

LGBTQ HISTORY MONTH

8 New Kids' Books for LGBTQ History Month

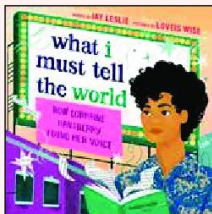
by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer



October marks LGBTQ History Month, so it's the perfect time to round up some of 2024's best new kids' books about LGBTQ history and historical figures.

Picture Books

"The ABCs of Queer History," by Seema Yasmin, illustrated by Lucy Kirk (Workman). "A is for abundant, because we are many; our histories show we are diverse and plenty," begins this rhyming volume. Each letter of the alphabet offers one or more words about



concepts, events, identities, and people that have contributed to queer history. Some of the rhymes and meter bump awkwardly, but

see **MOMBIAN**, page 4

Ripping America's fabrica Trump seeks a society without us

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



Donald Trump returning to power would be calamitous, because he would actually do the reckless, destructive things he is threatening.

My voice-to-text transcribed that last phrase as "he is pregnant." If he were, I would support his right to make his own reproductive decisions. If I were the baby, I would prefer to be switched with another in the nursery after birth to avoid ever being known as his child.

Many people are annoyed by the flood of political ads on television. One I have seen repeatedly in the Washington media market is from Maryland US Senate candidate Larry Hogan claiming he will codify Roe

v. Wade into law. Hogan is a Republican, and if his party wins control of the Senate, they will abolish the filibuster and pass a nationwide abortion ban.

Annoyances are things like my smartphone transcribing things badly, or an online game making me say no to the pop-up ad four times before letting me play, or the woman at the bakery shouting people's orders. The damage done to our social fabric by Trump's constant lies and viciousness is far more grave.

Permit me, therefore, to share a couple examples of people the

see **ROSENDALL**, page 4



Boston's LGBTQ+ Community wants to hear from Kamala Harris

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Since announcing her candidacy for president, Vice President Kamala Harris's silence on LGBTQ+ issues has been appallingly deafening. Harris's website has one sentence about us under the heading "Protect Civil Rights and Freedoms: As President, she'll fight to pass the Equality Act to enshrine anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ+ Americans in health care, housing, education, and more into law." The Advocate ran articles about the debates for president and vice president, and how there was no of LGBTQ+ issues.

Taking us for granted?

"I'm getting used to saying Madam President. But with that said, it is important for her to recognize us and elevate the LGBTQ+ community. The fact that she has not spoken definitively about our community is a misstep in my mind," said Paul Glass, the co-founder and Program Coordinator of LGBTQ+ Elders of Color. "I think it's something she needs to correct. I think she needs to have a town hall and address the issue concerning LGBTQ+ issues in particular."

However, with less than a month away, Harris and her campaign may



Then Attorney General Kamala Harris, right, officiates the wedding of Kris Perry, from left, and Sandy Stier, in San Francisco in 2013. Photo by Jeff Chiu, Associated Press.

feel she lacks the time to hold a town hall meeting with us. With LGBTQ+ Americans more likely to be Democrats, there was a groundswell of support from the LGBTQ+ community immediately followed her announcement in July. Immediately after announcing her bid for the White House, an HRC press release announced that over 1,100 LGBTQ+ leaders, celebri-

ties, influencers, and activists had signed a letter endorsing Harris.

For two decades, Harris has been a staunch supporter of LGBTQ+ rights, beginning with her tenure as San Francisco's district attorney in 2004 to the present as the Biden-Harris administration with the passing of many pro-LG-

see **MONROE**, page 3

Supreme Court to take up 2 LGBTQ cases

By Keen News Service

The U.S. Supreme Court opened its 2024-25 session October 7 with at least 10 LGBTQ-related petitions before it. Seven of those petitions involve transgender issues: Four ask whether states can limit a minor's access to treatment for gender dysphoria, and three ask whether states

can ban transgender females from participating in female sports competitions.

Of those 10 LGBTQ-related cases, the court has agreed to hear two cases and refused to hear two others this session. Six others await disposition.

The Supreme Court announced on October 4 that it will review the

Sixth Circuit's ruling in a case in which a straight employee challenges lower court rulings that say she cannot sue under a law prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination. In the other case, the court has taken up a case from Tennessee to decide whether states can ban minors from

see **SCOTUS**, page 5



"According to Barbra, I would have no career if it weren't for her. She turned down 'Barbarella,' she turned down 'Klute,' 'They Shoot Horses, Don't They?' and 'Julia.' Can you see her...oh, never mind."

—Jane Fonda shakes her head—probably at the thought of Babs in any of those "Barbarella" outfits. I mean, the boots alone could kill her!

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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Monroe

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BTQ+ policies and initiatives. Some feel her track record speaks for itself. However, others think it's not enough to rest on her laurels.

Unmet Trans issues

"She has the iconic video talking about trans rights and trans lives from when she ran many years ago, but what about 2024?" Giselle Byrd shared with me. Byrd is the new executive director of The Theater Offensive in Boston and the first Black transwoman to head a major theater company in the country.

"The life is different. Our opportunities are different. But we are still seeing the same sort of injustices. Trans folks are still being murdered. How are we being protected at a federal level because there is not a lot of protection for us? We are not thinking beyond gay marriage."

With anti-trans bills continuing to be introduced into legislation across the country with the aim to obliterate any traces of transgender Americans from public life—education, bathrooms, athletics, military, healthcare, and legal recognition—Harris cannot afford to not speak up on trans civil rights while on the campaign trail, because Trump is on the attack. The "Team Trump Agenda 47 Policy Tour" clarifies its plan to revoke gender-affirming care. The plan states it will "stop the chemical, physical, and emotional mutilation of our youth because no serious country should be telling its children that they were born with the wrong gender."

Although as senator, Harris was a pro-LGBTQ+ ally, she did make some missteps on transgender advocacy. In 2015, she denied gender-affirming surgery for a trans sister in prison. In 2019, Harris co-sponsored the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) and the Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act (SESTA) with 27 Republican and Democrat senators. Had she repealed FOSTA-SESTA, both Acts working together would have decriminalized sex work, created a safer and consensual work environment online, provided financial stability, and stopped sex trafficking.

What Harris must do

Harris has the LGBTQ+ vote in the bag. However, once in office, we must use our voting clout.

The LGBTQ+ community must push Harris on a laundry list of issues. These immediate ones that would exponentially improve quality of life:

Repealed FOSTA/SESTA to decriminalize sex workers, allowing sex workers the dignity of a safe work environment.

Protect gender-affirming care because the government should not decide.

Protect Respect for Marriage Act 2022 that expands same-sex and interracial marriage rights against a Trump Supreme Court.

Pass the Equality Act prohibiting anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination nationwide beyond employment and in every aspect of our lives, like housing, federal funding, and public education, to name a few.

We must stress to Harris that democracy can only begin to work when those relegated to the fringes of society can begin to sample what those in society take for granted as their inalienable right.

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the joyful, affirming, diverse and resilient character of the LGBTQ community comes through in both the words and the colorful, fun illustrations.

"What I Must Tell the World: How Lorraine Hansberry Found Her Voice," by Jay Leslie, illustrated by Loveis Wise (Zando Young Readers/Hillman Grad Books). When Lorraine Hansberry was a child, her parents won a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case against housing discrimination, and taught her, "Our stories can change the world." Inspired by them and the many prominent Black leaders drawn to their orbit, Hansberry sought to find her own voice as a writer and playwright, ultimately realizing that to be true to the stories she wanted to tell, she needed to be true to herself and acknowledge her attraction to women. Newly confident and committed to her vision, she became the first Black woman to have a play performed on Broadway. A powerful and moving biography.

"Glenn Burke, Game Changer," by Phil Bildner, illustrated by Daniel J. O'Brien (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Glenn Burke was the first openly gay player in Major League Baseball and the co-inventor of the high five. Bildner shares the story of Burke's baseball achievements as well as the battle against homophobia that ultimately led to his departure from professional sports. That struggle contributed to his "trouble with drugs and the law," before he died from AIDS complications in 1995. The compelling biography touches on some tough topics with age-appropriate thoughtfulness while celebrating the life of a changemaker.

"Jimmy's Rhythm & Blues: The Extraordinary Life of James Baldwin," by Michelle Meadows, illustrated by Jamiel Law (HarperCollins). Before he was known as James Baldwin, he was Jimmy, growing up in Harlem during the Great Depression. Meadows gives us a lyrical biography of Baldwin from childhood onward, capturing something of the rhythm of his work in her blank verse. This is an outstanding biography, offering young readers just enough detail about Baldwin's

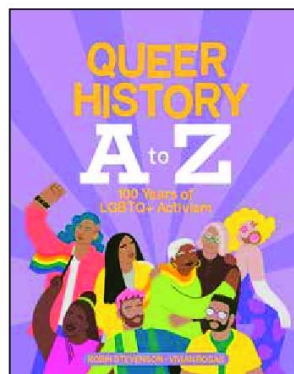
life and importance to inform without overwhelming; incorporating both his Black and gay identities; and honoring his legacy in the rhythm of the text itself.

Middle Grade Books

"Queer History A to Z: 100 Years of LGBTQ+ Activism," by Robin Stevenson, illustrated by Vivian Rosas (Kids Can Press). Stonewall Award honoree Stevenson brings us a thoughtful and wide-ranging book offering informative and inspiring snapshots of people, movements, events, and concepts from U.S. and Canadian LGBTQ history, with a focus on those who have helped push LGBTQ equality forward. While the alphabetic structure means the topics are not covered chronologically, Stevenson always offers context and clarity and refers readers to other entries as needed. Rosas' illustrations are bright, bold, and contemporary, despite the historical focus of the book, adding to its appeal for tween readers.

"The Queens' English: The Young Readers' LGBTQIA+ Dictionary of Lingo and Colloquial Phrases," by Chloe O. Davis (Simon & Schuster). This young readers' adaptation of Davis's book for adults offers definitions of both contemporary and historical terms related to LGBTQIA+ identities and culture, along with insights into their origins and examples of usage. A few terms may skew the volume towards older middle grade and young adult readers (depending on your opinions here), but Davis tries to be thoughtful about her audience. The usage example for "sex," for instance, involves a student telling their health teacher that they don't feel ready for sex yet. Overall, it's an entertaining and informative reference guide.

"Queer and Fearless: Poems Celebrating the Lives of LGBTQ+ Heroes," by Rob Sanders, illustrated by Harry Woodgate (Penguin Workshop). This compilation of biographical portraits stands out for its use of poetry to convey the meaning and importance of historical and contemporary LGBTQ political and social activists. Sanders matches poetic forms carefully with each subject, for example deploying the march-like beat



of rhyming couplets to tell of Bayard Rustin, who organized the 1963 March on Washington. A few paragraphs of prose on each figure add details and substance to the emotional connections that the poems create.

"Jane Addams: The Most Dangerous Woman in America," by Marlene Targ Brill (Ohio University Press). Social activist and reformer Addams was the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This biography charts the course of her life and offers readers useful context on society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brill is cautious, however, about Addams' relationships with Ellen Gates Starr and Mary Rozet Smith, seeing Starr simply as a close friend and colleague and Smith as a "longtime friend and partner," but also noting, "There has been much speculation about the exact nature of their relationship. Was it romantic or were they good friends?" Other historians have come down more firmly on the side of romance. Despite Brill's academic caution here, she has given young readers a substantive but readable biography of Addams, whose tireless work deserves to be more widely known.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog plus a searchable database of 1,600+ LGBTQ family books.

wanted him to wait there for me. I thought, my goodness, he's ready to move in. I made a reference to my fiancé to indicate my relationship status. It is awkward to talk about personal boundaries, but without them one can drown in other people's suffering.

When I told a friend about Kevin, he reminded me of Us Helping Us, a community-based organization in the Washington, DC area "committed to improving the health and well-being of communities of color" and "reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the entire Black community." I wrote down UHU's contact information and put it in my wallet.

I ran into Kevin again several days later. I gave him the information and said UHU could help him. He studied it and put it in his pocket. He was in a hurry to get somewhere. I hope he contacts them.

Another morning, I encountered a neighbor recently diagnosed with cancer. Lee, now in his 80s, was being pushed in his wheelchair by his 25-year-old straight grandson Liam on their morning stroll.

Lee's partner Don died four years ago. Liam and his family attended Don's memorial service. Before he met Don, Lee was married to

a woman with whom he had four children. He has 14 grandchildren. As we chatted, I joked that Trump would approve of his success as a patriarch, though he might be bothered by some of the details.

America's social fabric was woven not by government dictate, but by people of all kinds over time. If Trump wins in November, how much of it will he try to rip out? As Adam Serwer of The Atlantic wrote, "The cruelty is the point."

Even if we defeat Trumpism, the supremacists will fight our egalitarian republic every step of the way. Liam told me about his home county in Virginia where there are still cross burnings.

The world is richer and more varied than we know. The ability to remain open to new things is a gift, not a threat. Those who think they know everything and press coercive certitudes have caused much needless bloodshed over the centuries. We can defeat them if, as Barack Obama said last week in Pittsburgh, we get off our couches, put down our phones, and vote.

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

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PO BOX E14,
Boston, MA 02127

Publishers Emeritus:
Jeff Coakley
Sue O'Connell

Editorial:
Editor-in-Chief
Sue O'Connell
sue.baywindows@gmail.com

Contributing Writers:
Judith Lebling
Billy Masters
Richard J. Rosendall
Dana Rudolph
Rev. Irene Monroe
Jules Becker

Letters to the Editor:
letters.baywindows@gmail.com

News tips:
news.baywindows@gmail.com

Calendar listings:
news.baywindows@gmail.com

Announcements:
announcements.baywindows@gmail.com

Advertising:
Display Advertising
sales@baywindows.com

Classified Advertising:
classifiedads@baywindows.com

Editorial Design Manager:
Julie Walker Palmer

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SCOTUS

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receiving treatment for gender dysphoria.

In the discrimination against straights case, *Ames v. Ohio*, a straight female employee of the Ohio Department of Youth Services filed a lawsuit after two gay coworkers were chosen for positions she sought or held and then she was demoted. Marlean Ames' lawsuit said she was the victim of sexual orientation discrimination. But both the district court and a Sixth Circuit panel ruled against her, noting that she offered "no evidence other than her own experience."

In her appeal, Ames' attorneys argue that the Sixth Circuit and four other courts of appeals require majority-group plaintiffs to prove—in addition to the other elements of Title VII—"background circumstances to support the suspicion that the defendant is that unusual employer who discriminates against the majority."

The court, in June, indicated it would accept the Biden administration's appeal of another Sixth Circuit decision: *U.S. v. Tennessee* (or, more formally, *U.S. v. Jonathan Skrmetti*, attorney general for Tennessee).

The U.S. Department of Justice filed the appeal to the Supreme Court after the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the state of Tennessee could enforce a ban against medical treatment of gender dysphoria in any minor in the state. Specifically, noted the DOJ, the Tennessee law prohibits any treatment that would enable a minor to "identify with, or live as, a purported identity inconsistent with the minor's sex..." And the law prohibits any treatment for a minor's "purported discomfort or distress from a discordance between the minor's sex and asserted identity."

Nineteen states have laws that bar treatment of minors for gender dysphoria. More than 50 transgender adults, including actor Elliot Page, filed a brief in support of the administration. And several LGBTQ legal organizations, including GLAD and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, submitted a brief in support of the U.S. government's appeal. Members of Congress, including 11 senators and 153 mem-

bers of the House also submitted a brief in support of the government's case.

The Supreme Court has not yet set the dates for oral arguments in the two cases it has accepted.

In June, the court also refused to take up the appeals of two cases seeking to determine whether states can ban transgender females from participating in women's and girls sports competitions. *Department of Education v. Louisiana* and *Department of Education v. Tennessee*.

There are many other cases pending.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has made treatment for gender dysphoria a somewhat common complaint in his remarks to campaign rallies.

In *Mahmoud v. Montgomery County*, three sets of parents have appealed a decision from the Fourth Circuit that held public schools did not have to give parents an opportunity to opt out their children from classroom books that discussed sexuality. The parents said this violated their right to free exercise of religion; the Fourth Circuit panel disagreed, saying the parents were free to exercise their beliefs and teach their children anything they wanted. The books which prompted the conflict

were LGBTQ-inclusive storybooks for elementary school children. (Status: Montgomery County, Maryland, has until October 16 to file their brief in opposition to the parents' petition that the high court hear their appeal.)

Meanwhile, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has made treatment for gender dysphoria a somewhat common complaint in his remarks to campaign rallies. In his second visit to Butler, Pa., rattling off a mind-numbing list of impossible campaign promises (make sure everyone can afford "groceries, a beautiful car, and a home," "build a defense shield around our country," and "keep critical race theory and transgender insanity the hell out of our schools."

After rambling on some more, Trump said, as president he would "keep men out of women's sports" because "it's so demeaning to women." He has derided Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris for having supported for the Equality Act, which would prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination

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billy masters

How was your week? Probably better than **Anderson Cooper's**—to say nothing of all the people in West Florida. There he was, in Bradenton, Florida, getting pummeled...and not in the good way! Call me crazy, but I always thought Coop would enjoy getting hit in the face with something slippery and wet. "Woah! That wasn't good," said Andy. Eh, chacun à son gout. Meanwhile on CBS, your favorite and mine, **Rob Marciano**, resurfaced just a few miles away from Cooper in Tampa. After being canned by ABC, he was gobbled up by the Eye Network.

We interrupt this column for a special announcement—**Bette Midler** wants to make a sequel to one of her classic flicks. Given the time of year, you'd think I meant "Hocus Pocus 3". And, yes, she does want to do that. But that's not what we're talking about. Sure, talk of a second "First Wives Club" surfaces every once in a while. "The Fabulous Four" probably put an end to that. Instead, Midler would like to see where CC Bloom ended up when she got older. Yes, she wants to make "Beaches 2"! Of course, she doesn't have a script, a director, or a story. In fact, I don't believe she even has the rights! But she told an interviewer, "It would be great if I could revisit that character at this age. I think it would be marvelous. And the songs would be great." From your lips...

I'm writing to you from a plane, sitting between two (ostensibly) heterosexual men. Having nothing to do, my first thought was to watch some gay porn. Instead, I did something even gayer. I turned on the last two episodes of "Dancing with the Stars"! I think my reasons for not watching this show and "The Bachelor" are well documented. However, if that former "Bachelor", **Joey Graziadei**, isn't a ringer, then I don't know who is. This is someone who moves like a professional dancer...and I know this because for several seasons I was "dating" half of the "Boston Ballet". I also question whether this "Bachelor" has interest in anyone female...but that's another story (we learned he's a former cheerleader). Obviously I have a fondness for hometown boy **Danny Amendola**, and I can't fault him for showing off that body! As for some behind-the-scenes gossip, I hear that one of the pros was told to lose weight or their contract would not be renewed. Speaking of scuttlebutt (and what a butt it is), rumor has it that another pro on the show is itching to come out. Problem is, it could ruffle a few feathers. Lastly, on their tribute to "Soul Train", is it just me or did **Dwight Howard** bear a striking resemblance to **Sheryl Underwood** from "The Talk"?

By the by, didya know that prior to going on DWTS, Joey got something called armpit Botox! An alleged expert says, "Botox in the underarms treats hyperhidrosis and helps reduce pit stains. It makes sure Joey stays sweat free on DWTS". The more you know...

The hoover with a heart of gold is returning to the Big Apple. Last week, **Hugh Jackman** made an announcement that shook the rafters. Starting in January and continuing April through August, he will perform two concerts each month at Radio City Music Hall. "From New York with Love" is being billed as a retrospective look at his career—including material from "The Boy from Oz", "The Greatest Showman", "The Music Man", "Oklahoma!", "Sunset Boulevard", "Carousel", and more. One person close to the jacked man told me, "Hugh loves theatre. He'd move to NYC and just do Broadway—if it weren't for the movie money." At least he hasn't lost sight of his priorities.

The Broadway League has (once again) reversed a catastrophically bad decision: "In recognition of

the passing of several beloved Broadway community members in recent weeks, and in honor of their significant impact on that community, the Committee of Theatre Owners has announced that they will dim the lights of all Broadway theatres in New York in honor of **Adrian Bailey, Gavin Creel, and Maggie Smith**." They add, "In addition, the Committee is reviewing their current dimming policy and procedures." Many people have asked me, "What is the big deal? Flick a switch, dim some lights, move on." And that would be great, if it were that simple. I'm told many unions are involved and the dimming of lights (typically accompanied by some graphic which some techie in high school could probably facilitate in seconds)—ends up costing thousands of dollars. Can't someone make an app for that?

This ruling was made in the nick of time. I'm not saying **Liza** is near death, but you know...tick tock. We previously told you that Miss Minnelli is working on her memoirs. The book will be called "Kids, Wait 'Till You Hear This" and is scheduled to be released in the spring of 2026. As you know, she's being assisted on this project by her bestie, **Michael Feinstein**. "We've been joined at the hip for 40 years," says Liza—a curious statement from someone who has had no fewer than three hip replacements! I bet having someone joined to your hip makes the replacement a whole lot more complicated. Liza calls Feinstein "my absolute favorite collaborator. Michael's one of the greats, he's razor-sharp and he tells the truth. That's important because, as I fly toward my eighth decade of living, memories differ." I bet they do. Speaking of differing memories, let's start with Liza thinking she can fly!

With precious few projects on the horizon for women of a certain age, **Barbra Streisand** is continuing to stroll down memory lane. Hot on the heels of her best-selling memoir, she's now opening up even more. She's planning to participate in a large-scale documentary which will take advantage of her vast archive of material. While she is allegedly not controlling the narrative (as if), the producers have said the following: "The production has been granted unprecedented access to Streisand's personal archives, including hundreds of hours of personal, never-before-seen video, photographs, audio recordings, and personal keepsakes from throughout her acclaimed career." That couldn't have been hard—they just had to go to one of those shops in her basement.

Every once in a while, someone asks me about **Calvin Klein's** former beau, **Nick Gruber** (no relation). I seem to recall him being arrested after some out-of-control house party. And I think there were a few brushes with the law that led to assault and drug charges. But that was eons ago. And then, poof, as if a gift from the gods, I looked up and saw him on TV. No, he didn't have a juicy role to sink his teeth into. He was on the news—and the news wasn't good. It was a story about an older gay couple who lived in Santa Rosa, California. During the pandemic, they took in a roommate—or a "roommate"—they didn't clarify. After doing a clearly not thorough background check, they rented Nick a room of his own. A month later, the house was raided! Why? Police said it was a routine probation check. Neighbors saw people coming and going, talked to the landlords, and a dispute ensued. Police showed up and found a locked safe which had a gun, nine pounds of methamphetamines, and \$10K in cash.

Gruber doesn't say he was "dealing drugs". He says he was a "broker" in "the drug industry". OK, so he's a dealer with a thesaurus! He was still convicted and



Bette Midler

Photo by Library of Congress Life, via Wikimedia Commons.



Hugh Jackman

Photo by Dick Thomas Johnson, via Wikimedia Commons.



Barbra Streisand

Photo by Ifescript, via Wikimedia Commons.



Dan Link

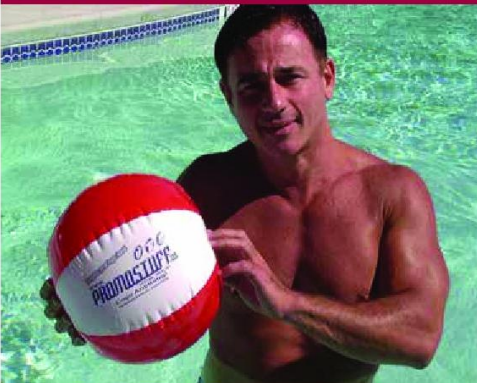
went to jail for two years. Legally, the landlords were advised to send an eviction notice to Gruber in prison which also stated that if someone didn't claim his belongings, they would be disposed of. The landlords say they donated the stuff to the Mormon Church. Oh, the humanity! Gruber claims his belongings included thousands of dollars of designer clothes, furnishings and jewelry. He sued the couple for the value of his missing property—which he totaled at \$182K! Problem was, he didn't have receipts (well...you know...). One item on his list caught my eye. He says he had an H&M V-neck shirt costing \$225. Honey, I shop at H&M—NOTHING costs that much! The judge awarded him \$8,683.92, which Nick felt was a win! You can see his interview and the entire news report on BillyMasters.com.

Our "Ask Billy" question is actually more of an answer. Patrick in San Francisco writes, "If you've never watched 'Naked and Afraid', you've missed out on the hottest little twunk to come around in a long time—Dan Link."

I have indeed watched "Naked and Afraid" and written about it in this very column. Patrick goes on to tell me that Dan is the first openly gay man to win "Naked and Afraid—Last One Standing", which took place in South Africa. Apparently Dan is a scientist, but did some nude modeling in his earlier years. Since Patrick shared with me, I'll share with you—on BillyMasters.com.

When I'm looking up the word "twunk", it's definitely time to end another column. I bet Nick could look it up in his thesaurus. Once again, we ran long—which sounds like some of the photos you'll find on www.BillyMasters.com—the site that's never afraid of nudity! If you have a question or want to share a find of your own, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Liza gets her fourth hip (and you know what that means...the fifth one is free). Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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