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In Memoriam: 3 Pioneering Lesbian Mothers

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

The world lost three groundbreaking lesbian mothers this July, who each helped in different ways to strengthen and support queer families.

Minnie Bruce Pratt, an acclaimed poet, essayist, and activist who wrote, among other things, about losing custody of her children when she came out as a lesbian, died on July 4 of an

aggressive brain tumor at age 76.

Pratt was born in 1946 in Selma, Alabama, and graduated from a still-segregated high school before earning a B.A. and a Ph.D. in English Literature. When she came out in 1975, she had been married to a man for almost 10 years and had two young

see **MOMBIAN**, page 4



Will the GOP turn away from Evangelical Christians?

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

In today's political landscape, where there is a blurring of church and state, white Evangelicals call the Republican Party- the Party of Trump. As a core constituency of the Republican Party, white Evangelicals revere Trump as their modern-day savior. Trump, however, has made a mockery of Christian values and ideals -like his recited botched Bible

verses and infamous staged photo-op outside St John's Church in DC during the George Floyd protests in 2020.

His zealous supporters have compared him to King Cyrus in the Bible, an atheist who liberated the Jews. His cult-like grip on white Evangelical-

see **MONROE**, page 4



Splashing bullies with reality Let trolls be trounced with the truth

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

Vicarious pleasure from movie violence can be cathartic, but what does it say about us?

During an interview by Ta-Nehisi Coates with director Barry Jenkins at The Atlantic LGBTQ Summit in November 2016 in DC, a friend and I applauded when Jenkins mentioned the scene in his film Moonlight where Chiron strikes back against the bully.

Coates turned and looked at us. He said he understood our reaction. The scene was crucial to the film but was also tragic, landing Chiron in the criminal justice system. Hitting someone over the head with a chair is not acceptable; but that scene was important because it showed Chiron finally standing up for himself.

see **ROSENDALL**, page 5

ANALYSIS

Supreme Court session, the present is bad, the future is gloomy

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

The only thing worse than a bad ruling at the U.S. Supreme Court is a bad ruling that sets up the prospect that the worst is yet to come.

Former Solicitor General Donald Verrelli worried about that prospect a year ago when he wrote, in an essay for the American Bar Association, that the 303 Creative v. Elenis appeal could have consequences far beyond sexual orientation discrimination.

"What if, for example, [Lorie] Smith [the website designer who brought the case] had instead asserted



see **SCOTUS**, page 2 Photo by Ted Eytan, via Wikimedia Commons.

US House Republicans deny funding for Boston's LGBTQ+ affordable housing project

By Dominique Farrell
Courtesy of GBH News



The Pryde, an affordable housing development planned for LGBTQ+ seniors in Boston's Hyde Park, hit a hurdle yesterday after House Republicans in an appropriations hearing voted to deny it federal funding.

U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley had requested \$2 million in federal funding to help finance the project, of which \$850,000 made it onto the final appropriation bill. Fellow Democratic Reps. Brendan Boyle and Chrissy Houlahan had also sought federal funding for LGBTQ+ projects in Pennsylvania. House Republicans struck all three earmarks.

The Pryde, a \$47 million project currently



A sign for The Pryde affordable housing development hangs on a fence outside the old William Barton Rogers School, which will be converted into apartments, during the project's groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, June 17, 2022. Photo by Meg Woolhouse / GBH News.

under construction, is slated to include 74 mixed-income rental units in addition to a public community center. A housing lottery is expected to be held in the fall, with the building to open within six months.

The federal earmark for The Pryde was intended to help with unexpected

construction costs from renovating such an old building. But Gretchen Van Ness, executive director of LGBTQ Senior Housing Inc., one of the groups behind The Pryde, said she is determined to find that additional capital one way or

see **PRYDE**, page 5



"I propose a literal dick measuring contest."

- Elon Musk's proposal to Mark Zuckerberg. Who wants to see this? Hands? Above the table, please.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

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SCOTUS

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that her religious beliefs forbade her from employing her creative abilities to celebrate an interracial marriage, or even to serve African Americans at all?" said Verrelli. "While such hypotheticals may seem far-fetched today, those are precisely the kinds of arguments that challengers to the civil rights laws made during the 1950s and 1960s."

Justice Neil Gorsuch did not mention the Civil Rights Act of 1964—not once—in his opinion for the 6 to 3 majority June 30. He did not contemplate the implications for interracial couples, even though two of the court's nine justices are part of interracial marriages. And he certainly didn't mention—as he did in the Title VII decision he wrote—that "Judges are not free to overlook plain statutory commands on the strength of nothing more than suppositions about intentions or guesswork about expectations."

And certainly, Gorsuch did not mention that a billionaire credited with doing a lot to get Gorsuch appointed to the Supreme Court also gave thousands of dollars to support the work of the Alliance Defending Freedom, which brought forth the 303 Creative case.

Gorsuch and the 6 to 3 majority's 2019 decision in the Title VII case, *Bostock v. Clayton County*, held that the federal law barring discrimination on the basis of "sex" in employment also prohibits discrimination on the basis of "sexual orientation" and "gender status." Gorsuch and the 6 to 3 majority's 2023 decision in the public accommodations case, *303 Creative v. Elenis*, held that the First Amendment right to free speech can, in certain circumstances, free business owners to violate state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. (Technically, Lorie Smith said she would not create websites for people having same-sex marriages; realistically, nearly all same-sex marriages involve LGBTQ people, not heterosexuals.)

The Gorsuch decision in *Bostock* was meticulously reasoned; the Gorsuch decision in *303 Creative* came across as rushed, defensive, and painfully aware that the question the court posed was stacked to reach its result.

The dissent to the *303 Creative*, written by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, contemplates various implications of the ruling.

"Although the consequences of today's decision might be most pressing for the LGBT community, the decision's logic cannot be limited to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity," warned Sotomayor. "The decision threatens to balkanize the market and to allow the exclusion of

other groups from many services."

Echoing a county judge in Virginia who, in 1959, found Richard and Mildred Loving guilty of violating that state's law against interracial marriage, Sotomayor added, "A website designer could equally refuse to create a wedding website for an interracial couple, for example. How quickly we forget that opposition to interracial marriage was often because 'Almighty God... did not intend for the races to mix.'"

"Yet the reason for discrimination need not even be religious," noted Sotomayor, "as this case arises under the Free Speech Clause. A stationer could refuse to sell a birth announcement for a disabled couple because she opposes their having a child. A large retail store could reserve its family portrait services for 'traditional' families. And so on."

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, in reaction to the *303 Creative* majority decision, said it "provides cover for those who seek to curb any group of people's right to access services due to their identity."

"For multiple reasons, this decision is a direct threat to everyone at risk for discrimination," said Jenny Pizer, chief legal director for Lambda Legal. "The decision states explicitly that discrimination based on sexual orientation is to be treated the same as other forms of discrimination prohibited by Colorado law. That might at first glance seem like good news to LGBTQ+ people because there has been a fear that this court would contrive a way to rule that some version of cherry-picked history justifies using a less-protective standard for anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination. But the equal-treatment principle comes in the context of this court creating a new exception to civil rights laws that reduces the protection for everyone."

Within days of the June 30 decision, officials at a Catholic high school in Indianapolis said the ruling provided cover for their decision to fire two guidance counselors because each is married to a same-sex partner. A justice of the peace in Texas said she thinks the ruling provide cover for her refusal to officiate marriages for same-sex couples. The Alliance Defending Freedom, the anti-LGBTQ legal group that pressed the *303 Creative* lawsuit, said Monday (July 17) that it is asking two federal circuit courts to apply that decision in cases they have on appeal for wedding photographers in New York and Kentucky. And the First Liberty Institute expressed confidence that the *303 Creative* decision bodes well for their client, a Portland, Oregon, bakery that has refused to sell to same-sex couples.

In *Klein v. Oregon*, the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled that owners of the bakery, Melissa and Aaron Klein, could not cite their religious beliefs in order to

see **SCOTUS**, page 7

RICHARD SILVERMAN, M.D.

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Mombian

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sons. Her husband was given custody by a North Carolina court biased against lesbian mothers. She managed to keep visitation rights—but her husband then moved the boys hundreds of miles away.

She found ways to keep in touch, driving around the South to see them and to do readings of her writing. Yet their separation cut deep. "I paid for my freedom with my children," she observed in her second book of poetry, "Crime Against Nature" (1990). That volume, about her relationship with her sons and losing custody, won the prestigious Lamont Poetry Prize (now the James Laughlin Award) from the Academy of American Poets and was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year.

The loss also fueled her involvement as an activist, organizer, and writer at the intersection of women's, gender, and LGBTQ issues, anti-racist work, and anti-imperialist initiatives.

She was also an adjunct teacher for 45 years, ending her career as an on-contract Professor of Women's & Gender Studies and Writing & Rhetoric at Syracuse University, where she helped develop an LGBT Studies Program.

Pratt was predeceased by her partner and spouse of more than 22 years, renowned trans activist and author Leslie Feinberg, who died in 2014. She is survived by "her two sons and their partners, five grandchildren, and a chosen family of friends and loved ones," per her obituary in the Syracuse Post Standard.

Cheri A. Pies, whose book, "Considering Parenthood: A Workbook for Lesbians," helped innumerable queer women become parents during the 1980s "gayby boom," died from cancer on July 4 at the age of 73. The book, published through lesbian feminist

press Spinster Ink in 1985 (and updated in 1988), evolved from two influences: Pies' work in the 1970s running Planned Parenthood workshops for straight women contemplating motherhood, and her own experience becoming an adoptive parent in 1978 with her then-partner. Pies realized that she and other lesbians considering parenthood could benefit from group workshops, too. She held the first one in her living room in 1978 and 25 women attended.

"Considering Parenthood" drew on these workshops to offer practical tips, questions to ask oneself, and plentiful quotes drawn from the hundreds of lesbians Pies had worked with, covering not only how to start a family as a lesbian parent, but also how to help it thrive.

Pies, who got her doctorate in public health education in 1993 from the University of California-Berkeley, spent the bulk of her career as a clinical professor at that university's School of Public Health, researching ways of addressing social and economic inequities that influence birth outcomes and generational health. A popular teacher and mentor, she also published dozens of papers and was nationally recognized many times for her contributions to public health.

She is survived by her spouse Melina Linder; sisters Lois Goldberg and Stacy Pies; and "a legion of honorary children and grandchildren in families with lesbian and gay parents who were conceived because of her work," notes her obituary at the Berkeley Public Health website.

Dr. Susan Love, one of the world's foremost breast cancer researchers and a visionary leader in breast cancer advocacy, died at age 75 on July 2. She was also part of a groundbreaking parenting case in Massachusetts.

Love was an early proponent of cancer surgery that conserves as much breast tissue as possible. She also helped found the breast cancer advocacy movement in the early 1990s. In 1995, she became medical di-

rector of the Santa Barbara Breast Cancer Institute, and retired from active surgery a year later to focus on finding the cause of breast cancer. The institute was renamed in her honor in 2000 and is now the Dr. Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer Research.

"Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book" first published in 1990, is widely recognized as a seminal book on breast cancer for patients and others. It will be released in its 7th edition this fall.

Love earned a business degree from UCLA's Anderson School in 1998 and was appointed by President Clinton to the National Cancer Advisory Board, where she served from 1998 to 2004.

When she and her partner (later spouse) Helen Cooksey, MD, had their daughter in 1988, only Love, her gestational mother, was recognized as the legal parent. In 1993, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court granted the women the right to jointly adopt her, the first time a same-sex couple had been allowed to do so in the state.

Ten years later, Massachusetts Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall, in the landmark Goodridge decision that made Massachusetts the first U.S. state to allow same-sex couples to marry, cited their case among others to support her statement that, "Protecting the welfare of children is a paramount State policy. Restricting marriage to opposite-sex couples, however, cannot plausibly further this policy."

Love is survived by her wife Helen Cooksey and their daughter Katie Patton-LoveCooksey and her wife, Diana Patton-LoveCooksey, per the Foundation's website.

May the memories of all three women and their work continue to sustain us.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1300+ LGBTQ family books.

Monroe

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calcs has proven their Faustian bargain for power has no moral bottom.

However, with Trump's 37 felony counts related to mishandling of classified documents hovering over him as he vies for a third term as president, the GOP has to assess if he's too big of a liability they now need to ditch. Or do white Evangelicals need to ditch the GOP if a Trump-like candidate doesn't emerge in the 2024 presidential campaign?

Trump delivered

Before Trump's indictment, many Republican leaders who pledged fealty to him for political survival are now distancing themselves. The 37-count indictment has the potential to further fracture the Party between die-hard backers of Trump for 2024 like Marjorie Taylor Greene, JD Vance, and Senator Lindsey Graham and moderate Republicans who want their Party back. The Republican presidential hopefuls are the first to break rank. The most shocking of them, and what Trump loyalists would call a turncoat, is his former V. P. Mike Pence.

"Let me be clear. No one is above the law," Pence stated on PBS Newshour. The "handling of classified materials of the United States is a serious matter."

While many political operatives are trying to inch away from Trump, his everlasting white Evangelical base—churchgoers and voters—loves him, comprising approximately 60 percent of the Republican presidential primary electorate.

Trump won the presidency on the promise he would appoint judges with a Christian worldview.

And Trump delivered. During his tenure, Trump nominated 274 conservative Republicans to federal benches and three to the Supreme Court: Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett—who would overturn Roe v. Wade.

Trump's Israel policy took center stage when he moved the US embassy to Jerusalem, a colossal win for Christian dispensationalists—evangelical Zionists who believe that in the Second Coming of Christ, Israel will be rightly restored to its biblical boundaries. He later boasted, "The evangelicals appreciate it more than the Jews."

Using SCOTUS to justify hate

Trump's slogan to "Make America Great Again" was an undisguised dog whistle to his base to keep America a white heteronormative theocracy. The Supreme Court rulings have worked on behalf of Trump's evangelicals. Roe v. Wade overturned last year was merely the tip of the iceberg. This year SCOTUS has struck down Affirmative Action, Student Government Loan Cancellation, and sundry other misguided rulings, like the 6-to-3 ruling in 303 Creative LLC v. Elenis under the guise of religious freedom that discriminates against LGBTQ+ Americans. The plaintiff, a Colorado web designer who opposed same-sex marriage, contested and won that by requiring her to serve everyone equally, the state was unconstitutionally forcing her to create messages she opposed, violating her free speech rights under the First Amendment.

In a Trumped-up Supreme Court, the uber-conservatives have eroded decades-long civil rights gains and the Constitutional mandate of separation between church and state. For example, in 2018, SCOTUS ruled in "Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission" in favor of the baker who refused

to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple on the grounds of religious freedom. In 2013 a family-owned bakery in Gresham, Oregon called "Sweet Cakes by Melissa" wanted to "practice their Constitutional right to religious freedom." However, instead of servicing an LGBTQ+ clientele, Sweet Cakes closed the family shop and moved the business to their home, making it clear LGBTQ+ dollars were not wanted.

Trans rights in the bull's eyes

Bigotry works in this political climate. Restricting transgender rights will work for Trump's evangelical base and help the GOP in the 2024 election. At least 650+ anti-LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in Congress, with over 400 targeting our trans population; bills banning trans people from sports, banning gender-affirming surgery, and banning drag queen story hours in some states. HRC has declared a state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans.

"They have an interest in keeping the base riled up about one thing or another, and when one issue fades, as with same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage, they've got to find something else," Randall Balmer, a Dartmouth professor of Religion, told PBS NewsHour. "It's almost frantic."

The Republican Party has been transformed by Trump irreparably. The Party wants to win the 2024 presidency by any means necessary, and the January 6th Insurrection was proof. The Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll shows Trump beating Biden by 7 points in a hypothetical match-up. "Any Republican who wanted to cross the finish line would have to kneel at the feet of the evangelical base," Balmer said. The GOP can verbally trash Trump and even ditch him. However, they are still under his yoke because they need his base to win.

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PRYDE

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another.

"We are grateful for the support that we've received in the state budget," said Van Ness. "Rep. Rob Consalvo and state Sen. Liz Miranda have earmarked \$250,000 for us in the state budget."

According to Van Ness, LGBTQ+ seniors are

more likely to face discrimination and harassment in housing and need a welcoming and safe place to live.

"These are the folks that we owe everything to," said Van Ness. "We stand on their shoulders, and they should be able to live with dignity and their full, authentic selves as they grow older."

Presley criticized yesterday's decision by Republicans as an "act of blatant homophobia & hatred."

"It is unconscionable that Republican committee members would hold senior citizen-specific housing

hostage and continue their dangerous national trend of targeting the LGBTQ+ community," the Massachusetts congresswoman said in a statement. "This process is intended for our communities to advocate for projects that have the highest impact, and this move by Republicans is blatant homophobia designed to attack some of our most vulnerable seniors."

Van Ness also said that yesterday's decision to exclude LGBTQ+ projects from community project funding is unprecedented.

"If anything, people should see what happened to us yesterday as the reason why we're doing what we're doing," said Van Ness. "We are not afraid of the work that we're doing. We're not afraid of this backlash. We are deeply, deeply committed to our community and to providing the kind of housing that we're building at The Pryde."

Clarification: This story was updated to clarify the amount of funding Rep. Ayanna Presley had requested for The Pryde.

Rosendall

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We have to assert ourselves against bullies; but we need a more constructive method than violence. One inspired response to bullies was the making of that film, which won an Oscar for Best Picture.

Our republic would best be rescued without recourse to mayhem. But the bullies on the right have shown a penchant for violence wrapped in false patriotism. Their America is a monochromatic fantasy in which everyone looks and thinks like them. They seem to think they can erase all literature and history that doesn't conform to their blinkered vision.

If we don't deliver a strong rebuke at the polls—and if the instigator-in-chief does not face consequences—the insurrections are likely to recur. The MAGA horde is still fighting the first civil war. Trump uses them to threaten anyone who crosses him, such as prosecutors. He vows retribution if he regains the White House.

In MAGA world, cruelty and inhumanity run rampant. We are seeing not just a surge of know-nothingism, but a frontal assault on reality.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis's State Board of Education, for example, has adopted standards that require teaching children that slavery benefited slaves by giving them valuable skills. Quick show of hands: how many of you are eager to experience those alleged benefits yourselves? The Peculiar Institution, as it happened, did not give the enslaved a choice.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman tweeted on July 19, "The 14th Amendment was designed to protect and enfranchise Black people. I can't believe the caucusy of the Supreme Court to use it to limit students of color from accessing higher education." Those who responded by calling him racist displayed the odd conviction that black people are not entitled to defend themselves.

Pro-life, did someone say? CNN reported on July 20, "Nearly two years after Texas' six-week abortion ban, more infants are dying." Meanwhile, Gov. Greg Abbott showed his concern for human life by install-

ing barriers in the Rio Grande that cause migrants to drown.

On another front, the fear-mongering about medical care for gender-variant minors is not only full of misinformation, it is a cynical diversion, since those stocking panic over it also seek to ban it for adults. This is hardly a surprise given the speed with which the "states' rights" pose on abortion was replaced with calls for a nationwide ban.

Connecting with people across multiple divides is hard. Sometimes we do it with music. Beloved singer Tony Bennett, who died on July 21 at age 96, ended his farewell concert with Lady Gaga in 2021 with his signature song, "I Left My Heart In San Francisco." Despite his advancing Alzheimer's, he was strong vocally and deft in his shaping of the lyric: "The morning fog may chill the air. I don't care. My love waits there..." Music stays with us.

Everyone, however, is not stirred by the same music. Look at the controversy over "Try That In a Small Town," sung by Jason Aldean, which traffics in right-wing paranoia and encourages vigilantism.

It isn't just lies, grafting, and recklessness that lovers of liberty and justice for all must reject. We must reject the suppression of votes, literature, and history. We must reject gaslighting. We must reject bigotry. We must reject the recruitment of fake electors and the incitement of mobs to overturn elections. We must reject corruption on our high court. We must reject the absurd notions that we are terribly fragile and diversity is a weakness.

Let us appeal to people's better angels and common sense. This was neatly demonstrated in a recent Biden campaign ad consisting entirely of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene describing how Biden is carrying on the work of FDR and LBJ. Greene evidently considers Biden's efforts to help ordinary Americans shockingly offensive. Let's keep telling the uplifting truth until her MAGA bubble breaks. A beleaguered republic is in our hands.

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

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billy masters

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Usually in the summer, we can take it easy and things land in our lap. Let others do the work, I always say. But not this week. We've got more stories than you could shake a dick at! We recently told you about a woman who accused a popular BBC host of paying her son huge sums of money for explicit photos. She didn't name the host, but we now know he is **Huw Edwards**, the BBC's highest-paid presenter. In a twist not even I saw coming, the 61-year-old news anchor did not reveal himself — his wife did! Vicky Flind, who has been married to Huw since 1993, released this statement: "In light of the recent reporting regarding the 'BBC Presenter' I am making this statement on behalf of my husband Huw Edwards, after what have been five extremely difficult days for our family. I am doing this primarily out of concern for his mental well-being and to protect our children." Huw is currently in a "facility" after having suffered a "serious episode." The BBC is continuing their internal investigation while the police have opted to not bring any criminal charges against Huw...for now.

Meanwhile, the trial against **Kevin Spacey** rambles on. We've heard lurid details from the many accusers about his alleged predatory activities. Rarely does one hear this question in a court of law: "Did he accuse me of grabbing his buttock?" Spacey described certain actions like this: "I would say in my estimate it is not a grab, not a grope. It is a gentle touch." To say nothing of a slow hand! A victim had a different opinion: "It wasn't like a caress — it was like a cobra coming out and getting hold." Spacey said, "I'm sure if I wanted to, I could have had sex with people all the time." Is he running for president? While he admits, "I was promiscuous", he termed one encounter as "a clumsy pass". He added something I'm sure is true: "I always believed in supporting emerging talents."

Then there's Studio 8 Hair Lab — which sounds like a place curing cancer! This Michigan salon has ruffled more than a few feathers after posting the following on their Facebook page: "If a human identifies as anything other than a man/woman please seek services at a local pet groomer. You are not welcome at this salon. Period." The owner, **Christine Geiger**, later said that LGB clients are welcome — "the rest of it is not something I support". She added, "This stance was taken to insure that clients have the best experience and I am admitting that since I am not willing to play the pronoun game or cater to requests outside of what I perceive as normal this probably isn't the best option for that type of client." I can agree with that last part — if you are a "T", why would you want to go there?

Some people are whispering that **Madonna** faked this latest health scare to cover up low ticket sales for her now-postponed tour. She inexplicably went from death's doorstep to frolicking around NYC. On the other coast, her "Desperately Seeking Susan" co-star **Rosanna Arquette** crashed her car into a Malibu shopping center. I think it's time these two reunited for a "Thelma and Louise" remake — with Rosanna driving!

As a proud member of the Screen Actors Guild, I support this strike. I'm also proud of our president (and my pal), **Fran Drescher** — who made a career-defining speech announcing the strike. She even handled detractors, who accused her of neglecting her duties by being photographed with **Kim Kardashian** at a recent Dolce & Gabbana event in Milan. She was there as a paid brand ambassador. "It was absolute work. I was in hair and make-up three hours a day, walking in heels on cobblestones...doing things like that which is work — not fun."

There's an update about whether **Lady Gaga** should pay reward money for the return of her pups — "no questions asked". The judge ruled that she does NOT have to hand over any money to the woman who orchestrated the reunion. That woman, **Jennifer McBride**, filed the suit after Gaga refused to pay the reward — and that's primarily be-

cause McBride pled no contest to being involved with the people who actually stole the dogs. The judge said, "Under the circumstances, plaintiff's successful pursuit of her current claims would allow her to benefit from her admitted wrongdoing." While I agree with that, I still feel "no questions asked" means just that.

How many of you are watching "Stars on Mars"? Anyone? Don't I always say that words matter? These people are not stars, and they're not on Mars. But apparently **Lance Armstrong** and his single testicle are on the show, discussing trans athletes competing in sports. "Listen, this is real simple: You want to transition, let's do it. You have your own category. We're gonna have a whole new division. We'll celebrate you just like we celebrate everyone else. Let's go. What's unfair about that?" **Tinashe** (another "star") said, "To me, I think we just have to care about if you otherize people. It's not good for their mental health." **Ariel Winter** (finally, a name I recognize) said, "You're ostracizing the people who don't fit in the categories" — which I don't think Lance is doing. He's saying create a new category. Olympian **Adam Rippon** said he found Lance's comments "so disheartening".

Back on Earth, cyclist **Na Hwa-rin** called for the need of a "third gender" in sports — didn't Lance Armstrong just do that? Na, who was born male, won Korea's Gangwon Sports Festival in the female category. Hwa-rin is described as having a skeletal muscle mass of 32.7 kilograms, which is said to be about a dozen kilograms more than a typical female athlete. When asked about the win, Na said, "My goal was to stir controversy...I am not proud of myself at all." Na believes that being born male provides "physical superiority" against biologically born female competitors. Hwa-rin added that if a third gender category were created, "we allow more people to compete in sports and let them live their dreams."

As we went to press, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) issued a new policy barring trans women from competing in the Women category if they "transitioned after (male) puberty". This is based on scientific research, which cannot guarantee that genetic men those who transitioned after puberty do not have a physical advantage. Those cyclists will still be able to compete — but in category now called "Men/Open".

Beauty pageants typically focus on judging exterior qualities. And since many allow plastic surgery (including "augmentation"), anything goes. Last week, a transgender woman was crowned Miss Netherlands. **Rikkie Valerie Kollé** proudly accepted the crown, scepter and sash "for all young women and queer people." I would like it noted that I did a whole story about the Netherlands with nary a dyke joke!

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Gerry in Maine: "I just saw an *Armani* commercial and one of the models looked like **Lukas Gage**. Is it him?"

You've got a good eye. That is indeed Lukas frolicking with three other models in a commercial for Acqua di Giò by Armani. Should you be interested, those other models are **Chase Stokes**, **Jonathan Daviss** and **Michael Evans Behling**. And there's a whole lotta abs, as you can see on BillyMasters.com.

When we have an item that looks as good as it smells, it's time to end another column. I want to take a moment and acknowledge the passing of trailblazing actor, **Jeffrey Carlson**. He was riveting on Broadway in "The Goat" and "Taboo", to say nothing of his groundbreaking work as a trans character on "All My Children". Details of his passing are unknown, but he was 48. Closer to home, I must announce the peaceful passing of my papillon, Li Li. She was just a couple weeks shy of 16...which is an amazing run for a dog. You won't find any dogs on www.BillyMasters.com — the site that sniffs out the best. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I'll get back to you before anything else lands in our lap! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



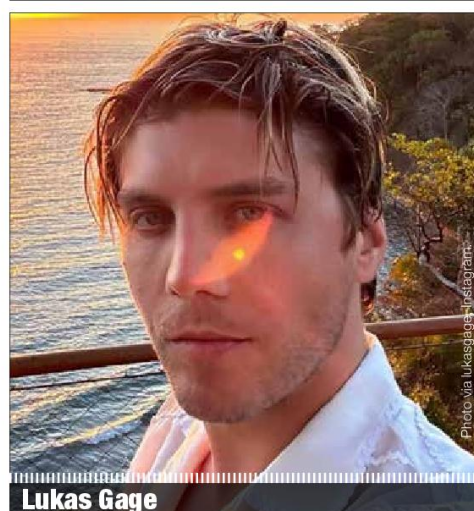
Huw Edwards

Photo by Brian McNeil/London News, via Wikimedia Commons



Fran Drescher

Photo by Gage Skidmore, via Wikimedia Commons



Lukas Gage

Photo via Lukas Gage's Instagram

SCOTUS

Continued from page 2

violate a state law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations. The U.S. Supreme Court vacated that decision once in 2019 and asked the lower court to reconsider the case "in light of" the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*. Oregon came back with the same decision. But on June 30 this year, the Supreme Court vacated the Oregon decision again and sent it back, directing the lower court to give "further consideration" to the case, "in light of" 303 Creative.

"The actual [303 Creative] ruling is limited, but the discrimination door is now open, wide open," said Richard Socarides, a legal analyst and commentator for a number of national media outlets. "Given the court we are stuck with, I would say the future outlook is quite gloomy."

Quite. And yet, there were a few tiny moments of relief in the Supreme Court's 2022-23 session. Tiny, because they were appeals that the Supreme Court simply refused to take. One involved a public school seeking to require girls to wear skirts; one sought to defend a ban on transgender athletes in schools; and one attempted to undermine anti-discrimination laws in employment. The refusal to hear the appeals has no legal value—they are simply three among 7,000 or more similar appeals that sought Supreme Court review but were turned down. The three included:

Church school bias: In *Faith Bible v. Tucker*, a church school sought to defend itself against a lawsuit alleging racially motivated discrimination by claiming the teacher it fired was a "minister." In previous rulings, the Supreme Court

has given church employers exemptions from certain non-discrimination laws if the violation alleged is against a "ministerial" employee. The LGBTQ legal group GLAD joined a brief arguing that church employers will just label all employees ministerial in order to gain the exemption, leaving LGBTQ people and others "unprotected." *Faith Bible* lost at the appeals court level and appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. On June 12, the Supreme Court declined to hear the church schools' appeal.

School dress policy: A charter school in North Carolina appealed a lower court decision that found its dress code violated the right to equal protection for its girl students. In *Charter Day School v. Peltier*, the school claimed its policy of requiring girls to wear skirts was necessary to "preserve chivalry" and because a girl is a "fragile vessel." The mother of a female kindergarten student filed a lawsuit, which some other parents joined, challenging the policy as sex discrimination and saying it was based on gender stereotypes. The ACLU, Human Rights Campaign, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), the National Center for Transgender Equality, and others were among the LGBTQ groups who submitted briefs in support of the female students in the lawsuit. The students lost at the district court level but won at the appeals court level. The school appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court and on, June 26, the Supreme Court declined to hear the charter schools' appeal. The court's denial said nothing of its feelings about whether schools can dictate how girls and boys should dress. The key legal question was simply whether this charter school operated as part of the public school system and, as such, had to provide equal protection of the law to all its students.

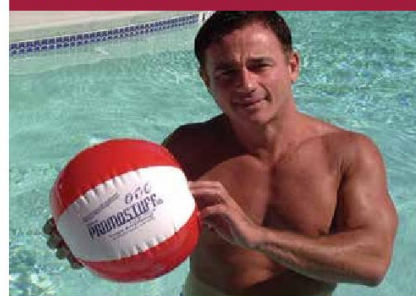
Trans female athletes: In a 7 to 2 vote, the Su-

preme Court on April 6 denied a request from West Virginia to vacate a federal appeals court injunction that prevented the state's anti-transgender law from taking effect. The injunction is set to remain in place until the lower courts rule on the constitutionality of the law. The West Virginia law, which is one of many similar laws passed in various states around the country, requires that students who participate in girls'/women's sports at public secondary schools or universities, must be identified as biologically female at birth. With the aid of Lambda Legal and the ACLU, the parent of an 11-year-old student in third grade challenged the law as violating Title IX. The student identified as male since age 3, has been treated for gender dysphoria since third grade, and has not experienced puberty. Two federal appeals courts, including the Fourth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, have ruled that Title IX, the federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex in federally supported schools, covers gender identity. The district court ruled against the student (Becky Pepper-Jackson, now 13), but the Fourth Circuit issued an injunction to stop the law from taking effect until the appeals court could rule. West Virginia asked the U.S. Supreme Court to vacate that injunction, but the majority refused. The case, *BPJ v. West Virginia*, will almost certainly be back before the Supreme Court once the Fourth Circuit rules.

Jenny Pizer, chief legal officer for Lambda Legal, said, "It's hard to know what's likely to come next — where and whether this majority will see logical limits to this new free speech carve-out....The rule has been [that] the business decides what to make and sell, not to whom to sell."

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