TERF stands for trans-exclusionary radical feminist. I mention it here before mentioning the Trump administration or conservative state legislatures, which have been up to a great deal of transphobic mischief, because anti-trans feminists have been around for decades.

The key insight is that everything is not about you. Sen. Mitt Romney, anticipating the mountain of grief he would receive for voting to convict Trump of abusing his office, asked rhetorically why he would do it except out of faithfulness to his conscience. Similarly, the abuse heaped on trans people just for going about their lives is so widespread that it is hardly plausible that they would endure it except out of personal integrity.

Our ability to cohere as a society erodes if we retreat into bubbles of suspicion and resentment. Your right to feel discomfort over others’ differences ends somewhere before the passage of laws to erase them. We have a right to many things, but not to our neighbors’ disappearance.

Trans women are not "men in dresses." That affront is not supported by the science, which was advanced enough to find its way into Obama-era DOJ court filings.

Inherent in the role of an ally, as someone supporting justice for
voters. “Whether it’s the Republican party or the Democratic Party they need to understand from here on out the black vote isn’t free,” Marcus Wilkins wrote after watching the debate in the comment section of the New York Times.

In July 2018, DNC Chair Tom Perez issued an apology statement to black voters for the party taking us for granted over the years. “I am sorry,” Perez stated. “We took too many people for granted.” He went on, “and African Americans—our most loyal constituency—we all too frequently took for granted. That is a shame on us, folks, and for that, I apologize. And for that, I say, it will never happen again!”

I, like so many African Americans, was hoping for a fresh start.

In sharing his thoughts about the lack of people of color in the race, House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC) stated the following on C-Span on the night of the N.H. primary: “We have to take that into account. We ought not to let people for granted. Take us on us, folks, and for that, I apologize. And for that, I say, it will never happen again!”

I, like so many African Americans, was hoping for a fresh start.

Steinem’s impressively diverse efforts and varied life. Theatergoers learn of her parents’ divorce when she was 10 years old. Young Gloria effectively helped her mother cope with emotional troubles. Her Jewish paternal grandmother would save many relatives from the horrors of the Holocaust. Mann has paid timely tribute to a great woman.

New, like Trump? … What the hell do you have to lose by trying something new, like Trump? … What the hell do you have to lose? At Sharpton at the 2004 DNC in Boston answered why we do: “The Democratic Party was the party of Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. It is true that Mr. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, after which there was a commitment to give 40 acres and a mule… We didn’t get the mule. So we decided we’d ride this donkey as far as it would take us.”

The Democratic Party must do more than court African American voters. The party must address our issues, too.
FLAG Football Scholarship Deadline Approaches

Boston’s FLAG Flag Football league, a 501(c)3 organization, has a mission to give back to the community through community outreach initiatives.

They are now accepting applications for the 2020 Marc E. Lewis Youth Scholarship. FLAG Flag Football will be awarding up to $5,000 to a graduating Massachusetts high school student or students who will be attending a two- or four-year college or a post-high school career school in the 2020-2021 academic year.

The scholarship will be awarded to a student who has made high school and/or community sports programs safer for, and more inclusive of, LGBTQ student-athletes, as either a role model or ally.

In line with the mission of our organization, students of all athletic skill levels, achievement, and contributions are encouraged to apply. The award will be based on responses to the questions below and two letters of reference. All students are welcome and encouraged to apply: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or straight.

Applications must be postmarked no later than Monday, February 24, 2020.

https://flthatflagfootball.com/scholarship/

SOTU
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President Trump also said “everyone is made equal by the hand of almighty god.” But he said his administration would continue “defending religious liberty, and that includes the constitutional right to pray in public schools.”

That latter statement stood out for many LGBT activists. Sharon McGowan, national legal director for Lambda Legal, said Trump was “weaponizing religious liberty arguments.”

“This administration has relentlessly attacked not only the LGBT community, but also women, communities of color, and religious minorities,” said McGowan. “And by using tonight’s State of the Union to bestow the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Rush Limbaugh, President Trump displays his utter disdain for the overwhelming majority of our country who neither look like him nor share his cynical world view.”

President Trump was probably displaying some disdain for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Tuesday night when he declined to shake hands with her as he presented her with a copy of his speech, as is tradition. She seemed to return the favor at the end of his address when she tore up the copy of the speech and tossed it away in full view of the Congressional audience and television cameras following the president’s remarks.

Democratic presidential hopeful Pete Buttigieg appeared on MSNBC for some brief post-SOTU commentary. Buttigieg, who was in Concord, N.H., said he thought the address was “highly partisan, highly polarizing,” that it appeared to be pandering to Trump’s base of supporters, and that it included “some disturbing efforts … to further divide the American people.”

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When people look back on the 2020 Oscars... well, God only knows what they’ll think. Here’s my general thought—confusion. Every time someone popped up around the theatre to introduce a segment, I was bewildered. First off, I had no idea where to look. It was like a celebrity version of “Where’s Waldo”—minus the celebrities. Who were these people? I suppose using lesser performers made sense. You couldn’t have Diane Ladd hanging on for dear life from the rafters. I will definitely remember some of the outstanding performances. How fabulous was Cynthia Erivo wailing “Stand Up” from “Harriet”? Even better, how fabulous was Cynthia keeping her gaze on the camera circling her to the commercial break? As great as she was and as great as the song was, I have to give it up to Elton—especially after his kick-ass rendition of “(I’m Gonna) Love Me Again”. Admittedly, he had to look at music and lyrics (it’s not a song he’s performed often), but it was touching to see him and Bernie Taupin win their first Oscar.

Let me give a warning to any future award show singers—don’t go anywhere near Rita Wilson with a microphone. She’s got sheet music in her purse and is ready to hit the stage. Chris Rock and Steve Martin showed how valuable comedians are to an awards show. But, it’s not as easy as you think. The night before the Oscars, the two were at The Comedy Store in Hollywood and tried out their routine—including several jokes which didn’t make it to air. I believe James Corden and Rebel Wilson are carrying the mantle of Bob Barker by reminding us to spay and neuter our pets. I do have one question—do Maya Rudolph and Kristen Wiig have no gay friends? Not even one?

Without a doubt, the winner of the EMMY Award for Award Presentation is Diane Keaton. My God, the only thing she didn’t do was exclaim “La La Land”! It’s sad when Keanu Reeves always looks like he’s having such a good time—even when he lost Best Director. Lastly, after the first award of the night, I wouldn’t be surprised if the Scientologists had Tom Cruise on suicide watch.

I’m assuming most of you don’t read “Variety” religiously. So it follows that most of you didn’t see the photo of Liza Minnelli on the cover of the magazine’s “Oscars” issue. If you did, you would have seen a youthful-appearing Minnelli, clutching an Oscar to her bosom, perched high upon a director’s chair, with one leg precariously swinging over the arm. This is in sharp contrast to the Liza who is usually captured by the paparazzi having enormous difficulty walking, and who approaches stairs as if she’s being asked to negotiate a medieval gauntlet. Which begs the question—how many people did it take to get Liza into this unusual position? And is she still stuck in the chair? The interview really seems secondary, but it did provide one illuminating moment. Given her protection of her mother’s image, and the fact that Renee Zellweger was nominated for (and ultimately won) an Oscar for playing her, the topic had to come up. Minnelli admits to not seeing (and having no interest in seeing) the flick, but graciously added, “I hope she had a good time making it.” Now could someone please help me out of this chair??!!

Last month, Perez Hilton bemoaned to an Australian journalist how difficult it is for him to find love. “The overwhelming majority of gay men don’t like me.” He also disclosed that hasn’t even had sex since 2006. As it happens, that was the year I started having more sex than ever before. Apparently I did it (and them) to make up for those less fortunate...and I’m always happy to oblige. Alas, it only got worse for Mr. Hilton. The Australian interview was a prelude to his appearance on the country’s version of “I’m a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!” And out of here appeared on the cover of the magazine’s “Oscars” issue. If you did, you would have seen a youthful-appearing Minnelli, clutching an Oscar to her bosom, perched high upon a director’s chair, with one leg precariously swinging over the arm. This is in sharp contrast to the Liza who is usually captured by the paparazzi having enormous difficulty walking, and who approaches stairs as if she’s being asked to negotiate a medieval gauntlet. Which begs the question—how many people did it take to get Liza into this unusual position? And is she still stuck in the chair? The interview really seems secondary, but it did provide one illuminating moment. Given her protection of her mother’s image, and the fact that Renee Zellweger was nominated for (and ultimately won) an Oscar for playing her, the topic had to come up. Minnelli admits to not seeing (and having no interest in seeing) the flick, but graciously added, “I hope she had a good time making it.” Now could someone please help me out of this chair??!!

It was recently reported that Jennifer Lopez needed 10 hours of makeup to prepare for her performance at the Super Bowl. This begs yet another question—what on Earth does she look like when she’s hosed down? I’m thinking that after 10 hours of professional makeup, I could look like J-Lo!

Rosendall

Continued from page 5

sexual minorities, is to defend our transgender sisters and brothers. They are at the bleeding edge of the Trump Administration’s attacks on gender variance. They face greater risk of employment and housing discrimination and hate crimes.

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when he was found having sex with two men in a parked car in Pasadena, where he was appearing as part of a lecture tour on anti-colonial struggles in West Africa.

Rustin served 50 days in Los Angeles County jail and had to register as a sex offender before returning to his home state of New York. He died in 1987. Newsom noted that police and prosecutors nationwide at the time used charges like vagrancy, loitering and sodomy to punish LGBTQ people. He issued an executive order creating a new initiative to identify those who might be eligible for pardons and swiftly consider those applications.

Rustin “is far from alone.” Newsom said in the order. He encouraged others in similar circumstances “to seek a pardon to right this egregious wrong.”

“Countless others in California, as well as around the country, have experienced similar unequal application of the law because of stigma, bias and ignorance,” Newsom said.

“His conviction is part of a long and reprehensible history of a criminal prohibitions on the very existence of LGBTQ people and their intimate associations and relationships.”

Equality Federation executive director Rebecca Isaacs and Movement Advancement Project research director Naomi Goldberg said it appears Newsom’s is the first such clemency effort in any state.

“California’s new initiative gives them a path to clear their names,” Isaacs said in a statement.

Newsom first gained national prominence in 2004 when, as San Francisco’s mayor, he ordered officials to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The practice was overruled then but eventually became the law nationwide.

Last month, the California Legislature’s LGTBQ and black caucuses asked the Democratic governor to pardon Rustin. Rustin’s close friends knew he was gay, but his religious and political associates distanced themselves after his arrest, Sen. Scott Wiener of San Francisco and Assemblywoman Shirley Weber told Newsom on behalf of the caucuses.

“Generations of LGBT people, including countless gay men, were branded criminals and sex offenders simply because they had consensual sex.” Wiener said in a statement praising Newsom. “This pardon assures his place in history.”

Weber said the pardon helps leave Rustin’s legacy in the civil rights movement “uncompromised.”

Rustin was stripped of his leadership post at the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organization involved in the civil rights movement, after U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina read Rustin’s arrest file into the Congressional Record. California repealed the law against consensual sex between same-sex adults in 1975. In 1997, it created a way for those individuals to be removed from the California Sex Offender Registry. But neither step changed the original convictions. President Barack Obama honored Rustin posthumously with a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013 for the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

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Worcester, Mass. (AP)—Three professors at colleges in Worcester have been honored for their work on a project documenting the history of the region’s LGBTQ community.

Robert Deam Tobin of Clark University, Stephanie Yuhl of the College of the Holy Cross and Joseph Cullon of Worcester Polytechnic Institute recently received a Key to the City, according to The Telegram & Gazette.

They helped curate an exhibit on the topic at the Worcester Historical Museum last year, and helped produce a 116-page catalog of LGBTQ-related stories from across the country.

“I was really moved that the city leaders took the time to honor scholarly work in the humanities as important for preserving our identity as a city,” Tobin said in a statement. “They were able to see how this kind of work, documenting marginalized and unrecognized communities like the LGBTQ community, helps create a more just society.”

The museum exhibit, called “LGBTQ+ Worcester—For the Record,” was one of many events last year commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, a watershed moment in the history of gay rights.
Phillip Schofield came out as gay.

"Today, quite rightly, being gay is a reason to celebrate and be proud," he wrote, adding, "I am feeling pain and confusion, but that comes only from the hurt that I am causing to my family." Imagine the pain and confusion his wife and two daughters feel! He later admitted that he knew he was gay when he married his wife in 1993. I can beat that—literally. Why, I remember a couple of years earlier when I saw him in a loincloth as "Joseph" in London’s West End. In fact, when I went backstage ...well, I’ll save that story for the book. In the meantime, welcome.

Last week, "The Good Place" ended with a wholly satisfying (if slightly rushed) finale. One of the stars, Jameela Jamil, now begins her next project—as a judge on HBO Max’s ballroom competition show, 'Legendary'. For some reason, several critics felt compelled to bemoan the lack of any LGBTQ presence in a show about ballroom culture. That’s when Janeela came out as queer. "I added a rainbow to my name when I felt ready a few years ago," she says—pointing out an event which apparently everyone missed.

Speaking of HBO Max, it looks like the network has locked in all six "Friends" for a 25th anniversary unscripted special. It may be gauche to talk in terms of money, but we’re not above being a bit gauche. Each of the cast members will be paid in the $4 million neighborhood for the special—not a bad neighborhood to be in for an hour. The event will kick off HBO Max’s deal to rerun "Friends" and also offer the show on its streaming platform.

Nick and Vanessa Lachey were recently interviewed by Hoda Kotb about their show, "Love is Blind", which I know absolutely nothing about. Kotb mentioned that she’d interviewed Jessica Simpson about her book, and claims that Jessica wished the couple well and added that they "sent me something beautiful when we had our children." Nick stammered something about not having read the book, but wishing Jessica well. Then Vanessa piped up. "I feel bad. I’m sorry, you said somebody sent her... because now...we...it wasn’t us." Vanessa looked at Nick, and he added, "I didn’t...I don’t know her address. Thank you whoever sent it from us!" So, the world is now thinking that Jessica is just loopy—which is not a stretch. Then Simpson went on Andy Cohen’s radio show and cleared it up. "I didn’t get a gift. I don’t know where that came from.” Could it be that Hoda is the loopy one?

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Roger in Detroit: "I get a very gay feeling about [celebrity DJ] Calvin Harris. Maybe it’s 'cause he’s so hot. But why did he stop doing underwear ads? And do you have anything hotter?"

I first became aware of Calvin when billboards started popping up around Los Angeles featuring his torso and his name—an odd way of promoting a DJ. But we’re in a time when one cannot be a great DJ or painter or aluminum siding installer without having a 6-pack and pecs. Or maybe that’s just what I look for in someone banging around my home. With that notoriety came the underwear spread for Armani. That was around the same time as his liaison with Taylor Swift—such a fine judge of heterosexual men. Perhaps coincidentally, the Armani campaign ended when Calvin’s relationship with Taylor went kaput. Still, it made him comfortable enough in his skin to take more candid shots—such as the one on his manager’s birthday when he was just standing there in his fully-packed boxer briefs (he being Harris). We’ve gotten a peek at what’s inside those briefs and, while most DJs specialize in 12-inches, Calvin’s sporting a good, solid eight inches—hard. Oh, yes—very hard. And veiny. And, lest you question the veracity of the photo, our forensic experts insist that certain moles on that distinctive torso line up perfectly with this photo. Check it out for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

When nothing comes between me and my Calvin, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. What a long night! I must confess, I’m exhausted. But let me quickly remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that’ll perk you up. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Liza gets out of that chair! So, until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
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