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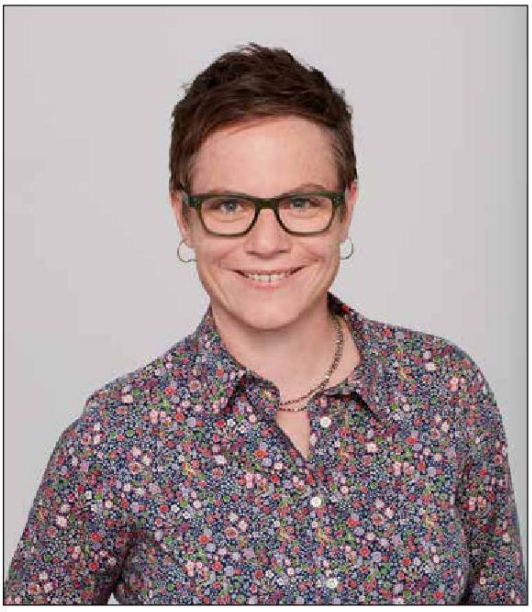
Queer Representation in Children's Media

Backlash and a Way Forward

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer



Chris Nee. Photo courtesy of Disney Junior/Craig Sjodin.

LGBTQ representation in children's media has been hard won. "Every time you see a queer character on screen, that is the end result of someone having really, really put themselves on the line to push that storyline through. And that was even in the best of times," said three-time Emmy Award-winning children's television screenwriter and producer Chris Nee in an interview.

Nee ("Doc McStuffins"; "Ada Twist, Scientist") and Emmy Award-winning animation casting and voice director Kristi Reed ("Steven Universe"; "Dead-End: Paranormal Park") spoke with me about their efforts to encourage queer representation in children's media, the state of the industry, and how to create change.

Both of them "know how much resistance there is" to queer representation, Nee said. Several years ago, she and Reed were "lamenting the state of the business," and wondering how to encourage people. They asked themselves, "Why don't we just give out our own

see **MOMBIAN,** *page 5*

When the "Job" robs your sanity

Dennis Trainor Jr. and Josephine Moshiri Elwood. Photo by Benjamin Rose Photography.

By Rev. Irene Monroe
Contributing Writer

The play "Job" is a bracing must-see. Written by the renowned playwright Max Wolf Friedlich, it is now in its final week at the Speakeasy Theater (527 Tremont Street. The buzz it has generated will linger long after the final curtain call.

This gripping psychological techno-thriller keeps audiences on the edge of their seats for its taut 80-minute, one-act runtime. The play unfolds as a volatile therapy session between Jane (Josephine Moshiri Elwood), a

see **"JOB",** *page 2*

RI Foundation Awards $87K to LGBTQ Community Organizations

Nonprofit organizations serving Rhode Island's LGBTQ communities will share $87,000 in grants through the Rhode Island Foundation's Equity Action Fund, the Foundation announced.

"The Foundation has offered uninterrupted grant support to organizations on the front lines of housing, health, advocacy and youth services for more than 20 years," said Foundation President and CEO David N. Cicilline.

Grant recipients include East Providence Public Library; Woonsocket Pride; Pride in Aging RI; Black and Pink Providence; GLAD; Haus of Codec; Newport Community School; Planned Parenthood of Southern New England; Project Weber/RENEW; Sojourner House; Thundermist Health Center; Wanderground Lesbian Archive Library; Woonasquatucket Valley Community Build; and Youth Pride Inc.

The Equity Action Fund has distributed more than $1.4 million since its inception, with an additional $2.3 million awarded since 2017 to support LGBTQ housing and health services. The funding comes as LGBTQ-serving nonprofits continue to face growing demand for services alongside increased political and financial pressure.

LGBTQ-Affirming Senior Housing Project Planned for East Provi-

see **FOUNDATION,** *page 4*

OBITUARY

Tom Morganti

Boston gay liberation movement trailblazer

Tom Morganti. Courtesy photo.

Thomas L. "Tom" Morganti, a proud and devoted member of Boston's LGBTQ+ community and a longtime resident of the Fenway neighborhood, passed away on January 27, 2026. Born in Walpole, Massachusetts, on January 18, 1943, Tom lived a life marked by authenticity, activism, and deep care for those around him.

Tom's life was defined by his devotion to his partner of over 30 years, Eric Schlott, who ensured Tom's home was filled with love and safety through the challenges of Lewy Body Dementia in his final years. Their bond was a testament to enduring love, care, and partnership.

see **MORGANTI,** *page 3*

"I know how to handle a stick!"

— Gus Kenworthy campaigns for a role in season two of "Heated Rivalry". But he's got other fish to fry. The ever-ambitious athlete secured a spot on Team GB for the upcoming Olympics.

more in Billy Masters on page 6!

Photo via Gus Kenworthy, Facebook.

"Job"

Continued from page 1

Millennial content moderator at a downtown San Francisco tech firm, and Loyd (Dennis Trainor, Jr.), a Baby Boomer crisis therapist assigned to assess her fitness to return to work.

"Job" dramatizes the hazards of constant surveillance and the psychic toll of a high-pressure tech workplace. Jane embodies the long-term, deleterious effects of such labor—the erosion of boundaries, the corrosion of mental wellness, and the steep personal cost of digital gatekeeping.

Like many Millennials, Jane is a techie tasked with reviewing and removing offensive, violent, and reprehensible material from the internet. After suffering a meltdown at work—captured on video that unsurprisingly went viral—she is desperate to reclaim her job. "I was everywhere on earth, screaming like a crazy person—being a crazy person," Jane tells Loyd. "I was a meme." Loyd's role is to evaluate her psychological readiness to return. "Would getting let go from this job be the worst thing?" he pointedly asks.

Jane's work has exposed her to relentless violent imagery and hate speech, resulting in PTSD and vicarious trauma. One harrowing account underscores the depth of that damage: "The video was from the civil war in Sierra Leone. Government soldiers tied a rebel to two trucks. He was a little boy, not older than thirteen. The trucks drove in opposite directions and split the boy in half," Jane recounts. "I buried it—nobody will ever have to see that video again."

Generational tension crackles throughout their exchanges, revealing sharply drawn assumptions and resentments. "Boomers spend their time being mad that sixteen-year-old girls are using filters on Instagram to feel prettier," Jane snaps. "We're protecting ourselves from the thoughts your shampoo commercials made us think!"

The play moves with startling velocity, mirroring the relentless pace at which we are all forced to live and process information. There are no winners here, and no tidy resolution to the moral and ethical questions surrounding technology's impact on younger generations. The audience is left to wrestle with those questions alone. What we do know is that the play begins in a dark place: Jane is pointing a gun at Loyd. By the end, we understand why.

"What makes "Job" vital storytelling is its insistence on complexity. It resists heroes and villains. It asks us to sit with ambiguity and examine our own assumptions about harm, responsibility, and control," notes Dawn M. Simmons, the Speakeasy Stage Company's new and second artistic director. "At a moment when conversations about mental health, workplace ethics, and digital surveillance are urgent and fraught, this play offers no sermon—only a mirror." I left the theater acutely aware of the grip my iPhone has on my own life.

Josephine Moshiri Elwood and Dennis Trainor Jr. Photo by Benjamin Rose Photography.

The performances are nothing short of a tour de force. Elwood and Trainor spar with impeccable timing and their witty, electric repartee provides relief amid the dark stories they tell. "Elwood brings a jittery, manic quality, like circuitry gone haywire. Trainor excels in "Job" as a regular-seeming professional who has layers — a better word is depths — that aren't immediately apparent, " The Boston Globe wrote.

Both actors elevate "Job" to an unforgettable performance.

After seeing the play I am trying now to untether my dependence on my iPhone. It worked for the hour I was at the gym.

"Job" runs through February 7 at the SpeakEasy Stage Company at the Roberts Studio Theater, Calderwood, Pavilion. Tickets start at $25. 617-933-8600, www.speakeasystage.com

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Morganti

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Tom lived his adult life as an out, proud gay man and was a trailblazer in Boston's early gay liberation movement. In 1974, he was instrumental in the creation of the iconic Lavender Rhino, a symbol of gay pride designed to represent strength, courage, and inclusivity. He also helped distribute Fag Rag, a grassroots publication promoting awareness, community, and equality for gay and lesbian individuals during the early years of LGBTQ+ activism.

A resident of Boston's Fenway neighborhood for more than 50 years, Tom was a beloved fixture of the community. He took great pride in his neighborhood, and in his later years could often be seen on walks picking up trash along the streets, through the Back Bay Fens, and around the Fenway Victory Gardens, quietly caring for the place he called home.

Tom also had a deep love of music and dance, which defined much of his social life. In the 1980s and 1990s, he frequented dance clubs and bars, forming lasting friendships with those who shared his passion for rhythm, movement, and joy. He worked at Vinyl Connection, first in Copley Square and later near Kenmore Square, where he sold dance records and connected with a wide community of music lovers. Many of these friendships endured throughout his life, reflecting the warmth and generosity of his spirit.

Tom was predeceased by his parents, Aileen (Yorston) Morganti and Louis L. Morganti, and his sisters, Shirley Morganti Warden and Dorothy Morganti. He is survived by a wide circle of friends who loved him for his humor, generosity, and zest for life.

Tom's life was a celebration of courage, community, and joy. He will be remembered for his activism, his music and dance, his dedication to Fenway, and the love he shared with all who knew him.

Services are private. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to organizations supporting Lewy Body Dementia research or LGBTQ+ community initiatives.

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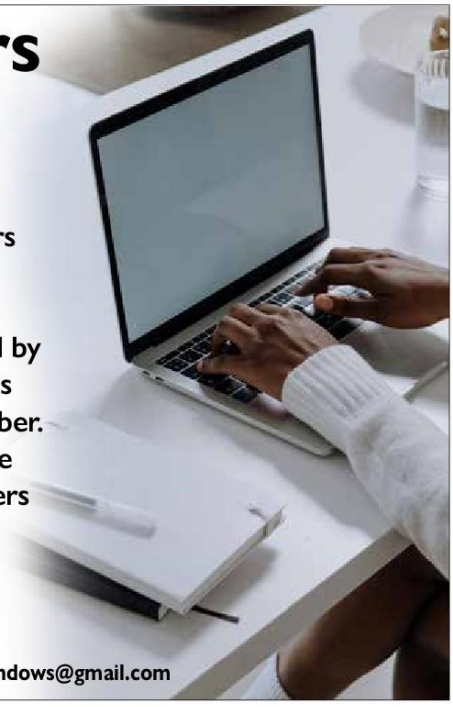

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To Minnesota with love

Making the instigator-in-chief flinch

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

Photo by Chad Davis, via Wikimedia Commons.

The citizens of Minnesota have stood up heroically to the cruelty, viciousness, and mayhem that Donald Trump has unleashed on their state.

Still, the daily onslaught against freedoms in our country can wear us down. Let us pause to give one another credit for the many efforts at resistance. Let us also notice when the instigator-in-chief flinches at our pushback.

We should not give the authoritarians comfort by sitting out the fight. Instead, we should be like members of a chorus who drop out quietly during a sustained note and come back in after taking a breath.

One of the problems we face is the brainless mockery that abounds on social media and makes it hard to have a serious discussion. Right-wing trolls and bots are ready to pounce, substituting laughing emojis for arguments.

MAGA is built on hate. Its adherents have done all they can to pull our country apart. They demand an America that erases, excludes, and removes people unlike them. They are relentlessly vicious and ignorant, and refuse to respect the diverse perspectives and traditions that have enriched us. They expect freedom for themselves while refusing to respect the Bill of Rights for others.

If they don't like comparisons to Nazi Germany, they should stop defending Trump's secret police.

Like the brave people in the Twin Cities, voters across the country are making it clear they have had enough. The radical right's hatred and attempts at racial and religious supremacy only diminish America. We will remain a diverse country whether the bigots and bullies like it or not.

Possibly the most astonishing evil we are witnessing is cruelty toward children. How can anyone not have a pang of conscience when confronted with the consequences of their own fanaticism? Such cold-bloodedness is a sure sign they are in a cult.

Meeting our country's challenges requires a minimum level of respect and intellectual honesty. Descending into tribalism is no sign of strength.

We are going to defeat this monstrous, corrupt regime. The courage and decency on display in our streets show we are capable of so much better than a political arsonist who poses as a firefighter. We will not let him erase the proud history of the struggle to make this country live out the meaning of its creed.

The Democratic Party is the only major party defending the fundamental American values which have been trampled by the Republican Party under Trump. Democrats, to be sure, are not perfect. We are always struggling to confront inequities. But we are defending working people against those who would divide us for their own gain. The polls reflect this. Democrats have a good chance of winning the midterm election despite Trump's efforts at stealing it through intimidation and lies.

A close election is the easiest to steal. Let us make sure it is not close.

We have a strange tendency to argue over who is entitled to speak. When Victor Wembanyama of the San Antonio Spurs expressed horror at the ICE shootings in Minneapolis, some responded "Who?" and others suggested he stick to basketball. Wemby, as he is known, is a French player whose father is of Congolese origin. He is 7 feet 4 inches tall; was the top NBA draft pick in 2023; was Rookie of the Year in 2024; and at age 22 has already played in two All-Star games. But even if he were mediocre, he would have as much right to express his views as anyone else.

MAGAs love to dismiss the contributions of people of color. It is fine to clap back, but it is more important to set a better example. Black people have wisdom borne of surviving four centuries of racial injustice on this continent. The thuggery of ICE and Border Patrol agents recalls the slave catchers of old. The persistence of hatred is disturbing, but history teaches us that we will overcome.

Greyhound announced in February 2020 that it would not consent to warrantless immigration checks by Border Patrol agents on its buses. A 2020 story has resurfaced about a bus driver telling an ICE agent, "Gargle my balls." Pardon me for quoting such a vulgar comment, but I think it vividly illustrates the innate courage of many people in standing up to police-state tactics. We cannot win by being complacent.

Don Lemon's defiance in response to his arrest for committing journalism also shows the right spirit. This proud black gay man demonstrates that the struggle makes us stronger.

Richard Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rrosendall@me.com.

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Foundation

Continued from page 1

dence

Aldersbridge Communities has announced plans for The Landing at East Point, an affordable, LGBTQ-affirming independent living community for adults 55 and older in East Providence.

The nonprofit organization describes the project as Rhode Island's first affordable housing development specifically designed for LGBTQ older adults and their allies, with an emphasis on safety, dignity, and community. Advocates have long warned that LGBTQ seniors face heightened risks of housing insecurity, isolation, and discrimination in traditional senior living settings, particularly for those who came of age before broader legal protections were in place.

Project details, including financing and construction timelines, remain in development and have not yet been consolidated in a single public filing.

New Hampshire Bill Would Restrict Flags Displayed in Public Schools

A bill introduced in the New Hampshire House would limit which flags may be displayed in public schools and public charter schools, a proposal that has drawn sharp debate over classroom neutrality and student inclusion.

House Bill 1132 would allow only the U.S. flag, New Hampshire state flag, and POW/MIA flag, with narrow exceptions for municipal flags, military branch flags, and instructional use. Violations could result in civil penalties of up to $1,000.

Supporters argue the measure would prevent political messaging in schools, while opponents say it would effectively prohibit Pride flags and other symbols that LGBTQ students and allies view as indicators of safety and acceptance in educational spaces. The bill has received a public hearing and awaits further legislative action.

Federal Civil Rights Investigation Opened in Maine Over Transgender Student Participation

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights has opened a Title IX investigation involving a Maine school district following a complaint related to a transgender student's participation on a school athletic team.

The investigation is part of a broader federal enforcement action in which the Department confirmed it opened 18 Title IX investigations nationwide based on similar complaints. Maine officials have said most districts continue to follow the Maine Human Rights Act, which explicitly protects transgender students' rights to participate in school activities consistent with their gender identity.

The case underscores the growing conflict between state-level civil rights protections and shifting federal interpretations of Title IX, with immediate implications for school policies and transgender students' access to extracurricular activities. The specific OCR notification letter sent to the district has not been publicly released.

Written with information provided by the Rhode Island Foundation; Aldersbridge Communities; the New Hampshire General Court; the U.S. Department of Education; the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit; GLAD Law

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awards?"

The two of them, along with entertainment executive Jeremy Blacklow (Prime Video; Amazon MGM Studios), therefore launched The Rainbow Project and its first initiative, the Velma Awards (therainbowproject.tv), in 2024. The Velmas take a different approach than most media awards. "Part of what we wanted to do was queer the awards structure," Nee explained. Traditionally, she said, "studios submit, there are nominations, and then there's a winner." With queer content, however, the studios often don't want anyone putting a spotlight on it, she said, so rather than relying on studio submissions, The Rainbow Project seeks out such programming itself.

When they find it, Reed said, "We award anybody who has had the temerity to make that happen," rather than selecting just one winner from a group of nominees.

And instead of being aimed at the studios, Nee added, the Velmas are "purely for the creators to know that people are cheering them on and paying attention."

Award categories adjust to fit the programs and include ones like "Best Queer Relationship That's Just a Plain Ol' Relationship," "Best Episode for Storytime with Drag Queens," "Best Helping My Dad Propose to My Other Dad," and "Best New NonBinary Cast Member."

Last year, The Rainbow Project also launched an archive of first-hand accounts from creators and producers who have gotten queer stories through or around the studio system, in order to help others trying to do the same. The archive is closed to the public so that creators can speak freely about where they found pushback, Nee noted, but stressed, "We're not here to shame anyone." Instead, they want to create a "safe space" for creators to be honest about their experiences and share best practices.

Their goal is to build the archive into "the best resource we can for the children's media market in anything queer narrative," Reed said.

The motivation behind The Rainbow Project is personal as well as professional. All three founders grew up watching "queer-coded stuff" where they had to imagine themselves in the storylines, "because nobody was projecting ourselves back to us," Nee reflected.

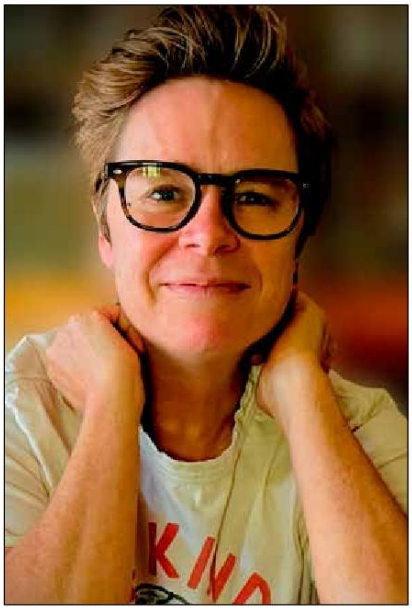
When her own son was growing up, she saw how it mattered when he saw families that looked like his on screen. Now, however, she said, "I think we're back in a place where kids know how dangerous it is to be themselves." But whether kids are figuring out their own gender identity or sexuality or have LGBTQ parents, she insisted, "We want everyone to see that there is representation."

Nee thinks that many shows on the Velmas list would not get greenlit now, however; they have simply already been in progress. She knows people working on new shows, and said it feels like things are "going back 10 years" where the networks are telling them not to include same-sex parents or nonbinary characters. "People are being told flat out, 'No, we're not doing that right now because it invites the online trolls,'" she shared. Nee experienced such trolling firsthand with her Netflix show "Ridley Jones" (2021-2023), because it included a nonbinary character. "The networks don't want to get into that," she said.

Reed agreed that among the people they both know in high positions at the networks, "everybody is just really afraid of the consequences." She urged, "We have to take risks regardless of the outcome. It is for the sake of our country as a whole."

Both she and Nee were adamant, however, that the networks harbor no villains or evil overlords. "I think everyone is in a bad place and we want to keep encouraging people to be courageous," Nee explained.

A way forward, too, could come from new approaches, such as independent platforms outside the studio system, Reed said, noting, "If somebody is able to fund that, I think it could be immensely successful." She said that today's "market-driven narrative" is "not teaching [children] values and all the fundamental building blocks that I think children's programming is essentially meant to be."



Kristi Reed. Courtesy photo.

Nee concurred that "purely market-driven media" is not the answer, "especially not in the kids' space." As she sees it, "The whole paradigm of the business is going to keep moving towards people making their own stuff and it finding life online"; eventually, "the studio system is not going to be the only game in town." When that shift really happens, she believes, people will "get out of having to ask all the permissions up the lines in these old structures that are built to protect the bottom line. I'm really excited for that."

But while she finds her biggest hope in the independent pathways, she also insisted, "The studio system still tells us more about ourselves than any smaller platform, so it still feels really important to keep fighting the fight to make sure that people see themselves in the big brands."

To other professionals in the industry, Nee said, "I think we're all looking for places to change the direction of what's happening in our world. The most powerful and specific thing that any of us can do is to figure out what steps we can take this year within the media landscape." She exhorted, "Go out and do letter writing or protesting or whatever else, but don't forget the power that's right at our fingertips. Every small thing you do will reverberate with a generation of kids."

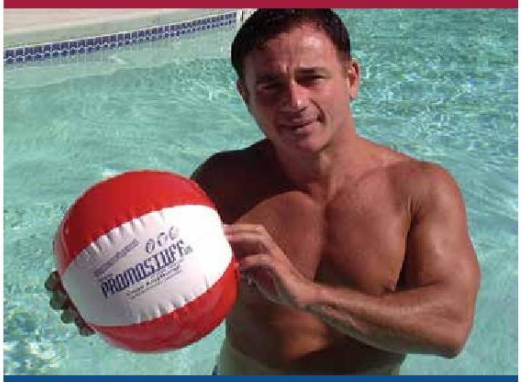
Viewers also have a role to play. Reed advised watching the shows on the Velmas list, talking about them, leaving positive reviews online, and promoting them on social media. "Let people know you care, you want to watch it, you appreciate it, your family sees it, and let the creators know how important it is to you. All that stuff matters," she said.

Looking ahead, Reed revealed, "I am working on a number of things that will come out in the next year or so that do have wonderful queer narratives. Some of them are some pretty big IPs [intellectual properties], and that is hopeful."

Although children's programming is often seen as a small part of the entire media landscape, Reed feels it plays a vital role. "I very strongly believe that if you need to end generational hatred, it starts in children's programming. That is how you change a generation," she asserted. "That's where we are placing our focus."

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 1,900+ LGBTQ family books.

HOT IDEAS



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billy masters

Sometimes you've just got to be patient. An event 50 years in the making was just announced—a reunion of "Charlie's Angels". Obviously since the death of **Farrah Fawcett (Majors)**, it isn't a reunion of the original cast. But it's the next best thing. On April 6, 2026, **Kate Jackson, Jaclyn Smith and Cheryl Ladd** will attend a 50th anniversary celebration at the PaleyFest LA. You'd think the fact that they got Kate to show up (likely in a face mask) would be cause to celebrate, but there's a fly in the ointment. I never thought I'd say these words, but people are clamoring for **Shelley Hack**. The least popular Angel in captivity is also the only living Angel not invited. Of course, she still could show up. Nobody's saying she can't buy a ticket.

Vying for second place in hot stories is this: "**Don Lemon** was taken into custody by federal agents last night in Los Angeles, where he was covering the Grammy Awards." That's the statement from Lemon's lawyer. This stems from Lemon's interviews of protesters and the pastor at an anti-ICE rally at Cities Church in St. Paul, Minnesota on January 18th. El Presidente took umbrage at the coverage, and the Department of Justice twice attempted to get an arrest warrant. A Minnesota Federal District Court judge denied both requests. Lemon and four others were charged with "Conspiracy Against Right of Religious Freedom at Place of Worship" and "Injure, Intimidate, and Interfere with Exercise of Right of Religious Freedom at a Place of Worship". That's a whole lotta religious mumbo jumbo from someone who previously quoted Two Corinthians!

I don't watch "Traitors". There, I said it. Not that I don't like it—I've never seen it. I'm absolutely convinced I'd love it if I bothered to turn it on. That said, I have been following this **Colton Underwood** situation, and I know a thing or two about him. What you have to understand is that most reality contestants are driven by one thing—the desire to be famous. Colton is driven by this. Not a criticism—in fact, something I admire. But when you go on THREE seasons of "Bachelor" shows without interest in women (whatever degree of "questioning" he may have had), there is one thing for certain—he knows how to keep a secret. Yes, many people will argue that he had issues, he had questions, he needed therapy. Absolutely. But what he needed even more was to be on TV. So, stop the bashing of **Michael Rapaport**, who simply said of Colton that he's "better at holding a secret than anyone I know."

Then there's the situation with **Lisa Rinna**, who I also have enormous affection for. She claims she playfully called Colton a "stalker". Then she found out he actually had been accused of stalking Cassie Randolph, one of his many "Bachelor" exes (oh, those silly questioning boys). Cassie even got a restraining order against him. That's why Rinna took back her accusation. "It's come to my attention that my post that I responded to in my 'housewife mode' is taking on a life of its own and it's causing real problems for Colton. I do not want this because Colton and I are great. He was a great and is a great nemesis for me on the show and in the game...The fact that the backlash is happening, I feel horrible about because I don't want to hurt anybody. I'm here to play the game and have fun. We had so much fun. I've only always had a great time with him. So, please guys be gentle. It's a game, it's a TV show. We're all doing the best we can. Don't send death threats or do anything to jeopardize somebody's family."

Chris Noth is going public about his relationship with **Sarah Jessica Parker**. The former Mister Big was killed off "And Just Like That..." in the premiere episode, which was always the plan. Then three women from his past came forward with claims of sexual assault. It should be noted that no charges were ever filed and no investigation ever happened. Noth had already wrapped "AJLT" by the time Parker and co-stars released this statement: "We are deeply saddened to hear the allegations against Chris Noth. We support the women who have come forward and shared their painful experiences. We know it must be a very difficult thing to do and we commend them for it." Noth says, "The statement that they put out—which was nothing more than brand management, really—I don't know, it was sad, it was disappointing, it was surprising. Because you need to call me and hear my side of this. You've known me for many years, and we've worked for many years...And that didn't happen, and that was too bad." Asked where things stand with Parker now, Chris replied, "We're not friends, I think that's pretty obvious."

To add fuel to the fire, both **Kristin Davis and Mario Cantone** believe the sequel series ended too soon—and certainly not in a tasteful fashion. Mario was a guest on Davis' podcast and said, "I just wanted one more season." Kristin responded, "I agree, I absolutely wanted one more season too." Mario added, "I don't care what anybody says. That was not a series finale. It was a season finale, but that wasn't a series finale." Frankly, I think an overflowing toilet was the perfect visual metaphor for this ill-advised venture.

Last week, we discussed **Hudson Williams** walking the runway of Milan's Fashion Week for Dsquared2. Turns out, he wasn't the only one—he was just first. Connor Storrie did the same for Saint Laurent. And then Vogue UK did something I didn't expect. After talking about Storrie's modeling debut, they said, "with a leather-trenched **Francois Arnaud** never straying too far from his side. The co-stars, who are believed to be dating, but could, of course, be best friends, or flatmates, were also seen leaving Hotel Costes together earlier that evening with the casual intimacy of two people who have shared each other's bodies (on screen, I mean, with the viewing public)." Except they are not connected at all on "Heated Rivalry". They ended the piece with this tantalizing quip: "And what does every great leading man in Hollywood have? A rumoured boyfriend." Throw the words "Could it be" at the beginning, and you might as well be reading a Billy Masters item. Surely I don't mean to imply Vogue UK isn't any more reputable than whatever publication you are reading this in. Progress? Perhaps. The jury's out. But the official videos of each lad getting dressed (in separate hotel rooms, by the by) can be found on BillyMasters.com.

Every day, performers have little triumphs in changing the world's perception of marginalized people. Last week, **Bob the Drag Queen** made a splash when he joined the cast of "Moulin Rouge! The Musical!" as Harold Zidler. Of course, not a total revolution as Bob and Harold are both males. It's worth noting that while the role was originally played by **Danny Burstein**, it was eventually portrayed by Tituss Burgess—as much a drag queen as Bob. But why quibble? I'm told Bob got a great reception on his entrance, and received a standing ovation at his curtain call. The producers even added a little of his "Purse First" for the finale megamix. Congrats.

Things are not coming up roses in Japan. An upcoming production of "Gypsy" in Tokyo will be retitled "Rose". Why? "The original title, "Gypsy", is a discriminatory term given to the Roma and Sinti people...The Japanese title has been changed to "Rose" out of consideration for this term." Here's a better idea—don't do the show. Nobody calls her "Gypsy" because she's banging a tambourine and reading people's palms. She adopted that as her name. This is a work of art—either you do it as written or not at all. Even the last Broadway revival was faithful to that. How will that scene in the Chinese restaurant go over in Japan? Or the notorious eggroll for Mr. Goldstone? Or the Salute to Uncle Sam? Aren't those problematic? I can't believe the estates of **Jule Styne, Stephen Sondheim and Arthur Laurents** are allowing this to happen. Dim the lights on Broadway—theatre is officially dead.

This week's "Ask Billy" question from Oscar in Florida: *"Who is the hot papi in 'Beauty in Black'? The one who plays the stripper?"*

That would be fitness model **Rodrigo Aburto**—who is probably better known as the spouse of Matteo Lane. You'll be happy to know that he'll be back for season three. "It's been very cool. I was really excited to use my dancing skills in the show. I'm a stripper on the show, and they decided to grow my character." I think parts of you will grow when you check him out on BillyMasters.com.

When I'm boycotting the Tokyo "Rose", it's definitely time to end another column. Should you be interested, you can even hear this leading lady sing. Just head on over to www.BillyMasters.com—the site that has never said no to a foreign tongue. Should I be able to give you a hand with anything else, feel free to drop a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I tell you about my night with two Corinthians in the back of a Chrysler Cordoba! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

Photo by Fuzheado, via Wikimedia Commons.

Don Lemon

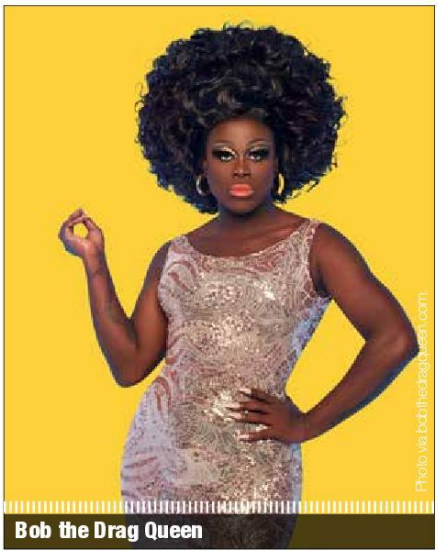
Photo via bobthedragqueen.com

Bob the Drag Queen

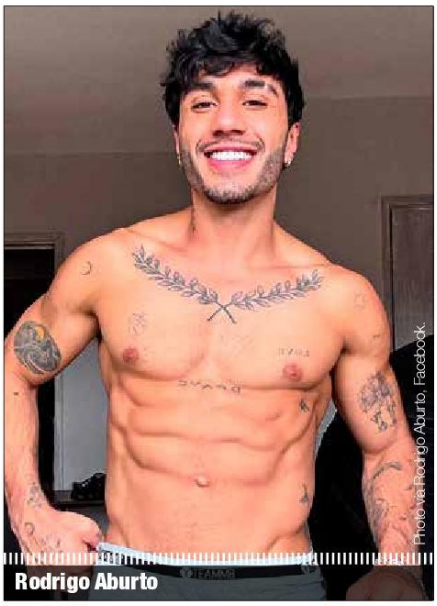
Photo via Rodrigo Aburto, Facebook.

Rodrigo Aburto

NATIONAL BRIEFS

By Bay Windows staff

Trump Reinstates Transgender Military Ban

President Trump signed Executive Order 14183 on January 27, 2025, reinstating a ban on transgender people serving openly in the U.S. military.

The order, titled "Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness," states that identifying as a gender different from one's sex assigned at birth "conflicts with a soldier's commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle." The Department of Defense later issued implementing guidance designating transgender people as presumptively disqualified from service based on a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

Multiple federal lawsuits were filed challenging the policy under the Fifth Amendment's equal protection guarantees. Several district courts initially blocked enforcement, but the U.S. Supreme Court later allowed the ban to take effect while appeals continue.

Written with information provided by the Federal Register; the U.S. Department of Defense; the U.S. Supreme Court; and the Associated Press.

Transgender Service Members Honored at Forced Retirement Ceremony

Five transgender service members were honored during a retirement ceremony held January 8, 2026, in Washington, D.C., marking the end of their military careers following the reinstated transgender service ban.

The event was hosted by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation and presided over by retired four-star Gen. Stanley McChrystal. Those honored included Space Force Colonel Bree Fram, Lt. Col. Erin Krizek, Cmdr. Blake Dremann, Sgt. 1st Class Cathrine Schmid, and Chief Petty Officer Jaida McGuire.

Representative Sarah McBride of Delaware and Representative Mark Takano of California delivered remarks. McBride described the forced retirements as "immoral, unfair, and un-American." Fram told attendees that those retiring were not leaving because they failed in their duties, but because "what we represented could not be hidden away."

Written with information provided by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation; official statements from members of Congress; and the Associated Press.

Former Space Force Colonel Bree Fram Launches Congressional Campaign

Retired Space Force Colonel Bree Fram announced her candidacy for Congress on January 20, 2026, launching a Democratic campaign in Northern Virginia and raising more than $100,000 in her first 24 hours, according to her campaign.

Fram served 23 years in the U.S. military, including deployments to Iraq and Qatar, and became the first openly transgender officer promoted to colonel in January 2024. She was forced into retirement following the reinstatement of the transgender military ban.

Fram is running in Northern Virginia's 11th Congressional District, though final district boundaries remain subject to ongoing redistricting. If elected, she would become the second openly transgender member of Congress, joining Representative Sarah McBride of Delaware.

Written with information provided by Bree Fram for Congress; Federal Election Commission filings; the U.S. Space Force; and the Associated Press.

Rep. Sarah McBride Misgendered During House Proceedings

Representative Sarah McBride of Delaware, the first openly transgender member of Congress, was misgendered during U.S. House floor proceedings on January 14, 2026, when Representative Andrew Clyde of Georgia referred to her as "the gentleman from Delaware" while serving as speaker pro tempore.

McBride did not respond to the remark and proceeded with her prepared floor speech honoring women leaders in Delaware, including members of the state's National Guard. A spokesperson later said McBride did not hear the comment and remains focused on lowering costs for her constituents.

The exchange is documented in the Congressional Record and House floor video.

Written with information provided by the Congressional Record; C-SPAN; and the Associated Press.

McBride Joins Bipartisan Delegation to Denmark and Greenland

Copenhagen and Nuuk — January 17–20, 2026

Representative Sarah McBride joined a bipartisan congressional delegation traveling to Denmark and Greenland from January 17 to January 20, 2026, amid renewed tensions following President Trump's public statements about acquiring Greenland.

The delegation met with Danish officials in Copenhagen and Greenlandic leaders in Nuuk to reaffirm diplomatic ties. Speaking afterward, McBride said leaders in Greenland privately expressed a desire to remain part of Denmark rather than become a U.S. territory.

The delegation included members of both parties from the House and Senate.

Written with information provided by congressional press offices and the Associated Press.

Anti-Transgender Riders Removed From Federal Funding Bills

Congressional negotiators removed anti-transgender provisions from multiple federal appropriations bills in late January 2026, preventing policy riders that would have restricted rights or services for transgender Americans.

The proposed provisions had appeared in draft funding bills for the Departments of Defense, Education, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and other agencies. Lawmakers involved in the negotiations said the language was stripped before the bills advanced.

Appropriations leaders emphasized that major policy changes should be debated through standalone legislation rather than attached to must-pass funding measures.

Written with information provided by Congress.gov; the House and Senate Appropriations Committees; and the Associated Press.

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