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Why LGBTQ+ Parents Must Again Lead in the Fight for Marriage Equality

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis has made headlines with her recent petition asking the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn marriage equality. While most LGBTQ+ legal experts I've read are doubtful the court will take her case, opponents of equality are clearly on the attack. While I cannot predict the outcome of this fight, I do know that we LGBTQ+ parents and our children were at the forefront of winning marriage equality, and must lead again in its defense.

First, let's take a look back. The majority of the plaintiff couples who won marriage equality in Massachu-

setts, the first U.S. state to legalize it, were parents, including lead plaintiffs Hillary and Julie Goodridge. One of the reasons the women chose to become involved in the case was that because they had no legal relationship, Hillary was not allowed to visit their daughter in the NICU after Julie gave birth "under harrowing circumstances," related GLAD Law in a blog post (May 3, 2024).

Marriage equality opponents, however, held that marriage should be restricted to different-sex couples, in

see **MOMBIAN**, page 4



Stopping the Christian nationalist revolution

Trump's overreach will backfire with our help
by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

There was a tiny bit of good news in the appalling story about Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth reposting a video of Christian nationalist pastors calling for the abolition of women's right to vote.

The good news was that a progressive evangelical group, Vote Common Good, described it as "very disturbing." Though I knew evangelical Christians were not all right-wing, it was nice to hear from the progressive ones.

It is important that we not play into the hands of religious bullies by swallowing the lie that Christianity

is inherently intolerant and coercive. There are many progressive people of faith, including LGBTQ+ Christians. Let us not throw away allies by making false generalizations.

The proper message is that Christianity at the point of a gun is no Christianity at all. For those on whom it is forced, it is at best performative, done by people to avoid being arrested or clobbered over the head.

Aside from what your faith teaches, we live in a civil society, not a theocracy. The First Amendment explicitly

see **ROSENDALL**, page 4

Theater Summer Season Finale: "The Wiz" Dazzles While "Grease" Takes Softer Approach

By Jules Becker
Contributing Writer

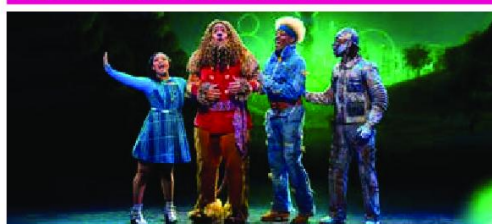
Revolutions of two very different popular 1970's musicals are closing out the area theater season—one very exuberant, the other surprisingly mild mannered. "The Wiz"—on tour at the Citizens Opera House has all of the magic of the 1975 Tony Award winning original. By contrast, the North Shore Music Theatre revival of the long-running 1972 musical "Grease"—seems to tone down the show's hard-edged slickness.

The best musical versions of classic films wisely avoid reproducing their

see **THEATER**, page 7

The Wiz, tour presented by Broadway in Boston at Citizens Opera House, through August 24. BroadwayinBoston.com

Grease The Musical, North Shore Music Theatre, Beverly, through August 24, 978-232-7000 or nsmt.com



Dana Cimone as Dorothy, Cal Mitchell as The Lion, Elijah Ahmad-Lewis as The Scarecrow and D. Jerome as The Tinman in the North American Tour of THE WIZ. Photo by Jeremy Daniel.

Kentucky Clerk Tries to Overturn Obergefel

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

A case asking the U.S. Supreme Court decision to reverse its 2015 decision striking down state bans on same-sex marriage is not keeping

Lambda Legal Senior Counsel Jenny Pizer awake at night.

She has two reasons: One, because Congress passed and then-President Biden signed the Respect for Marriage Act in 2022, prohibiting any state from denying recognition of a

same-sex or interracial marriage licensed in another state. And two, because reversing Obergefell v. Hodges has not been a top priority for President Trump or many conservatives

see **SCOTUS**, page 3

Transgender runner Evie Parts sues NCAA and Swarthmore College for removal from track team

By The Associated Press

Long-distance runner Evie Parts has sued the NCAA and Swarthmore College as well as members of its athletic department, saying they illegally removed her from the track team because she is a

transgender athlete.

Parts' lawsuit said the NCAA's ban on transgender athletes in women's sports did not have legal grounds because it's not a governmental organization and therefore does not have jurisdiction over Pennsylvania state law or the Title IX

federal statute.

She was removed from the team on Feb. 6, the day the NCAA issued its new policy on transgender athletes.

Swarthmore men's and women's track

see **NCAA**, page 7

BILLY MASTERS

"The woman looked out her window and realized she still harbored ill will towards the former lover who shattered the antique glass. It may have been a romantic gesture, but she was robbed of rainbows forever. The woman considered taking a trip. But who could house-sit? There was the gardener, who was taking an inordinate amount of time planting a few bulbs. Or maybe the son of a friend who knocked up a woman of ample proportions and had a com-

panion named after a theme park. No. The woman would stay home. And write. And write. And write ... books that nobody would read."

I suspect fans of Carrie Bradshaw's column are much like fans of Billy Masters—not particularly into the bodice-ripper genre. Rule one for writing a show—have a story you want to tell. Clearly that rule went out the broken window. After 10 hours I'll

see **BILLY MASTERS**, page 6



"And Just Like That." Photo by Craig Blankenhorn/HBO Max.

NEWS FROM... GLAD LAW

GLAD Law, Educators, ACLU, and NEA-NH sue NH

A diverse group of educators and advocacy groups filed a federal lawsuit today challenging a new anti-equity, anti-inclusion, and anti-diversity law in New Hampshire, which became effective on July 1, 2025, after being signed into law by Governor Ayotte in late June. The law, contained within House Bill 2's budget

provisions, seeks to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion programs pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability in New Hampshire schools (including both K-12 public schools as well as both public and private

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GLAD

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colleges and universities) and public entities like police departments and libraries.

According to the lawsuit, this law radically contradicts federal civil rights laws that protect the rights of students with disabilities, violates the First Amendment rights of educators and students, and is vague and ambiguous under the United States and New Hampshire Constitutions.

Hannah Hussey, Staff Attorney at GLAD Law, said, "This law is yet another unconstitutional attempt by elected officials seeking to control and censor valued and trusted educational programs in New Hampshire simply because they don't like them. Imposing vague bans on programs related to race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability in our public schools and public and private colleges and universities will chill vital programs like special education services in our public schools, initiatives to increase the representation of girls in STEM, and other opportunities and resources to ensure equal opportunity for LGBTQ students, students of color, and students with disabilities. Such programs not only provide vital support for marginalized students, they contribute to an enriching environment for all students to get a well-rounded education, develop critical thinking skills, and learn to appreciate human differences."

Heidi Carrington Heath, Executive Director of New Hampshire Outright, a plaintiff in the case, said, "N.H. Outright has been leading the way in caring

for LGBTQ+ youth and their families for over 30 years. That includes a well-respected, evidence-based training program that many schools and communities across the Granite State have benefitted from. We know that creating healthier and stronger environments for LGBTQ+ youth does so for everyone. HB2 is an attempt to silence the voices of vulnerable Granite Staters and puts them at risk in a time when they need stronger supports than ever. We believe that it is critical to challenge this unjust law that is already causing harm to our organization, and communities."

The lawsuit was brought by the state's largest educator union, National Education Association - New Hampshire (NEA-NH), four school districts (Oyster River Cooperative School District, the Dover School District, the Somersworth School District, and the Grantham School District), trainer and consultant for diversity, equity, and inclusion James M. McKim, Jr., diversity, equity, and inclusion administrator and psychology professor Dottie Morris, and New Hampshire Outright, a nonprofit that provides training in public schools and entities on creating environments of inclusion and belonging for LGBTQ+ students.

They are represented by lawyers from a broad coalition of organizations and law firms, including the ACLU of New Hampshire, the national ACLU's Disability Rights Program and Racial Justice Program, National Education Association-New Hampshire (NEA-NH), GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law), and Drummond Woodsum & MacMahon.

Megan Tuttle, NEA-New Hampshire President,

stated, "All Granite State children deserve a high-quality education, safe and welcoming public schools, and the support they need to thrive. We know diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and initiatives are not only legally required in certain contexts but also create a sense of belonging where all students can feel comfortable sharing their ideas and stories. Vague and confusing laws that have the effect of censoring or limiting educators' abilities to teach and accommodate students who may have special education needs can undermine the high-quality education that students deserve. New Hampshire educators are standing together against HB 2's unconstitutional attack on those programs and standing up to politicians' overreach into our classrooms. Our profession should be guided by what's best for our students, not the threat of funding restrictions and punishment. We will never stop working to make sure every child feels safe, seen, and is prepared for the future."

Devon Chaffee, Executive Director of the ACLU of New Hampshire, said, "This new law threatens to revoke critical public funding from Granite State schools using vague criteria unless they cease programming and policies aimed at fostering equitable and inclusive environments for all - and that's unconstitutional. Just like with our other two lawsuits, we will continue to fight these unwarranted and unconstitutional attacks on diversity and inclusion efforts and our right to learn."

The law does not just seek to prohibit diversity, equity, and inclusion in public entities and public schools, but it also seeks to strip away millions of dollars in critical state (and possibly federal) public funding if K-12 public school districts guess wrong as

to how the New Hampshire Department of Education interprets the vague law's provisions. According to one estimate, state aid to school districts could amount to more than \$1 billion annually.

John Shea, the Superintendent of the Somersworth School District, said, "Looking at HB2's attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, I'm worried that our legislature and our politicians may have lost sight of what these three words actually represent—and just how important they are to our public education system. 'Diversity' simply is who we are here in Somersworth. It's not a program, initiative or ideology. It cannot be legislated away. And equity—or more particularly 'equitable opportunity'—is fundamental to the very idea of universal public education. As is 'inclusiveness' one of our community's most cherished values. We strive for a welcoming environment for all, one that is strengthened by diverse perspectives. The State's attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion are an attack on all of this. Special education, ESOL programs (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and the free and reduced meals program included—among many other examples. We have no choice but to fight the anti-DEI elements of HB2."

The law is already arbitrarily and selectively being enforced by the state Department of Education, which is aggressively applying it to private (including religious) colleges and universities that receive student scholarship funds through state grant aid programs (like UNIQUE Program state grants and the Governor's Scholarship), but apparently not private K-12 schools (including religious schools) that

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Halloween Dance to Benefit Breast Cancer Coalition

The Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition (MBCC) will host its 28th Annual Lesbians & Friends LGBTQIA+ Dance on Saturday, October 25th at Club Café, 209 Columbus Ave., Boston.

The Halloween-themed event will feature music by guest DJ Christina from San Francisco, a dance lesson by Liz Nania of OUT to Dance, and drag performances. A VIP party runs from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, followed by the main event from 8:00 PM to 11:00 PM.

General admission tickets cost \$20 and cover the main event. VIP access is \$40 in advance or \$45 at the door and includes early access, hors d'oeuvres, and an exclusive dance lesson. Attendees must be 21 or older.

Proceeds will support MBCC's breast cancer prevention efforts through community education, research advocacy, and public policy initiatives.

Tickets and more information are available at mbcc.org/dance.

SCOTUS

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who are driving his second term agenda.

There are also two reasons to be concerned the court might take up the appeal this session. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito have stated they would like to overturn Obergefell. They would need to convince only two more justices to have the four votes necessary to take up the appeal.

But, says Pizer, a 30-year veteran of Lambda's fight for marriage equality, the Court's other four conservative justices are mindful that they would need a fifth vote to overturn Obergefell. And, just five years ago, Thomas and Alito agreed with the rest of the court to reject a petition much like the one filed again this session. They said the case, *Davis v. Ermold*, did "not cleanly present" issues of religious freedom they saw as important to marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Nevertheless, county clerk Kim Davis of Kentucky has filed yet another petition, *Davis v. Ermold*, which was docketed by the Court August 1. David Ermold and David Moore are the gay couple who were refused a marriage license by Davis following the Obergefell decision. Davis said at the time she could not issue the license due to her religious beliefs. A federal jury in 2023 awarded Ermold and Moore \$100,000 in damages for Davis' refusal to issue the license.

In her latest petition, Davis poses three ques-

tions: Whether the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion should protect Davis from paying the damages; whether the county should pay the damages for Davis' act as county clerk, rather than Davis pay as an individual; and, whether "*Obergefell v. Hodges* and the legal fiction of substantive due process, should be overturned.

A three-judge panel of the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals (which included two Clinton appointees and one Trump appointee) ruled that Davis had made "the same" arguments before, seeking to have the county pay the damages for the former county official. It ruled that Davis' action in refusing the couple a marriage license was the act of a government official and, thus, could not be protected under the Free Exercise clause.

"It's hard to say for sure what will happen," says Pizer, "but for now, I'm not staying up all night with anxiety that our marriages will be dissolved and we'll not be able to marry in future."

According to the UCLA's Williams Institute, there are 823,000 married same-sex couples in the U.S. today, 591,000 of which married following the 2015 Obergefell decision.

The Supreme Court docket has placed *Davis v. Ermold* on the agenda for discussion at the Court's September 29 private conference. An attorney for the gay couple has asked the Court for an extension until October 8 to file a response to Davis' petition. As of deadline, the court had not responded to that request.

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Mombian

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large part because they claimed children need a mother and a father. And in 2008, during the Proposition 8 battle for marriage equality in California, opponents tried to scare people by saying that marriage equality would require that students learn about homosexuality in schools—as if that were a bad thing. Prop 8 passed, and same-sex couples were blocked from marriage.

Marriage equality advocates, however, worked hard to transform the “think of the children” argument from a reason to oppose marriage equality into a reason to support it. This effort included a “Voices of Children” amicus brief filed by Family Equality and COLAGE in the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court *Windsor v. U.S.* case that struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act. In the brief, children of same-sex parents explained how the lack of marriage equality harmed them and their families. Justice Anthony Kennedy cited the brief in his decision, writing, “[The Defense of Marriage Act] humiliates tens of thousands of children now being raised by same-sex couples.... [and] makes it even more difficult for the children to understand the integrity and closeness of their own family and its concord with other families in their community and in their daily lives.”

Variations of that argument were then used in every other federal win for marriage equality, including the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2015 ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which made marriage equality the law across the country. As in *Godridge*, most of the *Obergefell* plaintiffs were parents; one couple had even begun their legal journey seeking only to adopt their children, not to marry. And the “Voices of Children” brief was

submitted again in *Obergefell*, this time co-filed with Kinsey Morrison, a Kentucky teen who had two moms.

In *Obergefell*, Kennedy expanded on the theme, saying, “Without the recognition, stability, and predictability marriage offers, their children [of same-sex couples] suffer the stigma of knowing their families are somehow lesser. They also suffer the significant material costs of being raised by unmarried parents, relegated through no fault of their own to a more difficult and uncertain family life. The marriage laws at issue here thus harm and humiliate the children of same-sex couples.”

Despite this assertion, Kennedy went on to address one of the leading arguments against marriage equality, that marriage is entirely about procreation. He explained, “This does not mean that the right to marry is less meaningful for those who do not or cannot have children. Precedent protects the right of a married couple not to procreate, so the right to marry cannot be conditioned on the capacity or commitment to procreate.”

But although one can be married without being a parent and be a parent without being married, there is obviously frequent overlap. And even if Davis’s lawsuit does not succeed, I fear that marriage equality opponents will not soon give up. We married LGBTQ+ parents (and those who seek to be), must therefore take steps not only to protect our own families but also to sway public opinion.

This is the time to take action. For ourselves, for our children, and for all in the generations to come, who will benefit when every person and every family is equal under the law.

We (and our children who are old enough) must be as visible as we safely can and keep sharing—with our friends, neighbors, elected officials, and the media—the stories of how marriage has had or will have a positive impact on our families.

No, I don’t like that we’re still having to fight for our families in addition to simply raising and reveling in them—but I also know that we have to do so, not only for ourselves, but also for the generations to come. As the “Voices of Children” brief said, “If society benefits when the state encourages adults to form, and raise children within, committed relationships, it suffers when the state tells LGBT youth—the next generation of LGBT parents—that the families they may build are beneath the law’s notice.”

This is the time to take action. For ourselves, for our children, and for all in the generations to come, who will benefit when every person and every family is equal under the law.

Need a place to start? I recommend visiting GLAD Law’s helpful Web page at gladlaw.com/marriage, which provides information about the current state of marriage equality, explains how to secure your family relationships, and offers a way to share your story (anonymously, if desired).

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of *Mombian* (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents plus a searchable database of 1,800+ LGBTQ+ family books.

Rosendall

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prohibits the establishment of religion. The fact that you can cite Scripture that instructs wives to obey their husbands does not entitle you to impose your Holy Writ on the rest of us.

America is not and will not be a Christian nation even if it slides into Christian nationalist dictatorship. In that case, it will remain a diverse nation under the thumb of tyrants whose actions and beliefs bear no resemblance to the teachings of Christ.

The authoritarians know they are vulnerable, or they would not be pushing for mid-decade redistricting in red states like Texas to nullify the votes of black and brown people.

Anyone who persists at this late stage in saying the two political parties are indistinguishable has not been paying attention.

Vast amounts of harm have been done to our country and its governance by the Trump-hijacked GOP. The evidence can only be denied by those driven not by facts or principles but lust for power.

If you value freedom, vote for Democrats and against Republicans. It is political suicide to take

the attitude that no one deserves your support unless they agree with you completely. There has always been an undercurrent from the far left to the effect that anything that did not line up perfectly with their own dogma was a betrayal.

Responsible activists nonetheless made significant advances which are now at risk of reversal thanks to people (who should have known better) staying home on election day or voting for third-party candidates they knew could not win.

That was a victory for small-mindedness wedded to well-funded disinformation.

If marriage equality is overturned by the Supreme Court, we can expect the same scorn from Justice Alito that he showed in overturning *Roe v. Wade* when he invoked Sir Matthew Hale, a 17th-century British judge who oversaw witch trials.

In that event, we can thank self-righteous progressives who refused to vote for Kamala Harris because she had been a prosecutor, was not black enough, or failed to call for global Intifada. Some radicals think that if the right’s tyranny becomes sufficiently awful, it will pave the way for their fantasy revolution.

A revolution came, but it was not led by Angela Davis. It was a garland of reactionary wet dreams woven together by the Heritage Founda-

tion. Far from being defeated, capitalism is having its guard rails removed.

At the same time, the MAGA movement is threatened by its own internal contradictions, policy incoherence, and hubris.

Consider former Fox News host Jeanine Pirro, now U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. She crowed in satisfaction at charging a man who threw a Subway sandwich at a Customs and Border Protection officer with a felony. But overcharging crimes is no sign of strength.

The racism Trump exploits also blinds him. We are much too intermingled for racial purity to be more than a conceit. Similarly, his propaganda cannot withstand scrutiny, any more than his naked appeal for a Nobel Peace Prize will persuade the Norwegian finance minister.

Growing numbers are working in concert to mend our frayed republic. Let us quell any impulse to hold everyone hostage to one faction’s dogma. Diversity inevitably includes diversity of opinion. A winning coalition requires compromise.

As Trump overreaches in attacking freedoms in DC and other cities with majority-minority populations, more Americans are fighting back in an organized manner—demonstrating that the best way to preserve our rights is by exercising them.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rrosendall@me.com. Copyright © 2025 by Richard J. Rosendall. All rights reserved.

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receive public funds through Education Freedom Accounts.

The law also applies to private colleges and universities (for example, Dartmouth College, Southern New Hampshire University, and Saint Anselm College) that receive any form of state funding, including those that receive state scholarship grants that help New Hampshire residents attend these colleges.

For public and private colleges and universities in New Hampshire, the stakes for Granite Staters are severe: the amount at stake includes over \$22 million in annual UNIQUE Program state grants and over \$2 million in annual Governor's scholarship program state grants, which are both distributed based on merit and need to New Hampshire residents who attend private or public New Hampshire colleges or universities.

"The lack of clarity about the expectations for how to comply with HB2's anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion provisions, coupled with the severe and potentially devastating consequences a perceived violation may bring, have educators in a dilemma. As a result of this law, I am aware of several educators who will err on the side of caution out of concern and fear of engaging in some activity that might be perceived as diversity, equity, and inclusion related. The concern and fear of violating HB2's directive will stifle educators' abilities to adequately serve all of their students, to create school environments that support students from diverse lived experiences, and to ethically engage in their vocation," said Dottie Morris, a college administrator focusing on belonging and psychology professor, who is a plaintiff in this case. She is bringing suit only in her individual capacity.

Also at stake are the millions of dollars the State provides for operating costs. All of this scholarship money and operational funding could be ripped away if public and private colleges and universities guess wrong as to how to comply with the law or with the education department's interpretation of it.

The lawsuit also raises concerns about how this law could impact school districts' federally-mandated collection of demographic data, including racial and ethnic groups, in New Hampshire.

"New Hampshire's anti-DEI law is an expansive assault on the rights and freedoms of students and educators across the state. Among those potentially swept up in this vague law are students with disabilities, many of whom rely on accessibility and integration programs to succeed at school. Federal disability rights laws require public schools to identify disabled students to increase their achievement; state law cannot prohibit what federal law mandates," said Zoe Brennan-Krohn, director of the ACLU Disability Rights Program.

James T. McKim, Jr., a plaintiff in the case and who works regularly with state and local government bodies to improve operations, including through diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, said, "I am joining this suit because I believe the diversity, equity, and inclusion provision in HB2 goes against our Live Free or Die nature. It is unconstitutional. And

it is harmful not only to me personally and to those in the protected classes mentioned in the law, but also to White people in our state and beyond. The work of helping organizations live into diversity, equity, and inclusion helps everyone."

As the law was still making its way through the legislative process, disability rights advocates expressed clear concerns that essential services, programs, and trainings aimed at helping the lives of people with disabilities could be dismantled by the law. The legislature failed to address these concerns in the final bill language that was ultimately signed into law.

Jennifer Eber, litigation director for the Disability Rights Center - New Hampshire who is not part of this lawsuit but opposed the law, said, "Federal laws require school districts to provide specialized instruction and related services to qualifying students with disabilities. These federal laws protect the fundamental right of students with disabilities to access a free appropriate public education. Disability Rights Center - New Hampshire opposes HB2's effort to undermine these federal laws and fully supports the request that the Court find HB2 both unconstitutional and pre-empted."

The law also impacts LGBTQ+ students in New Hampshire and could be viewed as potentially requiring the removal of certain programming, for example, policies establishing non-discrimination protections for transgender students or making menstrual hygiene products available in gender neutral bathrooms.

The court documents also outline how the law could forbid education programs designed to increase the representation of girls and women in STEM classes, the use of tuition waivers or campus recruitment efforts for older learners 50 and up, or opportunities for religious students through spiritual activities.

This lawsuit follows several others filed in New Hampshire challenging anti-equity practices in education, including a 2021 lawsuit against a classroom censorship law that was struck down in federal court in May 2024, and one lawsuit filed on March 5, 2025 in New Hampshire by the ACLU of New Hampshire, national ACLU, NEA, and NEA-NH against the U.S. Department of Education. These practices were halted by the court in April 2024.

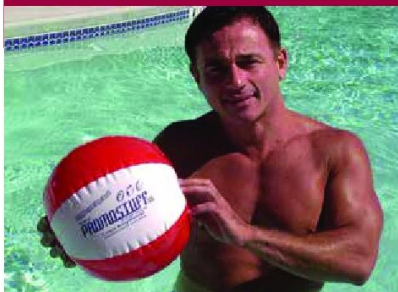
Dr. Christine Boston, Superintendent of Dover Public Schools, said, "The Dover School District provides relevant and engaging learning experiences and curricula to each student, which could violate HB2's anti-DEI provisions where such individualized instruction is for the purpose of 'achieving demographic outcomes' and classifies students based on the groups listed in RSA 354-A:1. The District celebrates the diversity of our student body; pursues equity to provide an individualized education, and creates inclusive learning environments. This commitment is required by the City of Dover school board and the State of New Hampshire. According to the Educational Equity Policy ACB of the Dover School District: 'The ultimate goal of the Dover School District's educational system is to assure that each and every student, regardless of background, has access to relevant and engaging learning experiences and curricula that they will need in order to thrive today and

into the future. This foundation will allow our students to become dynamic global citizens as they adapt to a rapidly changing world.' HB2's vague ban on, for example, 'critical race theory' and any program, policy, training, or initiative that classifies individuals based on a characteristic identified under RSA 354-A:1'—namely, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, mental or physical disability, religion or national origin—'for the purpose of achieving demographic outcomes, rather than treating individuals equally under the law' makes me question whether the N.H. Department of Education and others could view the District's efforts to create relevant and engaging learning environments with well-rounded teachers and staff as violating HB2, thus jeopardizing much needed state and federal funding."

Dr. Robert Shaps, the Superintendent of the Oyster River Cooperative School District (ORCSD), said, "HB 2, as written, directly contradicts our legal responsibility to meet our obligations under a wide range of preexisting laws that require school districts to improve learning outcomes for demographic groups. It contains broad and ambiguous declarations coupled with unclearly defined prohibited practices and no guidance. These determinations are subjective and unreviewable, and conflict with our legal and ethical responsibilities to our students. The ability to provide and apply resources and services that ensure all students succeed academically is crucial to their success. In effect, the New Hampshire State Government is using financial force to impose an unclear directive regarding educational learning opportunities, despite its constitutional responsibility to provide adequate school funding without conditions. This unprecedented ability gives them the ability to immediately halt all sources of public funding without warning if a school or district, knowingly or unknowingly, fails to abide by any section of the anti-DEI provisions. We cannot stand by as the state attempts to bypass its own legal responsibilities while failing to provide due process to respond to violations and offering no chance of appeal. We hope this legal action will defend our right to deliver a high-quality public school education and support a democratic, informed, and engaged community as we work together to protect our children's future."

Christine Downing, the Superintendent of the Grantham School District, said, "The Grantham School District is taking a proactive stance to protect its students and educational programs by challenging the diversity, equity, and inclusion prohibition language of HB2. The District is committed to providing a high-quality education that prepares students for a diverse, global society, grounded in principles of inclusion and equity. Due to a severe lack of clarity regarding what constitutes 'DEI-related programs, initiatives, policies, and training,' the District believes it's essential to seek legal action. Without clear guidance from the Department of Education, the District cannot risk the possibility of arbitrary and unilateral actions by the Commissioner that could halt all sources of public funding. Joining this legal action is a necessary step to ensure the District can continue to provide the education our community expects and our students deserve."

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billy masters

Continued from page 1

never get back, you know what I was left with? A shrug. Fine—but who cares? I was left with a question—where does one find this magical karaoke machine that also is preloaded with songs sung by the original artist? I also thought that if one wanted a show about people in their sixties who were interested in sex and the city, why not set it in London and follow the exploits of a certain ex-pat named Samantha? I'd watch that!

You wanna hear about sex and the city? **Renée Taylor's** new play "Dying Is No Excuse" recounts her epic love story with Joe Bologna. She's been working on this for a while, and there have been several readings in NYC and FL (know your audience, I always say). It just had its world premiere at the Unicorn Theatre Company in the Berkshires under the direction of **Elaine May**! But don't try to go—the entire run sold out in a matter of hours. That didn't stop Fran Drescher from flying in for opening night—not only to cheer on Renée Taylor, but also **Nicholle Tom**, who plays a young Renée Taylor (she also played **Fran's** stepdaughter on "The Nanny"). Fun fact—while I know Renée, Fran, and Nicholle, one of them was the last woman I made out with. I don't want to give you too many clues. But it was in the driveway after a holiday party. I swear there was something in that eggnog.

Last weekend, I zipped back down to Provincetown to the legendary Post Office Caf and Cabaret to check out two of the most popular shows in town. First is **Miss Richfield 1981**, who is celebrating 23 years in Ptown with her latest venture, "There's A Pill For That." I dunno what pills she's taking, but she looks terrific. With nary a blue dress in sight, she's singing and dancing and entertaining the capacity crowds. She hasn't lost any of her luster or spice. In fact, this new show has a strong theme, catchy ditties, and naughty off-the-cuff barbs. Make your plans early—she regularly sells out. And after Labor Day, she tours. Check out her full schedule on [MissRichfield.com](#).

Also at the Post Office Cabaret is the latest creation from the talented **Jamie Morris** of "Mommie Queerest" fame (not the version with a body count). This year, he does what the kids call a mash-up. He cleverly combines "The Golden Girls" with "Mean Girls" to bring us "Golden Mean Girls." This is Jamie's 8th season in Ptown, and this show may be his best. He's brilliant as Blanche, although Sophia's breasts (as embodied by **Payton St. James**) come close to stealing the show. For those interested in a twink who has probably never eaten a Twinkie, then **Zachary McEvoy** is for you (he also works at Joe Coffee). It plays Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 10PM—which still leaves you plenty of time to go out and get lucky. Tix to both can be purchased at [PostOfficeCafe.net](#).

Speaking gals with great gams, our very own **Alaska Thunderfuck** is off the market. The diva made the announcement on social media: "My longtime partner **Matthew Herrmann** proposed to me yesterday. It was after my grandma's 90th birthday celebration." Way to upstage Nana!

Let me tell you something nobody will—people don't go on "The Bachelor" to find love, they don't go on "American Idol" because they can sing, and they certainly don't go on "America's Got Talent" because they have any. People go on all of these shows because they want to be famous. And that doesn't just go for contestants. Like his sister **Julianne**, **Derek** wants it...BAD. He can check another thing off his list—he's been named the new host for "Extra." Yes, he's dangerously entering **Mario Lopez** territory by snagging **Billy Bush's** former gig. Derek says, "The ballroom has been my stage, my home, and my launchpad." Truer words were never uttered.

You would think being **President of the United States** would be a big enough gig. But no, not for El Presidente. He, too, is returning to his TV roots to host the Kennedy Center Honors—or whatever they'll be called by December. You'll recall during his last reign, he didn't even attend the telecast. Not only will he host, he says he was "about 98% involved" in the selection of the honorees (so much for his hand-picked committee). They include **George Strait**, **Michael Crawford**, **Sylvester Stallone**, **Gloria Gaynor**, and the band **KISS**. What? No **Village People**?

Many people have taken exception to Gloria Gaynor accepting

this honor. **Ana Navarro** said, "The woman is a goddess and deserves all the flowers that come her way. But I wish she wouldn't accept an award from the hands of a man who has attacked the rights and history of women, people of color and LGBTQ+. The gay community in particular, helped turn her signature song into an anthem. Trump is a stain on the prestige and significance of the KCH. Don't do it, Gloria!" Raconteur **Bruce Vilanch** pointed out that while honorees don't speak during the telecast, they do the night before at the White House. "It would be the appropriate moment for Gloria Gaynor to accept the honor by thanking the LGBT community that has kept her working for four decades and that is being so demonized by the current administration...it may be the only way she can redeem herself in the eyes of the one fan base that has been her economic engine since the '70s."

You know who had a career before the '70s? **Mamie Van Doren**—the last surviving Hollywood blond bombshell. I'm always suspicious when people make allegations about folks who have passed away. The 94-year-old Mamie claims that **Rock Hudson** wanted her in a sexual way. No, really—she believes that. During an arranged studio date, Van Doren says, "He came on to me, and in my book I told about having on a Crimmins skirt and him getting very passionate and rolling on the kitchen floor." Did it occur to her that maybe he just wanted the skirt?

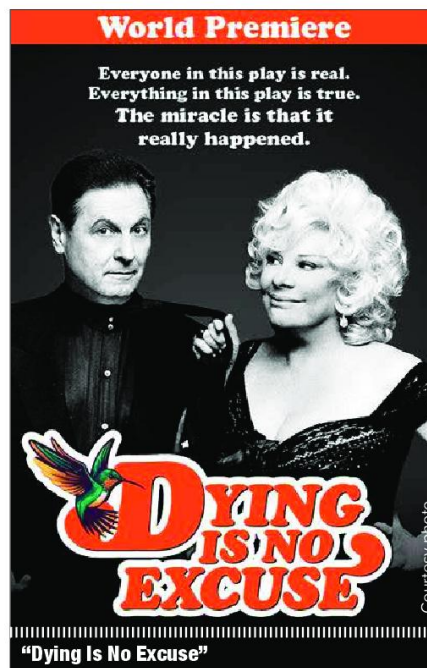
By the by, Mamie and several other former Hollywood luminaries will be honored at Cinecon 61, which takes place in Hollywood over Labor Day Weekend. The special honorees, in addition to Mamie, include **Ann-Margret**, **Pat Boone**, **Juliet Mills** and her "versatile" husband, **Maxwell Caulfield**. You can grab tix at [Cinecon.org](#).

This week's "Ask Billy" question was troubling. Henry from Chicago asks, "What is really going on with **Gladys Knight**? Is she really losing it?"

We're not quite sure. Gladys has a son, **Shanga** (who had a short-lived bakery in Las Vegas). He believes his 81-year-old mom is being forced to perform by her husband of 25 years, **William McDowell**, despite her declining cognitive ability. Shanga went to Health and Human Services and filed a complaint against McDowell for elder abuse. They are investigating. Shanga is basing his opinion on Gladys forgetting lyrics and appearing disoriented onstage. Additionally, he says sometimes she doesn't even know who she is. It bears mentioning that she didn't miss a single concert on the recent "The Queens Tour" alongside **Patti LaBelle**, **Chaka Khan** and **Stephanie Mills**. Gladys made her own statement: "I'm sorry that my health and performances have been misrepresented. I want my fans and those concerned to rest assured I am doing very well for someone who has been on stage for three quarters of a century—hard to believe, right? I'm healthy and happy and visiting friends and family these last few months. I'm excited to get back on the road with my sisters and on stage with "The Queens Tour". See you soon."

Of course, it didn't end there. Gladys' publicist (who works with Knight's husband/manager) was less polite: "Gladys and her team are greatly saddened by Shanga's unfounded allegations, especially as he has had no substantial contact with her. She has not been on tour since June 1st and can't wait to begin touring again in September. At this time our lawyers have no choice but to explore any and all legal remedies due to Shanga's defamatory comments." This won't be their first legal battle. Back in 2017, Gladys successfully sued Shanga for opening a chain of unauthorized restaurants called "Gladys Knight's Chicken & Waffles!"

When all I'm thinking about is chicken and waffles, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. Before closing, we must acknowledge the passing of Terence Stamp, who bore a striking resemblance to the late Jeanne Cooper. His death dashes hopes for a "Priscilla" sequel—something I never thought would or should happen. What will definitely happen is more dish on a regular basis on [www.BillyMasters.com](#)—the site that never met a Twinkie it didn't like! If you have a question, send it along to [Billy@BillyMasters.com](#) and I promise to get back to you before Gladys goes back on tour (which is September 19th in Greensboro, NC). Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Mamie Van Doren



Gladys Knight

Theater

Continued from page 1

cinematic predecessors. Gifted director-choreographer Geoffrey Holder smartly conceived theatrical ways of bringing the wonder of the 1939 gem "The Wizard of Oz" to the stage. The pivotal early tornado became a whirling dervish-like dancer. At the same time Holder evoked the famous Yellow Brick Road with actors dressed in yellow escorting Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion on their way to the Emerald City. The vivid production on tour at the Opera House takes its cues from Holder's brilliant conception. As adapted by Amber Ruffin (one of the Tony-nominated book writers of the musical "Some Like It Hot"), the thoughtful revival of the black cast show finds Dorothy to be "the natural leader that she is" and the four companions "a ragtag group of friends, not a girl and her weird uncles."

Director Schele Williams sharply paces both the challenging odyssey of the quartet and their evolving fortunes in Oz. Dana Cimone is an instant standout as Dorothy. Her rich voice sometimes brings to mind Stephanie Mills—particularly on the beautiful solo "Soon As I Get Home." Cimone captures Dorothy's early vulnerability and her growing confidence as she overcomes obstacles and helps her companions respectively to obtain a brain, a heart and courage. Elijah Ahmad Lewis catches all of scarecrows' jazzy style and humor. D. Jerome has all of Tinman's evolving insecurity. Cal Mitchell goes to town vocally on Lion's notable solo "Mean Ole Lion." Alan Mingo, Jr. is a hoot as the elusive title enigma. High marks go to Jaquel Knight's exciting choreography. Sharen Davis's vivid costumes and Ryan J. O'Garra's often surreal lighting.

Near the end of the musical, good witch Glinda advises Dorothy to "Believe in Yourself."

Likewise, audience members of all ages will believe in the spellbinding charms of "The Wiz."

Many fans of "Grease" may be more familiar with the popular John Travolta-Olivia Newton-John movie than the long-running 1972 musical. Theater buffs may appreciate North Shore Music Theatre producing artistic director Kevin P. Hill (last season's Broadway-worthy revival of "Titanic")'s earnest efforts to evoke the show's growing pain-rich 1950's Chicago-set fictional Rydell High. Granted, Rebecca Glick's period costumes reflect the peer pressure and group dynamics of the leather jacket T-Birds and the counterpart attire of the Pink Ladies. At the same time, Hill's own choreography proves striking and sharply synchronized for the Stroll sequence and the iconic "Born to Hand Jive" crowd-pleaser.

Even so, the total effect ought to be rougher. Hank Santos could do with more of the rebel posture of T-Bird leader Kenickie. Bailey Reese

Greemon does capture Rizzo's pain and humanity in the touching solo "There Are Worse Things I Could Do," but her character needs more tenacity in the early going. Caroline Siegrist has the right yearning as Sandy—especially on "Hopelessly Devoted to You." Nick Cortazzo persuades as popular Danny Zuko and brings strong feeling to his Drive-in solo "Sandy." Jeremiah Garcia is a winner as outspoken Roger, though the production seems to soften his fondness for mooning. Still, Garcia and Jayson Brown as reserved buddy Doody are a very convincing duo on "Rock 'N' Roll Party Queen." Best of all is big-voiced Avionce Hoyles as Teen Angel on the flashy "Beauty School Dropout."

In the 1950's James Dean often proved the rebel of choice. The T-Birds in the NSMT "Grease" need more of his raw volatility. Still, most of the theatergoers at the performance I attended seemed to see the Beverly revival as the one that they wanted.

NCAA

Continued from page 1

coach Peter Carroll, athletic director Brad Koch and athletics officials Christina Epps-Chiazor and Valerie Gomez also were named in the lawsuit. According to the complaint, they sent Parts into "such a depressive state that she engaged in self-harm and in one moment told a friend that she wanted to kill herself."

"We stand by the allegations in the complaint," said Susie Cirilli, an attorney who along with co-counsel Spector, Gadon, Rosen and Vinci, represents Parts. "As stated in the complaint, the NCAA is a private organization that issued a bigoted policy. Swarthmore College chose to follow that policy and disregard federal and state law."

Swarthmore issued a statement that it "deeply val-

ues our transgender community members."

"We recognize that this is an especially difficult and painful time for members of the transgender community, including student-athletes," the school said. "We worked to support Evie Parts in a time of rapidly evolving guidance, while balancing the ability for other members of the women's track team to compete in NCAA events. Given the pending litigation, we will not comment any further."

The NCAA chose not to comment.

The NCAA changed its participation policy for transgender athletes to limit competition in women's sports to athletes assigned female at birth. That change came a day after President Donald Trump signed an executive order intended to ban transgender athletes from girls' and women's sports.

Pennsylvania's state Senate approved a bill by a 32-18 margin on May 6 to ban transgender athletes

from competing in women's and girls' sports at the collegiate and K-12 levels. The state's Democratic-controlled House of Representatives isn't expected to vote on the bill.

Parts joined the Swarthmore track team in fall 2020 before then taking off the following four winter and spring seasons. She went back to the Division III team in 2023 to compete in the indoor and outdoor track seasons and in cross country.

When the NCAA issued its ban, the lawsuit states, Parts was told by Epps-Chiazor and Gomez that she could compete with the men's team or as an unattached athlete. She would only receive medical treatment, the complaint says, if she competed on the men's team.

According to the lawsuit, Carroll and his staff were not allowed to coach Parts, she could not travel with the team, was not allowed to receive per diem

or food and had to pay her way into meets. Parts also couldn't wear a Swarthmore uniform.

Swarthmore "fully reinstated" Parts on April 11, the lawsuit says, and she competed on the women's team until graduating in May.

In July, a transgender woman sued Princeton University claiming she was illegally removed shortly before her race in a school-hosted track meet in May due to her gender identity. Sadie Schreiner, who had transitioned during high school, had previously run for Division III Rochester Institute of Technology but was set to compete as an athlete unattached to any school or club in the Larry Ellis Invitational. That complaint seeks unspecified damages for a "humiliating, dehumanizing and dignity-stripping ordeal" in front of family and friends.

AP sports: <https://apnews.com/hub/sports>

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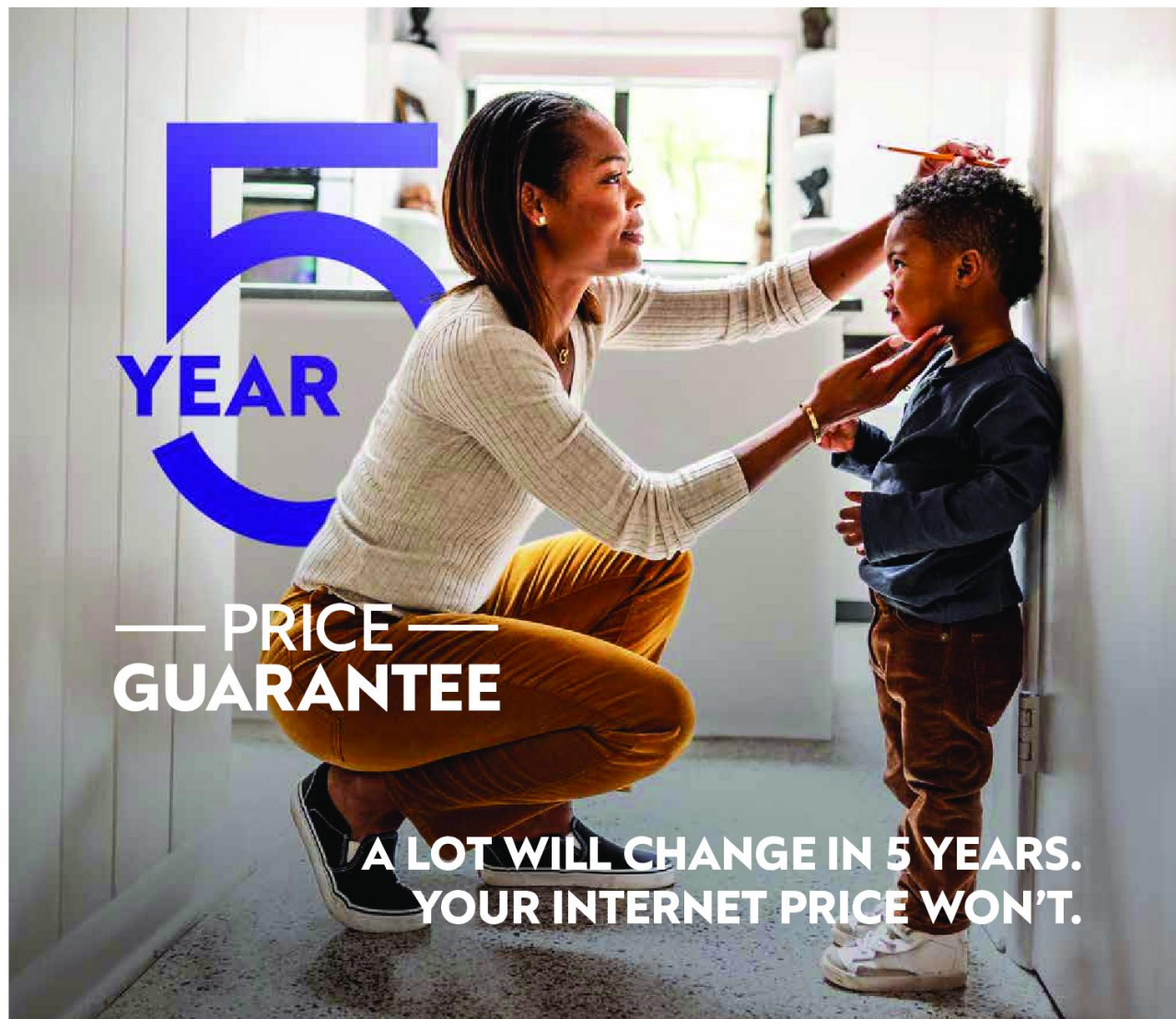
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