True Colors OUT Youth Theater Celebrates 25 Year Launches National Tour

Submitted by Theater Offensive

The Theater Offensive (TTO) will have much to celebrate at this year’s Beyond the Stage. The company will celebrate the 25th anniversary of True Colors OUT Youth Theater, and will announce the first-ever True Colors national tour. TTO will also honor two outstanding Bostonians for their many years of support.

Beyond the Stage is TTO’s annual premier fundraising event for True Colors OUT Youth Theater. It honors the resilience and strength of LGBTQ and allied youth members of True Colors, while being treated to mingling and meet the youth program’s key supporters.

At this year’s event on March 12th at Boston’s District Hall, guests will be invited to mingle and meet the youth of True Colors, while being treated to a performance by the headliners, True Colors OUT Youth Theater.

Buttigieg’s White House bid ensures place in LGBTQ history

By DAVID CRARY

NEW YORK (AP) — A divisive debate over same-sex marriage animated the 2004 presidential election as voters across the country approved constitutional amendments banning such unions. Sixteen years later, with those bans invalidated and his husband by his side, Pete Buttigieg became the first openly gay man to become — however briefly — a leading presidential candidate.

Buttigieg fell short of his goal to win the Democratic nomination and defeat President Donald Trump. But his candidacy will likely be remembered as an example of the remarkable advances made by LGBTQ Americans in their quest for equality and acceptance.

The former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, was a onetime political unknown who, in the past year, became a rising star in the Democratic party. He was also the first gay person to run for president as a major-party candidate.

On the morning of Super Tuesday, I was done talking with my spouse as to why she should cast her ballot for Senator Elizabeth Warren for President of the United States. However, I knew her hesitation and frustration.

Like many black Cantabrigians, there was no outreach by Warren or her campaign to a community historically identified as loyal voters.

Warren never reached out to us, seems never to have visited a Black church in Cambridge, never asked for Black support, just took it for granted. All of that would be constructive advice for Elizabeth if she were to consider another presidential run, and for a Senate re-election too,” a Cambridge resident emailed to me wanting to re-

This may be the last column you read from me. In just a few days, I will be going under the knife. I know what many of you are thinking—it’s about time! However, this is not elective surgery. While I have every confidence in my surgical team, anything can happen. If we’ve learned nothing from Auntie Joan and Donda, it is possible to come out of a minor procedure...DEAD! So, should that happen, well, it’s been a great couple of decades.
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Mombian

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adoption applicants solely because of “homosexuality.” More than 40 years later, though, even though we can technically now adopt in all 50 states, 11 states say that adoption and foster care agencies may use religious beliefs as a reason to turn away LGBTQ people. And last November, the Trump administration issued a new rule that allows child service agencies receiving grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to discriminate based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion. The U.S. Supreme Court said recently that it will hear a case this year on such discrimination. With a conservative majority on the court, I’m not hopeful; we will likely have to keep fighting.

The Every Child Deserves a Family Act, which would also counter this kind of discrimination, has been introduced with bipartisan support in the past six Congresses. Six! Yet advocates are continuing to push for the bill, which now has a record number of co-sponsors in both chambers.

We keep fighting, even when it feels like we’ve been here before. The American Psychological Association (APA), for example, on March 3 issued updated resolutions in support of LGBTQ parents and LGBTQ children, and opposing laws, policies, and practices that discriminate against LGBTQ people. It was way back in 1976 that the APA first enacted a position statement asserting: “The sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation of natural or prospective adoptive or foster parents should not be the sole or primary variable considered in custody or placement cases.” Since then, it has issued a variety of resolutions backing LGBTQ equality. In the press release for the latest updates, the organization noted that “The intentions of the original resolution are still relevant, and many have been preserved.” Those intentions—to combat discriminatory laws and mitigate the “psychological distress” that “exposure to prejudice and discrimination” can cause for LGBTQ individuals and their children—are still relevant because we are unfortunately still fighting those same battles.

Some people are even trying to reverse marriage equality. A bill that would have banned issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples was just defeated by the Colorado legislature. Yes, it was stopped—but do we really need to be having this fight again, nearly half a decade after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized marriage equality nationwide? A still-active bill in Iowa, too, would require people to declare their sexual orientation on marriage licenses; if they later came out as something else, a court could find that they engaged in “fraudulent concealment,” which would be grounds for denying that person child custody in a divorce. This hearkens back to the agonizing legal battles of the 1970s in which queer parents fought ex-spouses (not always successfully) for child custody or even just visitation rights.

In another arena, 30 years after controversy erupted over Lesléa Newman’s “Heather Has Two Mommies,” the first picture book to show happily partnered same-sex parents, more than half the books in the American Library Association’s latest annual Top Ten Most Challenged Books list are there because someone objected to their LGBTQ content. Nearly every month I see headlines about a school district arguing over whether to keep LGBTQ-inclusive books on the shelves.

It’s tiresome doing the same thing over and over. The fact is, though, that civil rights struggles are long and don’t simply end when the laws change, as many marginalized groups can attest. But sometimes repetition leads to progress. The Colorado bill was defeated; LGBTQ-inclusive children’s books are being published in even greater numbers and making their way to more shelves. The ongoing support of the APA and other professional organizations, backed by legitimate scientific research, has had a positive impact on LGBTQ people in areas including child custody, adoption, conversion therapy, affirming health care for transgender people, and marriage equality, which remains the law of the land. And our children do grow up and remember to brush their teeth.

I’m not sure if being a parent has made me more capable of dealing with the repetition of queer activism or the perseverance required to be an activist made me better prepared for parenting. It’s a chicken-and-egg conundrum, which—speaking as someone who provided an egg to my spouse to start our family—feels completely appropriate.

Now go wash your hands. Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.
many disagreed with Warren’s Medicare for All plan, I had confidence she would either convince the American public over time or change it. After all, Warren had both a plan and a solution for just about everything.

Warren’s disconnect with black voters, in particular, is not that she came across inauthentically from the heart; but rather that she came across totally inept in how to reach people on the ground. Cambridge, however, could have served as her training ground.

The problems, divisions, and increasing polarization in the country that Warren wanted to address as president reverberate in Cambridge, too. The top three concerns in Cambridge are access to quality public education, racial profiling by police, and affordable housing.

For example, Black students at Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School, the only public H.S. in Cambridge, for years have asked to reform the school’s curriculum toward a more racially just pedagogy and for equal access to AP classes. Area 4 (now known as the Port), was once a predominantly black poor and working-class enclave that’s now gentrified by the biotech and pharmaceutical boom. And, while we all know of the 2009 incident with renowned Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates being mistakenly taken as an unknown black man breaking and entering into someone’s home that happened to be his, profiling persists. Cambridge now has a more diverse police force.

Warren never reached out to black churches, and I am glad she didn’t. The perception that all white politicians need to do is merely show up the Sunday before election day and Tuesday we cast our ballots are not only a hackneyed campaign strategy, but it’s also a clear indication that these politicians have nary a clue nor a sincere concern for the parishioners they stand before. However, had Warren just popped her head in one of the regular monthly Interfaith Leadership Breakfasts, which brings all faith leaders together throughout the city, she could have mobilized a vast ground movement.

Warren missed opportunities to create a sisterhood with black women. While affordable housing is a problem in Cambridge, so, too, is homelessness, many of whom are women of color and their families. The YWCA Cambridge houses many of these women. Warren could have used her knowledge derived from these women’s experiences as part of her stump speech as to how a resource-rich city like Cambridge is tackling the problem.

Also, as a voting bloc, black women know their strength. We take pride in our agency and voting-mobilization strategies that Warren never tapped. Our voting-mobilization strategies in 2017 saved the Alabama Senate from Republican candidate Roy Moore, a pedophile and slave apologist.

In trying to reach black voters during her campaign in Las Vegas, Warren stopped at Ella Em’s Soul Food restaurant in North Las Vegas, but she never stopped by The Coast Cafe in Cambridge, one of the best soul food restaurants in all of New England.

In advocating to get the black vote out for Joe Biden in the Palmetto State, which he won, Democratic Majority Whip Jim Clyburn of South Carolina said: “I know Joe, we know Joe, but most importantly Joe knows us.” We black Cambridge residents can’t say the same of Liz.

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A generation from now, countless women will recall a moment in their childhood when they met a United States senator: “My name is Elizabeth,” said the woman who proposed and established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, crouching to the child’s level so they could see eye-to-eye, “and I’m running for president, because that’s what girls do.” And made them a pinky promise to remember.

Disappointment is part of life. Most candidates lose, most business startups fail, most revolutions are stillborn. The revolution 244 years ago in America was a rare success. That does not mean it was sufficient or forever. On December 5, 1955, a young black preacher spoke from a Baptist church pulpit near the Alabama state capitol when I was in my mother’s womb in Maryland. “[W]e are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” He echoed the prophet Amos.

The following decade saw passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. The latter was gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013 in Shelby County v. Holder, which unleashed a torrent of voter suppression efforts in Republican-controlled states.

Seven years further on, the hostile takeover of the Republican Party by a sociopath with feral cunning (as George F. Will described Trump) looked as if it might be answered with a similar takeover of the Democratic Party by an angry demagogue who brands even allies with labels. But activists hailed Buttigieg as a trailblazer and open LGBTQ president, said Annise Parker, a former mayor. But Buttigieg said. “So they want to debate family values?...” He echoed the prophet Amos. “We send a message to every kid out there wondering...”

There is a telling example, here in Nevada. He endorsed fellow moderate Joe Biden behind Sanders in New Hampshire before slipping to third place for them.”

While there have been gay governors and members of Congress, Buttigieg resonated with some voters for his potential to win the nation’s highest office. He startled Bernie Sanders to a virtual first-place tie in the opening caucuses in Iowa and finished just one percentage point behind Sanders in New Hampshire before slipping to third in Nevada. He endorsed fellow moderate Joe Biden on Monday in Dallas.

While Buttigieg often campaigned with his husband, Chasten, and was comfortable discussing his sexual orientation, it was rarely a focus of his own speeches or of commentary from his critics or opponents.

“The fact that Pete was gay didn’t really come up that much, which itself was an important marker,” said Richard Socarides, a former Clinton White House adviser on gay issues. “It’s such an angry, intolerant time. But Pete’s campaign proved that Americans are still capable of tolerance and accepting of differences.”

One exception came in mid-February, when Ruth Limbaugh said on his radio show that “America’s still not ready to elect a gay guy kissing his husband on the debate stage.”

Buttigieg, in response, held up his marriage as a contrast with Trump, who has been accused of infidelity and sexual assault — allegations he has denied.

“I mean, I’m sorry, but one thing about my marriage is it’s never involved me having to send hush money to a porn star after cheating on my spouse with him or her,” Buttigieg said. “So they want to debate family values? Let’s debate family values.”

Still, Buttigieg was a controversial figure in some LGTBQ circles. As a white man with a Harvard degree, he acknowledged enjoying privileges that aren’t extended to women, people of color and the poor. His ties to organized religion concerned LGBTQ people who have been marginalized, excluded and mistreated by churches.

That fueled a debate over whether Buttigieg is “gay enough.” Some critics said that wasn’t the point. Buttigieg, they argue, reached political prominence by presenting himself to heterosexuals as a safe, unsassing gay person.

“Buttigieg isn’t just gay — he’s also white, male, upper-class, Midwestern, married, Ivy League-educated, and a man of faith,” Christina Cauterucci, who covers LGBTQ issues for Slate magazine, wrote in a widely circulated article last year. “That doesn’t mean he’s not gay enough — there’s really no such measure. ... But it does make him less exciting as the supposed gay trailblazer some on the left desperately want him to be.”

Yet Evan Wolfson, a lawyer who played a key role in the long campaign to legalize same-sex marriage across the U.S., suggested that Buttigieg’s All-American resume was part of his appeal.

“His being gay proved an advantage — a signal of freshness, of empathy, of hope,” Wolfson said. “Americans responded to these urgently needed qualities, and to Pete’s demonstration that gay people can be just as talented, just as effective, and just as patriotic as anyone.”

ETHAN GETO, A New York-based political consultant who advised Hillary Clinton on LGBTQ issues, was active in Democratic campaigns back in 1972, the first year that openly gay delegates were invited to speak about gay-rights issues at the party’s national convention. “The LGBTQ community has traveled a long, hard road to equality,” Geto said via email. “An openly gay candidate could not have been successful if American society had not come to understand that LGBTQ citizens are found in every walk of life, are present in almost every extended family.”

Another veteran activist hailing Buttigieg was Gene Robinson, who won in 2004 the U.S. Episcopal Church’s first openly gay bishop.

“Because of Pete, there’s gay kid somewhere in Idaho or Alabama who now thinks he can be president,” Robinson Tweeted.

Buttigieg struck a similar tone Sunday as he announced his departure from the race.

“We send a message to every kid out there wondering if whatever marks them out as different means they are somehow destined to be less than,” Buttigieg told supporters. “To see that someone who once felt that exact same way can become a leading American presidential candidate with his husband by his side.”

Associated Press writer Thomas Beaumont contributed to this report.

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Black voters saved our sorry white asses — again!

A race between a decent man and a sociopath

by Richard J. Rosendall | rrosendall@starpower.net

contributing writer

A generation from now, countless women will recall a moment in their childhood when they met a United States senator: “My name is Elizabeth,” said the woman who proposed and established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, crouching to the child’s level so they could see eye-to-eye, “and I’m running for president, because that’s what girls do.” And made them a pinky promise to remember.

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Associated Press writer Thomas Beaumont contributed to this report.
World

Putin's new amendments revere God, ban same sex marriages

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP)—Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday submitted a slew of new proposed amendments to the country’s Constitution that include a mention of God and describe marriage as a heterosexual union.

Putin first proposed amending the constitution in January’s state-of-the-nation speech, saying it is necessary to broaden the powers of parliament and bolster democracy. Kremlin foes have described the proposed changes as part of Putin’s efforts to remain in charge after his current six-year term ends in 2024.

The Kremlin-controlled parliament quickly endorsed Putin’s draft in the first of three required readings last month, and is set to give it the final approval next week, setting the stage for a nationwide vote on April 22.

Following up on proposals from a Kremlin working group that worked in parallel with lawmakers, Putin on Monday presented 24 pages of additional amendments for the second reading set for March 10.

Lawmakers say they include an article that points to a millennium-long Russian history and pledges homage to “ancestors who bequeathed to us their ideals and a belief in God.”

The amendment follows a proposal by the Russian Orthodox Church to add a reference to God and their ideals and a belief in the Constitution.

Another amendment describes marriage as a “union of a man and a woman,” a wording in sync with Putin’s long-standing opposition to same-sex marriages.

The president also responded to a working group’s suggestion to add wording that would prevent any future Russian ruler from giving away Ukraine’s Crimea—annexed from Ukraine in 2014—or any other territory. He added an amendment that prohibits surrendering any part of Russian territory and outlaws making calls for that.

Another proposal underlines a special status of Russians as a “state-forming” ethnic group while pledging to protect the nation’s other ethnic groups.

And in sync with proposals to outlaw disparaging the Soviet role in WWII victory, Putin added an article pledging to protect “historic truth” and forbid “belittling the people’s heroic protection of the Motherland.”

The amendment comes as Russia prepares to celebrate the 75th anniversary of victory in World War II—the nation’s most important holiday.

The new set of amendments doesn’t offer any clue, however, what position Putin may take to continue calling the shots after his term ends. The 67-year-old Russian leader has been in power for more than 20 years, making him the nation’s longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

OUT
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presentations that demonstrate how the community’s generous support impacts the lives of those the company serves.

This year’s event will honor Myron Miller of The Herman and Frieda L. Miller Foundation. Also honored will be Chioke Iwa하-Howard, a True Colors alumnus, for his integral part in the growth and development of all True Colors programming and his role.

Founded in the 1994-95 season, True Colors is the longest-running LGBTQ youth theater program in the country. True Colors uses a proven community-engaged theater model to train LGTBQ youth leaders in writing and performance skills. The majority of True Colors youth ages 14-22 are from Boston neighborhoods.

In 2016, First Lady Michelle Obama awarded True Colors OUT Youth Theater the National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Award, the nation’s highest honor in the field of Creative Youth Development. True Colors was the first LGBTQ youth theater program to receive this award at a ceremony in the White House.

True Colors transforms real-life stories of queer youth into powerful performances and workshops, based on their lived experiences of topics such as bullying, homelessness, coming out and discrimination. True Colors is a safe space for all youth, where they can explore their identities and build personal identity and civic engagement in efforts to create their own identity and culture of legends and legacy outside of mainstream culture.

Since 1994, the True Colors troupe has toured to local schools and community groups, with performances geared toward combating bigotry, hate, and discrimination. In the 2020-21 season, True Colors will launch its first-ever national tour of a piece, Legends, Statements, and Stars (LSS). It is a new work centered on intergenerational coming of age stories of LGBTQ youth people of color in the US. Using Queer Documentary Theater, LSS explores the journey of LGBTQ youth of color as they battle identity politics in an effort to create their own identity and culture of legends and legacy outside of mainstream culture.

LSS is a National Performance Network/Visual Artists Network (NPN/VAN) Creation and Development Fund Project co-commissioned by ArtsEmerson in Boston, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in Pittsburgh, PA, Legion Arts in Cedar Rapids, IA, and NPN. The Creation and Development Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). For more information: www.npnweb.org.

LSS was made possible with funding by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Theater Project, with lead funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and additional support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Additional support for LSS comes from Sarah Hancock, the Boston Foundation the Harman Family Foundation, the Linde Family Foundation, the Parker Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts’ ArtsWorks program, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Boston Cultural Council.

Tickets: beyondthestage2020.eventbrite.com

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Mormon students protest BYU stance on same-sex behavior

By BRADY MCCOMBS
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—After Brigham Young University two weeks ago dropped a section from its strict code of conduct that had prohibited all expressions of homosexual behavior, bisexual music major Caroline McKenzie felt newfound hope that she could stop hiding and be herself. She even went on a date with another woman.

That optimism was pierced this week when administrators at the university owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints clarified in a letter posted online Wednesday that “same-sex romantic behavior” was still not allowed on campus. The letter said the recent revision to what is known as the “honor code” didn’t change the “moral standards” of the church or the faith’s opposition to same-sex marriage.

McKenzie said it made her feel whiplashed and that her religion was telling her she was dirty for who she is and unwanted by God. She’s reassessing whether she wants to finish her studies at BYU even though she loves her professors and the education she’s receiving.

“It’s psychologically damaging,” said McKenzie, 23, of Kaysvill, Utah. “It has been a roller coaster the last couple of weeks. This last Wednesday pretty much destroyed me. It felt like I was drowning again.”

She was one of several hundred people who protested Friday afternoon outside church headquarters in Salt Lake City to cap off a week of fury and heartbreak for LGBTQ students and their straight allies. They sang hymns and chanted “have no fear, God loves queers” as they held rainbow flags. They held signs that read “Love one another,” “Jesus loves everyone” and “Bigotry wrapped in prayer is still bigotry.”

McKenzie held a sign that said, “My family doesn’t want me, now my school? BYU is home.” It referenced a lack of support from her family after she came out last summer.

As they chanted loudly, “We’re here, we’re queer, we’re done living in fear,” many stared up at windows in the church headquarters.

The Utah-based religion of 16-million members worldwide has tried in the last decade to create a more welcoming environment for LGBTQ members, while adhering to its doctrinal opposition of gay marriage. The faith, widely known as the Mormon church, teaches that while being gay is not a sin, engaging in same-sex relationships is against God’s commandments.

Church spokesman Doug Andersen said in a statement Friday:

“The teachings of the church and the policies of our universities are consistent with eternal principles, and seek to encourage and strengthen relationships that lead to eternal covenants made with God. The church and its leaders continue to teach that though there may be disagreement on an issue or policy, we should treat one another with love, respect and kindness.”

Students who attend BYU in Provo, south of Salt Lake City, agree to adhere to the code of conduct known as the “honor code,” and nearly all are members of the church. Punishments range from discipline to suspension and expulsion. The code bans other things that are common at other colleges, including drinking, beards and piercings.

The letter posted this week and an accompanying Q&A posted online don’t provide details about what same-sex romantic behaviors are and aren’t allowed. But it seems to shut the door on the idea that gay and lesbian couples will be allowed to kiss and hold hands on campus like their heterosexual classmates.

“Same-sex romantic behavior cannot lead to eternal marriage and is therefore not compatible with the principles included in the honor code,” wrote Paul V. Johnson, commissioner of the church education system.

Church members Joey Pierson and Luke Larsen held hands as they chanted and sang along Friday at the rally. The young couple that identify as gay are still in high school, but came out to support fellow gay Latter-day Saints who attend BYU.

“I’m tired of feeling so suppressed and not feeling the love that God wants us to feel,” said Pierson, 18. “It’s time to show what God’s love looks like and that his God is unconditional and infinite and reaches everyone, not just straight people and not just celibate gay people.”

Calaway Williams, a BYU senior who is gay, called the letter a slap in the face that he interpreted to mean his faith doesn’t love or accept LGBTQ people. He called it infuriating to hear top leaders speak of their love for everyone and then see policies that don’t match that principle.

“I want them to know it’s not OK what they have done. These are people’s lives they are messing with,” said Williams, 24, of Minot, North Dakota. “We are deserving of love and acceptance, and we are not going away.”

Ex-GOP US Rep Schock says he’s gay, regrets anti-gay stances

BY MICHAEL TARM

CHICAGO (AP)—Saying he would do more if he were in Congress today to support LGBTQ rights—which he opposed when he served—former Illinois U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock came out as gay Thursday in social media and web posts.

In the postings on Instagram and a webpage, the 38-year-old also describes his anguish at being rejected by members of his deeply religious family, including his mother, after they learned last year he was gay.

The longtime Republican ламол that he opposed gay marriage while representing his conservative congressional district in central Illinois, noting Democrat and fellow Illinoisan Barack Obama once held a similar position.

“That fact doesn’t make my then position any less wrong, but it’s sometimes easy to forget that it was leaders of both parties who for so long wrongly understood what it was to defend the right to marry,” he writes.

He adds: “The truth is that if I were in Congress today, I would support LGBTQ rights in every way I could.”

The one-time rising GOP star and prolific Republican fund-raiser garnered national attention after appearing on the cover of Men’s Health showing off his six-pack abs. He successfully marketed himself during six years in Congress as an unwavering fiscal conservative.

Schock resigned from Congress in 2015 amid scrutiny of his spending. He was indicted a year later on charges that accused him of illegally dipping into campaign and government coffers to subsidize a lavish lifestyle. But all charges were dropped in 2019 amid criticism of how prosecutors handled the case.

Schock confirmed the posts’ authenticity in a text message to the Journal Star in Peoria, the heart of the congressional district he represented.

As he composed the social media posts, Schock said he knew he could expect sharp criticism from the community to which he said he now wanted to belong.

“Where was I, they will ask, when I was in a position to help advance issues important to gay Americans?” his posting says.

Many longtime supporters of gay-rights blasted him on social media Thursday.

“Anyone can be gay. Everyone who is should be out,” said Democratic Pennsylvania state Rep. Brian Sims in a Facebook posting.

“But to be a part of a Community, especially one you’ve attacked, is really problematic.”

Schock now understands, he said, that he is indebted to those activists who supported rights he opposed for so long.
**TV pilot 'Capitol Barbie' tackles gender, race and politics**

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN  
Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Riley Del Rey is taking some inspiration from the time she spent working in Washington, D.C., to create a television pilot she hopes will get people talking about gender, race and politics while showcasing New Mexico’s talent.

Del Rey, an Albuquerque-based filmmaker, and her all-New Mexico cast and crew will begin filming in the coming days.

Directed and produced by Del Rey, “Capitol Barbie” is described as a “’Mean Girls’ style political thriller” about aspiring Latinos working in Washington. It takes a page out of Del Rey’s life while co-writer Violet Martinez infuses some dark comedy reminiscent of “Mean Girls” and “Jawbreaker.”

Del Rey and Martinez said in an interview with The Associated Press that the outcome was a “really good script that a lot of people believed in.” Now, they said about 70 people are attached to the project.

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“..."I can live openly now as a gay man because of the extraordinary brave people who had the courage to fight for our rights when I did not," he writes.

Schock starts the postings on both Instagram and the webpage with the words: "I am gay."

He said he began driving to his mother’s house from Los Angeles to tell her that last year. But she had learned of it before he arrived and when he spoke with her on the phone en route, “She told me to turn around and go back to LA.”

“I’ve come to terms with the fact that it might take my loved ones more time than I would like,” he writes. “And I realize some might never come around.”

He said he still receives occasional emails from family members “trying to sell me on conversion therapy,” the widely debunked notion that someone who is gay can—with therapy—become heterosexual.

Schock described growing up in a conservative Apostolic Christian Church where members even considered “watching TV to be sinfully idle.” He said he doesn’t think he was aware there were other gays in his midst.

“I understood that the teachings of my upbringing were pretty clear on the matter,” he said. The ambitious Schock began buying real estate in high school, became a member of the local school board at 19 and an Illinois legislator at 23, then entered the U.S. Congress at just 27.

He said the fact he is gay wouldn’t be a revelation for many who know him, adding that coming out publicly as gay is “just one of those things in my life in need of explicit affirmation, to finally validate who I am as a person.”

“In many ways," he writes, “I regret the time wasted in not having done so sooner."

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Of course, the last thing I want to do is be spending time in a hospital—ground zero for the coronavirus. They say the people most at risk are the old and the infirmed. I may not be old, but it doesn’t get more infirmed than being sliced open like a sturgeon. But you know who is really at risk? The Pope. The last time the Pontiff was seen in public, he was sneezing and coughing and hacking. He has since cancelled everything on his schedule. While the official word is that he’s been tested and is negative, there has been a single case of the coronavirus reported within Vatican City. And that got one of my friends thinking—if something happens to the Pope, how will they have a Conclave of Cardinals? I say they vote by app—perhaps they can hire those geniuses who made the one for the Iowa Caucus! Then we can see white or black smoke on our cell phones. That’s me—always thinking ahead.

Speaking of old, let’s talk about two of our icons. Last week in Los Angeles, Oprah fell—and it registered on the Richter scale! One semi-notable defended Winfrey on Facebook, saying it’s not nice to make fun of an elderly woman falling. Ooooh, Oprah ain’t gonna like that. Meanwhile, Madonna took a tumble at Le Grande Rex in Paris. According to “The Sun”, she “burst into tears and struggled to stand”. Another outlet states that she “hobbled off stage with a cane”—which I’m sure they keep handy for Madge...just in case.

He’s been quiet for a while, but last week Aaron Schock surfaced in Rio. And he was all over sexy Eliad Cohen. Now, I know what you’re all thinking—Aaron Schock is dating that little Cuban boy who came to America on an inner tube! No, that was Elián González, who I believe is currently working on Bernie Sanders’ campaign. This is Eliad Cohen—a very successful Israeli circuit party promoter (and occasional actor and model). If you didn’t know who they were, you’d probably think Aaron and Eliad were just another hot gay circuit couple. But, of course, people do know who they are, and photographed them...as one does. And, as this one does, I’ll post them on BillyMasters.com—along with all those other photos (and videos) of every inch of Aaron.

And then Aaron did something unexpected—he came out. In a long, rambling essay. I really would have preferred some illustrations—as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. But, OK, I read it. Here’s my two cents. I don’t really care one iota about Aaron Schock. His minor political career didn’t interest me; his conservative views don’t interest me; and his voting record on anti-LGBTQ initiatives doesn’t interest me (but, should you like details, he supported DOMA and opposed DADT). I realize I’m in the minority in my apathy—if social media means anything. The gays posting online are livid that in Schock’s statement, he never said the words, “I’m sorry”.

Here’s my question—why does anyone need to hear “I’m sorry” from someone so insignificant in their lives? Why are you elevating him to that importance? If you read his missive, it’s clear he’s a damaged person from a very dysfunctional family. He has demons he hasn’t even dealt with—again, not my problem. However, even I, the apathetic Billy Masters, can imagine the horror when he telephoned his mother to tell her he is gay just before going home for Easter, only to be told that he should turn around—he wasn’t welcomed. I have no idea what that would feel like, but I’m willing to imagine it wouldn’t be fun. I suspect if he were less attractive, he’d probably get a bit more empathy from most gay men. And, if those haters were really honest, they’d admit that given half a chance, they’d sleep with him.

While we’re blaming things on Rio, do you remember Pita Taufatofua? If the name doesn’t ring a bell (or roll
to the project. “The characters in the script are fictional but obviously having worked in politics I had a perspective about being a trans woman and a Latina on Capitol Hill that I definitely put into these characters too,” Del Rey said. “So some of the topics in this thriller may be controversial but of course it’s how people really feel in their politics and ideology, just how they feel about women in the workplace, how they feel about abuse of power, how they feel about gender and race and politics.” Del Rey said in election year, the aim is to create a show that will engage different political philosophies and inspire debate. The mini-series stars native New Mexican Elese Jones as Dolly, an intern who dreams of working on Capitol Hill. She ruffles the feathers of a politician vying to become the first Latina president and realizes that pursuing her dreams won’t be easy. Jeanette Aguilar Harris, a life-long New Mexican and a series regular on CBS’ “Under Suspicion,” will play Melissa Lopez-Gaffney, the politician gunning to become president. A former congressional intern, Del Rey in 2017 filed an ethics complaint against then-New Mexico Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham over allegations that she was fired from her internship over her transgender identity. At the time, Del Rey said she was coming forward with her story because of the wave of news reports about harassment and discrimination. Lujan Grisham, who is now serving her first term as governor, denied the allegations.

But for Del Rey, Martinez and the others behind the project, it’s more about showing Hollywood that New Mexico’s film industry has more to offer when it comes to above-the-line talent such as writers and directors. Netflix has a bustling production hub on the southern edge of Albuquerque and NBCUniversal is planning to unveil in the coming days its new studios just north of downtown, but locals say the door has yet to open to some opportunities within the industry. “There’s a lot of pressure to really deliver considering that we’re not only taking on these issues but taking on the Hollywood industry and some of the larger productions here in New Mexico,” Del Rey said. “We’re confident about leading the project. I want to make sure that the big production hubs have some eyes on our local talent.” The New Mexico Film Office announced Del Rey’s pilot, saying filming will start Friday. The crew will be using the University of New Mexico and a historic downtown building to recreate the halls of Washington, D.C. Team USA athlete protests transgender bill at Idaho rally BOISE, Idaho (AP)—A transgender athlete who competes for Team USA is calling Idaho’s proposal to ban transgender females from competing against other women discriminatory. Chris Mosier was in Boise Tuesday to protest a bill targeting transgender athletes and students, Idaho Press reported. Mosier is a transgender man and triathlete sponsored by Nike Inc. “I’m here because your bill, HB 500, is the worst in the country attacking (transgender) student-athletes,” Mosier told a rally attended by about 200 people. The measure is one of several making their way through GOP-controlled state legislatures this year in Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, Tennessee and Washington state. The Idaho bill sponsored by Republican Rep. Barbara Ehardt would ban transgender women and girls from playing school sports on female teams, allow the gender of female students to be disputed and allow a medical exam to resolve gender disputes. The measure has passed the in the House and has been introduced in the Senate. Ehardt contends the bill is intended to ensure continued opportunities for girls and women in sports. “We need leaders in business, politics, and athletics that promote women and create opportunities for us in sports,” Ehardt said. “It is disheartening to think that some athletes, under the guise of equality, do not support girls and women as they pursue their dreams to stand atop the podium as a champion because a biological male had taken her spot.” The bill has been condemned by Idaho’s transgender community and others. “Trans girls are girls,” Mosier told the crowd at the rally organized by the Idaho American Civil Liberties Union and attended by groups including Add the Words and Planned Parenthood, KIVI-TV reported. “I want young people to know that it’s okay to be your authentic self and to play the sports that you love,” Mosier said.
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off the tongue), surely you’ll remember the brouhaha made over the shirtless and oily Tongan flag bearer at the Rio Olympics. That was Pita. If the Tokyo Olympics take place this summer (and that’s a big if), Pita will be there front and center. The hunky Tongan has qualified to compete in the kayak category. And I bet he’s a shoe-in for carrying that flag again.

March 17th is a big day in New York. It’s the day that people all over the city vomit and urinate in the streets—otherwise known as Saint Patrick’s Day. Apparently, not all New Yorkers celebrate it on the same day. On March 3rd, Staten Island had their own Saint Patty’s Parade. Someone who traditionally participates is the reigning Miss Staten Island. However, Madison L’Insalata was uninvited hours before the parade. Why? Because a day earlier, she came out as bisexual in the "New York Post". After being banned, she protested, saying, “I still wanted to march because I felt I could make a much greater impact being in the parade, waving my rainbow flag.” L’Insalata did indeed show up—but stood behind the barriers with other spectators. Of course, people recognized her—she was wearing her Miss Staten Island sash along with a rainbow scarf. And, yes, she was waving her rainbow flag.

Continuing her string of appearances in this column, it’s time for yet another RuPaul story. For those of you who have been waiting to binge watch "AJ and The Queen", be forewarned—this is not only the first season, it’s the last. Netflix cancelled it last week. RuPaul Tweeted, “End of the road for AJ and The Queen. Netflix has decided to not extend our trip across America. Thank you for all the love & support. We’re so very proud of the work.”

In some fascinating news, Linda Bloodworth-Thomason has created a new chapter to her seminal sitcom, "Designing Women". This new incarnation will be a play! This adaptation will have its world premiere at the TheaterSquared in Fayetteville, Arkansas on August 12th and run for one month. Subsequent dates will also take place at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and the Dallas Theater Center. No casting or plots have been announced, but Linda did make a statement. “What I really want to do was take these women as we last saw them and set them down right now. They’ll have the same history, be the same people, have the same attitudes, the same philosophies, but they’ll be talking about #MeToo and the Kardashians, and Donald Trump, and all that’s going on right now.”

Onto news about a reboot you’ll be able to see wherever you are. Amazon Prime Video is producing new episodes of "The Kids In The Hall"! Actually, it’s being produced by Canadian Amazon Original Series, which only makes sense since the original show originated in Canada. The entire cast has signed on for eight episodes.

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Henry in Baltimore: "I love Daniel Newman on "Walking Dead" and know how much he enjoys posting thirsty photos online. What do you know about him? And do you have any nudes?"

We first got a glimpse of the sexy ginger in the 2017 calendar "Red Hot Exposed"—he was the cover model and Mr. June. In 2017, he came out as a member of the LGBT community (back then, we didn’t have Qs or As). He even copped to having a boyfriend for over a year. Some sources describe him as Paul Newman’s grandson, but I can find no verification of that. Lately, he’s been posting several hot photos and encouraging people to slide into his DMs. Of course, he’s showing everything but. Speaking of butts, we do have that. Along with his fabulously ripped torso.

When I may soon join "The Walking Dead", it’s definitely time to end yet another column. Even when I’m gone, my website will carry on. So check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site that can (hopefully) raise the dead! While I am certain I’ll survive this major operation, one can never be too sure. So, if you have a question, you have two options: hold a séance, or send an e-mail to Billy@BillyMasters.com. Either way, I hope to get back to you before Danny Newman slides into Schock...literally. So, until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
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