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Landmark same-sex marriage bill wins Senate passage

By Mary Clare Jalonick
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate passed bipartisan legislation Tuesday to protect same-sex marriages, an extraordinary sign of shifting national politics on the issue and a measure of relief for the hundreds of thousands of same-sex couples who have married since the Supreme Court's 2015 decision that legalized gay marriage nationwide.

see **MARRIAGE**, page 7



Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., joined at left by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, speaks to reporters following Senate passage of the Respect for Marriage Act, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2022. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

Rainbow struggle playing out on sidelines of World Cup



Germany's supporter wearing a rainbow jersey waits for the World Cup group F soccer match between Belgium and Canada, at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Doha, Qatar, Wednesday, Nov. 23, 2022. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)

By Mariam Fam
Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP)—Aside from the competition for the World Cup title, one of the most hotly contested is-

ssues in the tournament in Qatar is over rainbow colors.

In the first week of the tournament, seven European teams lost the battle to

see **WORLD CUP**, page 11



World AIDS Day 2022 message acknowledges inequalities

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day! With the COVID pandemic foremost on the minds of many, HIV/AIDS seems like a distant problem. A POZ Poll asked its readers, "Are you participating in any World AIDS Day 2022

events?" On 11/28, when I responded to the poll questions, 20% said "yes," 20% said "I don't know," and 60% said "no."

In 1988, the World Health Organization designated the day to pause and

reflect on the magnitude of the devastating effect this disease continues to have on domestic and global communities. Much of the focus still is on developing countries. However, African

see **MONROE**, page 8



Think of the Children

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

Like many in the LGBTQ community, I am still grieving over those murdered at Club Q in Colorado Springs last month. I am also thinking about how much anti-LGBTQ rhetoric has created a climate in which such violence can germinate, and how

much a purported concern over children's well-being has played into that rhetoric.

This "think of the children" argument is not new. It was used heavily to counter marriage equality in the earlier days of that fight. Marriage

equality advocates, however, worked hard to transform it into an argument for marriage equality. By 2013, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in *Windsor* that the anti-

see **MOMBIAN**, page 9

Your guide to 303 Creative v. Aubrey Elenis

Monday's Supreme Court argument

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

The ordinary rights of LGBTQ people are on the line again at the U.S. Supreme Court —this time on Monday, December 5, with a case seeking

to allow any business to deny service to a customer by claiming a personal objection to treating that customer the same as others. The footnotes to this oral argument (see below) are as interesting as the argument itself. But, first, here's a guide to taking in Monday's historic event:

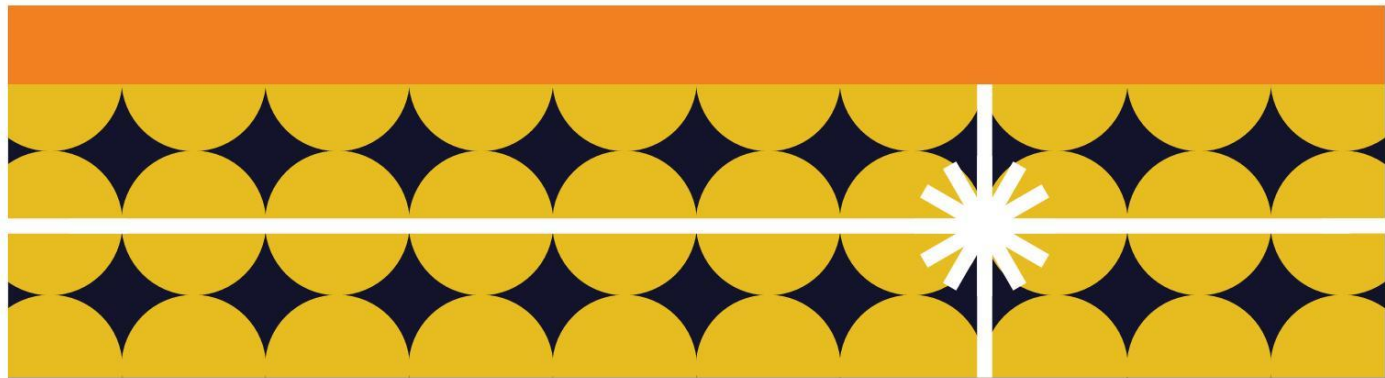
see **SCOTUS**, page 3



"I love Broadway. I love what they do—Broadway Cares, but I also want to say the show is extraordinary!"

—Nicole Kidman's impromptu speech after bidding \$100K to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS for Hugh Jackman's hat after a performance of "The Music Man". For that price, she should get to take Hugh home...Keith would be thrilled!

more in Billy Masters on page 6!



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NewEnglandbriefs

Vet sues over coverage denial for daughter gender transition

By Patrick Whittle, Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A U.S. military veteran and his daughter filed a lawsuit on Monday challenging a federal rule they said prevents the daughter from accessing medical coverage because she is transgender.

The veteran and daughter filed their lawsuit against the government anonymously via GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, a Boston-based advocacy group. The group's court filing said the daughter has been denied treatments recommended by doctors due to a federal statute that dates to 1976 that mandates exclusion of surgical treatments for gender transition in the military's medical coverage for the dependents of service members.

The statute is an antiquated rule based on outdated views of transgender people, and striking it from the books would be significant for many people seeking to access care, said Ben Klein, an attorney with GLAD.

"We can safely say this is the first time the statute has been challenged. It would affect a huge number of people," Klein said. "A victory in this case would ensure that all dependents of military personnel who are transgender would have access to the critical medical care they need, free of discrimination of exclusion."

The defendants in the lawsuit include the U.S. Department of Defense and Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin. The plaintiffs, who live in Maine, filed their lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the District of Maine in Portland. The lawsuit calls for the exclusion rule to be declared unconstitutional and also states that the plaintiffs want damages.

Representatives for the U.S. Department of Defense declined to comment on the lawsuit and deferred to the U.S. Department of Justice, which would represent the agency in the case. Justice Department representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press.

The lawsuit states that the veteran served for 23 years in the Marine Corps and Air Force. His daughter is a 21-year-old transgender woman who has been diagnosed with gender dysphoria and sought gender transition surgery to address the condition, the lawsuit states.

The suit states that the daughter, who is only referred to as Jane Doe, is entitled to receive health care benefits through the military's TRICARE health plan, which is a program of the Defense Department's Military Health System. It states that she "has been and continues to be unable to obtain coverage as a TRICARE beneficiary" for gender transition surgery because of the 1976 rule.

The lawsuit states that the daughter has also incurred costs and sought alternative health insurance because of previous improper denials of coverage by the defendants. Her request for coverage of treatments including laser hair removal and electrolysis were previously denied, the lawsuit states.

any potential customers. Although Smith said she has had LGBT clients, she said she could not do wedding site designs for same-sex couples because of her belief that the bible prohibits same-sex marriage.

The respondent: The state of Colorado, and its Attorney General Aubrey Elenis, are defending the state law prohibiting, in public accommodations, discrimination based on "disability, race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, or ancestry."

Previous rulings: Both a U.S. District Court and the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA) in this challenge. The 10th Circuit ruled CADA to be a "neutral law of general applicability" and said it is neither unconstitutionally vague nor overbroad and did not violate the free speech or free exercise rights of the plaintiff.

The question at the Supreme Court: The Supreme Court has dramatically reframed the question posed by attorneys for the web designer. ADF attorneys asked: "Whether applying a public accommodation law to compel an artist to speak or stay silent, contrary to the artist's sincerely held religious beliefs, violates the Free Speech or Free Exercise Clauses of the First Amendment." The Supreme Court, in accepting the ADF appeal, posed much larger question, one that does not require a religious objection but *any* objection: "Whether applying a public

see **SCOTUS**, page 10

SCOTUS

Continued from page 1

When: Monday, December 5, 10 a.m. Seventy minutes has been allotted.

Where: In the U.S. Supreme Court courtroom in Washington, D.C. Some members of the public will be allowed to attend the argument in person but on a first-come-first-serve basis, which generally requires camping outside in a designated line overnight. There are other ways to take in the argument (see below).

The case: *303 Creative v. Aubrey Elenis*, the Colorado attorney general. This case was initiated by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a legal group which has focused largely on anti-LGBTQ projects. In this case, ADF sought to re-stage an earlier case that fell short — *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*—where the group won only a procedural victory. In this case, ADF has asked a web designer to press a pre-emptive case against the state public accommodations law protecting LGBTQ people, saying that —if she did offer wedding page services, she would not want to offer them to same-sex couples because of her religious beliefs.

The appellant: Graphic artist Lorie Smith was recruited by the Alliance Defending Freedom to file this lawsuit even though no same-sex couple had yet come to her seeking a design for their wedding plans. In fact, Smith had not yet even offered to provide wedding site designs for

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The GOP grooms murderers Turning the tables on purveyors of hate

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

The relentless stoking of anti-gay and anti-transgender intolerance by Republicans needs aggressive push-back. We cannot accept their protestations of not intending violence. If they merely opposed us for being different, they could do so without inventing preposterous lies portraying us as a menace to their children. The real threat is from the purveyors of hate. It is time to turn the tables on them.

The increasingly radicalized Republican Party will gain a new platform for its incitements when it takes control of the House of Representatives in January. Revenge-driven investigations and impeachments are promised. Loony though leading voices like Marjorie Taylor Greene may be, we cannot afford to laugh them off.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says that the most dangerous person in the world is not President Xi of China or Putin of Russia, but Randi Weingarten of the American Federation of Teachers. This, he says, is because of the “filth” she allegedly advocates being taught in schools. This is culture war talk, in which tolerating gay and trans people and acknowledging that America’s history is not an unbroken stream of glory constitutes a depraved threat to our children.

Unless you just arrived by spaceship from Proxima Centauri, you likely know that extremist talk is nothing new for Pompeo. He is putting teachers in danger to advance his political ambitions.

Extremists like Pompeo who persist in this demonizing rhetoric are either trying to get people killed or they have a reckless disregard for the observable consequences of their provocations.

Some in our movement seem to have forgotten the main lesson of Stonewall, which was fighting back and refusing to be victims. I am not suggesting that we deny reality. We are disproportionately targeted for hate crimes. I’m talking about how we see ourselves.

Dan Savage tweets, “The raid on the Stonewall Inn was state-sponsored violence. The attack on Club Q in Colorado Springs ... looks like GOP-sponsored violence. Not just the logical result of the ‘groomer’ blood libel, but the goal.” And “[W]e’re going to keep fighting. Because if we’re not safe behind the closed doors of a gay bar—if they can’t let us have even that—then we’re not safe anywhere.”

One of gay rights pioneer Frank Kameny’s contributions in the early days of the movement was pushing his colleagues to get out of their defensive crouch and frame their activism more positively and proactively. At the time, many gay people let themselves be gaslit that they were sick.

A young trans woman in Kenya whom I help, Sharon, posts photos on Facebook of herself in stylish poses. I marvel at her determination to be herself despite being thrown out of her house, disowned by her family, and targeted for hate crimes. Her perseverance amid a storm of bigotry is an example of grace. Sure, hard-nosed advocacy and organizing are needed. But to me, these brave, despised people represent a new world struggling to be born.

Richard Fierro, the principal hero who stopped the Club Q shooter, is a straight Army veteran. Among the dead that night was his daughter’s boyfriend. The social acceptance that brought his family there is what right-

wing political and media voices seek to destroy. In order to defeat the intolerance, we must acknowledge the advances we have made. Attacks like the one on Club Q are part of the backlash that follows progress.

As to the shooter being nonbinary, that is no more shocking in a hate-drenched climate than, say, the sexual orientation of a vicious, closeted Republican senator.

After the candlelight vigils are over, refusing to be victims—even though some of us are indeed victimized—is crucial. We are not mere isolated victims, but compatriots in a multi-generational struggle.

Three decades ago I saw Holly Near sing “We are a gentle, angry people, and we are singing, singing for our lives.... We are a justice-seeking people,” etc. It was moving; but we are also fighting, not just for our lives but for the common good: for the idea that a diverse people can live and thrive together in peace. That idea was alive and well on November 17 in Nancy Pelosi’s announcement that she would step down from leading Democrats in the House:

“With these elections, the people stood in the breach and repelled the assault on democracy. They resoundingly rejected violence and insurrection. And in doing so, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.”

As the assault has not ended, neither can our struggle. To your battle stations!

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

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Rita Hester’s life mattered

by Rev. Irene Monroe
contributing writer

In the pantheon of slain Americans who have furthered civil rights gains of a marginalized group, Rita Hester, an African American transgender woman, is among them. There had been several transgender murders prior to Rita’s—Chanelle Pickett in Watertown in 1995 and Monique Thomas in Dorchester in September 1998. Rita lived large and loved big, but she could have never imagined her life as her death would mean so much to so many.

On November 28, 1998, Rita was found dead in her first-floor apartment with 20 stab wounds to her chest, just two days before her 35th birthday. Hester’s murder kicked off the “Remembering Our Dead” web project that became the catalyst for the annual International Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20. Her murder occurred six weeks after Matthew Shepard’s in Laramie, Wyoming, which became an internationally known homophobic hate crime that in 2009 President Barack Obama signed into law The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

In 2022, Rita’s murder is still an unsolved cold case like most transgender murders. Her murder occurred in an era when the “trans panic defense” - a defendant melodramatically pleads temporary insanity for kill-

ing - was a legal strategy. Friends of Rita told NBC.com their suspicion about her murder. “A man (or men) who couldn’t face his attraction to a trans woman came home with Hester and killed her in a fit of shame.”

I’ll never forget Rita’s vigil because the words of Rita’s mother, Kathleen Hester, haunt me to this day. When Rita’s mother came up to the microphone during the Speak Out portion of the vigil at the Model Cafe, where Rita was known, she brought most of us to tears, myself included. “I would have gladly died for you, Rita. I would have taken the stabs and told you to run. I loved you!” After her remarks, Rita’s mother collapsed in a grief-induced faint. When the Speak-out portion ended, the crowd moved outside with lit candles and gathered behind Rita’s family. As the vigil processed from the Model Cafe to 21 Park Vale Avenue, where Rita lived and died, Rita’s mother again brought me to tears as she and her surviving children knelt in front of the doorway of Rita’s apartment building and recited “The Lord’s Prayer.” Many of us joined in unison.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, this year, at least 32 transgender Black and LatinX sisters have been fatally shot or killed.

At this year’s Association of Black Harvard Women

Annual Vigil for Black Trans Lives, photos and the reading of names of departed Black Trans individuals were part of the liturgy in Holden Chapel on Harvard’s campus. Chastity Boswick, executive director of the Transgender Emergency Fund of Massachusetts, was the keynote speaker. Boswick told the audience “she hopes next year she’ll not be among the photos and names.” It’s an ongoing concern Boswick expresses publicly every chance she can. “What happened to Hester could happen to any of us. That’s her daily battle,” she told WBUR in 2020.

And that concern I heard during the “Trans Catholic Voices” breakout session at the DignityUSA conference in Boston in 2017. I listened to the vulnerability of an African American transwoman who pointed out that Pope Francis’s statements about trans people deny them basic human dignity and perpetuate violence against them. In her closing remarks, the African American trans-sister asked for help from advocates and allies in the room, bringing me to tears. She said, “Trans lives are real lives. Trans deaths are real deaths. God works through other people. Maybe you can be those other people.”

As we celebrate Trans Day of Remembrance, we are those other people honoring Rita Hester and others.

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Worldbriefs

Dutch not expected to emulate Germany with World Cup protest

DOHA, Qatar (AP) —The Netherlands is not expected to emulate Germany by making a gesture to protest host nation Qatar's human rights record before Friday's World Cup game against Ecuador.

Germany's players covered their mouths for the team photo ahead of their match against Japan on Wednesday to protest against FIFA for its clampdown on the "One Love" armbands. Seven European teams, including the Netherlands and Germany, had planned to wear the item in a move seen as a rebuke to Qatar.

Qatar has been criticized for its laws against homosexuality as well as its treatment of migrant workers, who were needed to build stadiums, metro lines, roads and hotels.

Netherlands defender Denzel Dumfries said the players won't do anything on the field Friday because they feel they have done enough after meeting some migrant workers directly.

"No, no. We paid a lot of attention, as the coach said. We received the migrant workers and that was a wonderful (time) both for them and for us,"

Dumfries said through an interpreter Thursday. "In the last two weeks we've spoken a lot (about human rights). We've said what we need to say, and from now on we need to concentrate on football."

The exact number of migrant workers who have died or were injured working in often extreme heat on projects since FIFA picked Qatar as World Cup host in December 2010 is unclear. Definitive data has been hard to verify or not published by authorities.

Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal said the Dutch team will take no further action.

"Because we put a full stop behind all the political issues (last) Thursday when we invited the migrants and we have this purpose," Van Gaal said through an interpreter. "It's been all about human rights (so far) and perhaps rightly so and perhaps not rightly so. But I think that's enough."

Germany's gesture on Wednesday was a response to FIFA's warning to the seven European federations that players would be penalized if they wore the colorful "One Love" armbands, which are seen as a symbol for inclusion and diversity.

Van Gaal was asked if he thought the German team would be affected on the field by their political gesture. The four-time World Cup champions lost to Japan 2-1 in their opening match.

"That is the question. That is the question," Van Gaal said. "I don't want to take that risk. We're here to become world champions."

AP World Cup coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/world-cup> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Russian Duma gives LGBTQ 'propaganda' bill final approval

MOSCOW (AP) —Russian lawmakers on Thursday gave their final approval to a bill that significantly expands restrictions on activities seen as promoting gay rights in the country, another step in a years-long crackdown on the country's embattled LGBTQ community.

The new bill expands a ban on what authorities call "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" to minors, established by legislation dubbed the "gay propaganda" law. It was adopted by the Kremlin in 2013 in an effort to promote "traditional values" in Russia.

This year, the lawmakers moved to ban spreading such information to people aged 18 and older.

The bill was approved in the third and final read-

ing on Thursday by the State Duma, the lower house of parliament. It will go next to the upper house, the Federation Council, and then to President Vladimir Putin, whose signature will give it legal force.

The new bill outlaws all advertising, media and online resources books, films and theater productions deemed to contain such "propaganda," a concept loosely defined in the bill. The 2013 ban was often enacted against any depictions of same-sex unions and used as a tool to crack down on LGBTQ rights groups and activists.

Violations are punishable by fines. If committed by non-residents, they can lead to their expulsion from Russia. The fines range from 100,000 to 2 million rubles (\$1,660-\$33,000). For some violations, foreigners could face 15 days' detention prior to expulsion.

The bill does not make violations a criminal offense. Russian law stipulates that the criminal code can be amended only through an independent bill. Some lawmakers have suggested they favor such a measure.

Russia explicitly outlawed same-sex marriages in 2020 by adopting amendments to the country's Constitution that, among other things, stipulated that the "institution of marriage is a union between a man and a woman."

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billy masters

Continued from page 1

It's that time of the year I both long for and dread. Yes, it's Peppermint Bark season. I had to go to Kohl's to make an Amazon return, and there it was—an entire wall of Ghirardelli's luscious peppermint temptresses bathed in both white and milk chocolate. I managed to walk by the display without succumbing to the siren's call—although I felt like I gained 10 pounds by just looking at it. My will was strong...until I made my Amazon return and got a Kohl's \$5 coupon. Peppermint Bark and a coupon? I'm only human. I bought my first bag of the season and, while I have managed to eat it both judiciously and deliciously, I sense this is the beginning of the end.

Everyone knows that Thanksgiving kicks off the holiday season—well, everyone except for CVS and the Hallmark Channel, where Christmas starts around July 4th! But what kicks off Thanksgiving? The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, naturally. The parade often features a variety of Broadway performances—well, performances whose audio tracks were pre-recorded under studio conditions. If there's one thing **Lea Michele** can do, it's lip-sync! Her number even featured some less-than-compelling drumming with drumsticks a foot from banging anything. If there's one thing I know about, it's banging!

While Michele has received critical praise, one of her former "Glee" co-stars has made it clear he ain't going. When asked if he's seen "Funny Girl", **Chris Colfer** said, "No, I can be triggered at home." Enough said.

Another "Glee" made a bit of news last week. **Kevin McHale**—who has developed into quite a looker—has stated he will not be part of any "Glee" sequels or reboots. But it's not over any cast issues. "Knowing what we know now, I don't think I should be playing a character that's in a wheelchair," said McHale. I have a feeling if he came out against Lea, it wouldn't take long before he landed in a wheelchair!

Despite a splendid farewell show which aired on Disney+, **Elton John** is NOT retiring from performing, as his hubby **David Furnish** made perfectly clear. "It's really important to make a distinction between Elton retiring from touring but Elton not playing his very last public performance for the very last time. Will Elton return as a live performer? I hope so! It's in his blood. I know for a fact he will not be touring in any capacity. What you're going to see is the possibility of a special one-off or small residency in one venue for a limited period of time."

Kevin Spacey is about to be charged with seven additional sexual assault charges by the Crown Prosecution Service in the UK. One of the victims claims to have been assaulted repeatedly between 2001 and 2004. But it was another charge which caught our eye: "The CPS has also authorized one charge of causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent." The actor is scheduled to appear in person at Westminster Magistrates' Court on December 16th. On the positive side, this is likely the first thing Kevin's had on his calendar since beating that **Anthony Rapp** rap. Speaking of which...

Anthony Rapp is returning to his off-Broadway roots. "Without You" is a one-man musical based on Anthony's memoir. Previews will begin at the New World Stages on January 14th, and opening night will be on January 25th—which just happens to be 27 years to the day from the first public performance of "Rent".

Broadway history is about to be made. **Jinkx Monsoon**—a "Drag Race" alum—will be making her Broadway debut in "Chicago". Well, that's no big surprise—several cocks in frocks have trod the boards as Mary Sunshine. But Jinkx will not be taking on the role of the gender-bending reporter. She'll play Matron "Mama" Morton, making her the first drag queen to assume that role on Broadway (I'm sure it was played by some men in

various prison productions). "I cannot stress enough that this has been a lifelong dream of mine. To be making my Broadway debut, as my favorite role, in one of my favorite shows—that lifelong dream is coming true and then some." Her eight-week run begins January 16th.

I thought I knew everything there was to know about **Greg Louganis**. We've known each other for years, and he's been on "Billy Masters LIVE" before. But our hour-long chat turned into a 90-minute in-depth interview about everything from ancestry to auctions, diving to dogs. If you missed it, head on over to our YouTube channel, Billy Masters TV, or simply dick on BillyMasters.com/TV.

I've wanted to do something special to pay tribute to **Leslie Jordan**. His final episode of "Call Me Kat" will air on December 1st. So at 3PM Eastern on November 30th, "Billy Masters LIVE" will chat with Leslie's on-screen love interest, John Griffin, as well as a few other special friends. As always, you can join in the fun on our YouTube channel, Billy Masters TV, or on BillyMasters.com/TV.

As of this writing, Leslie's character on "Call Me Kat" will not be killed off. He'll go on vacation—a long one. Filling his shoes for at least one episode will be his mother, played by **Vicki Lawrence** (Schultz). Of course, Vicki and Leslie appeared together on the short-lived sitcom "The Cool Kids". Whether she returns remains to be seen.

Russell Tovey has revealed how he feels about straight men playing gay—he finds it hot! While discussing his role on "American Horror Story", he said, "There is an anxiety that kicks in that you go, 'This is a straight guy. I'm a gay guy, openly, and we're going to be kissing now.' And we did it and then his tongue slipped in and then they cut and he went to me, 'I just slipped my tongue in there—is that all right?' I said, 'If it's all right with you.' The next time we did it, I was like, 'This guy is up for it! This guy's committed. I absolutely love this, let's go for it!' So then we are like eating each other's face, tongue in each other's face. At one point I thought, 'I'm going to spit in his mouth. No, don't do that. That's too much.' I had to hold back. There's where you get in trouble." I think I'd have some trouble holding back with Tovey!

It's time for the first installment of "Billy's Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions". Traditionally, my first gift is the annual collectible holiday ornament from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. This year, the honoree is **Billy Porter**, dressed as Lola in "Kinky Boots". What a festive way to kick off the holiday season—and deck your halls with a bit of fabulousness. Grab it at BroadwayCares.org.

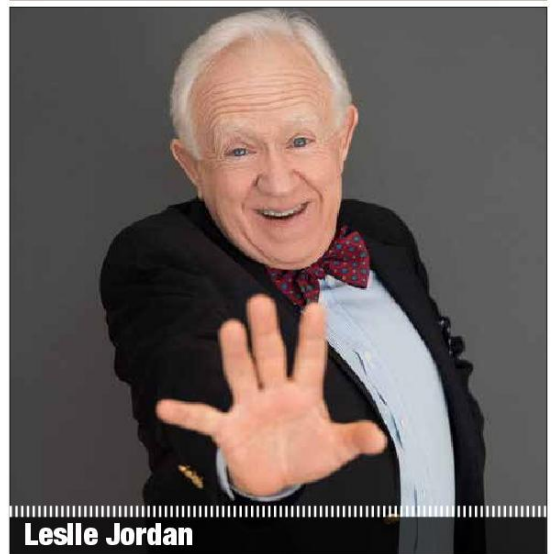
Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Randy in Providence: "What do you know about the new guy in 'Take Me Out'? I saw it on Broadway last summer. Is it worth going back again?"

That depends if you can't get enough of **Jesse Williams'** semi-fluffed dick bobbing about (to say nothing of the fact that he can act, too). If you're going just to see that, you can look at the exclusive footage on BillyMasters.com. If you need some fresh meat, a return trip might be in order. The person taking over for **Patrick J. Adams** is **Bill Heck**—who has a heck of a body...of work. Heck, his body's pretty fantastic too. And wait till you see his ass...also on our website.

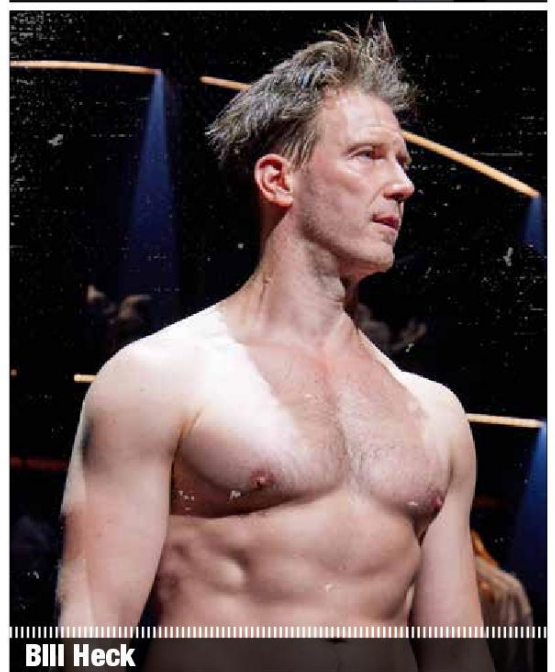
When we're recommending anything related to a sport, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. Of course, I do have a penchant for balls, which you can always find on www.BillyMasters.com—the site for pitchers and catchers alike. If you're looking to slide into home, drop a line to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Peppermint Bark goes on sale! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Kevin McHale



Leslie Jordan



Bill Heck

Marriage

Continued from page 1

The bill, which would ensure that same-sex and interracial marriages are enshrined in federal law, was approved 61-36 on Tuesday, including support from 12 Republicans. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the legislation was "a long time coming" and part of America's "difficult but inexorable march towards greater equality."

Democrats are moving quickly, while the party still holds the majority in both chambers of Congress. The legislation now moves to the House for a final vote.

President Joe Biden praised the bipartisan vote and said he will sign the bill "promptly and proudly" if it is passed by the House. He said it will ensure that LGBTQ youth "will grow up knowing that they, too, can lead full, happy lives and build families of their own."

The bill has gained steady momentum since the Supreme Court's June decision that overturned the federal right to an abortion, a ruling that included a concurring opinion from Justice Clarence Thomas that suggested same-sex marriage could also come under threat. Bipartisan Senate negotiations got a kick-start this summer when 47 Republicans unexpectedly voted for a House bill and gave supporters new optimism.

The legislation would not force any state to allow same-sex couples to marry. But it would require states to recognize all marriages that were legal where they were performed, and protect current same-sex unions, if the court's 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision were to be overturned. It's a stunning bipartisan endorsement, and evidence of societal change, after years of bitter divisiveness on the issue.

A new law protecting same-sex marriages would also be a major victory for Democrats as they relinquish their two years of consolidated power in Washington, and a massive win for advocates who have been pushing for decades for federal legislation. It

comes as the LGBTQ community has faced violent attacks, such as the shooting last weekend at a gay nightclub in Colorado that killed five people and injured at least 17.

"Our community really needs a win, we have been through a lot," said Kelley Robinson, the incoming president of Human Rights Campaign, which advocates on LGBTQ issues. "As a queer person who is married, I feel a sense of relief right now. I know my family is safe."

Robinson was in the Senate chamber for the vote with her wife, Becky, and toddler son. "It was more emotional than I expected," she said.

The vote was personal for many senators, too. Wisconsin Sen. Tammy Baldwin, a Democrat who is the first openly gay senator and was the lead sponsor of the bill, tearfully hugged Schumer and others as the final vote was called. Baldwin, who has been working on gay rights issues for almost four decades, tweeted thanks to the same-sex and interracial couples who she said made the moment possible.

"By living as your true selves, you changed the hearts and minds of people around you," she wrote.

Schumer said on Tuesday that he was wearing the tie he wore at his daughter's wedding, "one of the happiest moments of my life." He also recalled the "harrowing conversation" he had with his daughter and her wife in September 2020 when they heard that liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had passed away. "Could our right to marry be undone?" they asked at the time.

With conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett replacing Ginsburg, the court has now overturned Roe v. Wade and the federal right to an abortion, stoking fears about Obergefell and other rights protected by the court. But sentiment has shifted on same-sex marriage, with more than two-thirds of the public now in support.

Still, Schumer said it was notable that the Senate was even having the debate after years of Republican

opposition. "A decade ago, it would have strained all of our imaginations to envision both sides talking about protecting the rights of same-sex married couples," he said.

Passage came after the Senate rejected three Republican amendments to protect the rights of religious institutions and others to still oppose such marriages. Supporters of the legislation argued those amendments were unnecessary because the bill had already been amended to clarify that it does not affect rights of private individuals or businesses that are currently enshrined in law. The bill would also make clear that a marriage is between two people, an effort to ward off some far-right criticism that the legislation could endorse polygamy.

Republican Sen. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, who has been lobbying his fellow GOP senators to support the legislation for months, pointed to the number of religious groups supporting the bill, including The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some of those groups were part of negotiations on the bipartisan amendment.

"They see this as a step forward for religious freedom," Tillis says.

The nearly 17-million member, Utah-based faith said in a statement this month that church doctrine would continue to consider same-sex relationships to be against God's commandments.

Most Republicans still oppose the legislation, saying it is unnecessary and citing concerns about religious liberty. And some conservative groups stepped up opposition in recent weeks, lobbying Republican supporters to switch their votes.

"Marriage is the exclusive, lifelong, conjugal union between one man and one woman, and any departure from that design hurts the indispensable goal of having every child raised in a stable home by the mom and dad who conceived him," the Heritage Foundation's Roger Severino, vice president of domestic policy, wrote in a recent blog post arguing against the bill.

In an effort to win the 10 Republican votes necessary to overcome a filibuster in the 50-50 Senate, Democrats delayed consideration until after the mid-term elections, hoping that would relieve political pressure on GOP senators who might be wavering.

Eventual support from 12 Republicans gave Democrats the votes they needed.

Along with Tillis, Maine Sen. Susan Collins and Ohio Sen. Rob Portman supported the bill early on and have lobbied their GOP colleagues to support it. Also voting for the legislation were Republican Sens. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Todd Young of Indiana, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia, Mitt Romney of Utah, Joni Ernst of Iowa, Roy Blunt of Missouri, Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming and Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan of Alaska.

Just before passage, Collins thanked her fellow Republicans who supported it. "I know it has not been easy, but they have done the right thing," Collins said.

Lummis, one of the more conservative members of the Senate, spoke ahead of the final vote about her "fairly brutal self soul searching" before supporting the bill. She said that she accepts her church's beliefs that a marriage is between a man and a woman, but noted that the country was founded on the separation of church and state.

"We do well by taking this step, not embracing or validating each other's devoutly held views, but by the simple act of tolerating them," Lummis said.

Baldwin said earlier this month that the new-found openness from many Republicans on the subject reminds her "of the arc of the LBGTQ movement to begin with, in the early days when people weren't out and people knew gay people by myths and stereotypes."

"And slowly laws have followed," she said. "It is history."

Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

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Monroe

Continued from page 1

Americans are still disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic. And the epidemic is heavily concentrated in urban enclaves like Boston, Detroit, New York, Newark, Washington, D.C., and the Deep South.

In February, on National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2022, "Poz" reported that according to AIDSvU.org, African Americans in 2019 made up 43 percent of new HIV cases and comprised roughly 12- 13 percent of the U.S. population. This means that African Americans were 8.4 times more likely to contract the HIV infection compared to whites, according to The Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Massachusetts is a world-renowned medical hub known for its HIV/AIDS research and support systems, but the outcomes are equally grim.

In 2019, according to a UMass Chan Medical School report titled "Burden of HIV & AIDS amongst the Black Community in Massachusetts..." African Americans comprise 7.3 percent of the population but represent 32 percent of people newly diagnosed with HIV. This means that the rate of African American males living with HIV is 5.2 times of Whites males, and the rate of African American females living with HIV is 22.7 times that of white females. African Americans who contract HIV are more likely to die from it than members of other racial groups.

But this data doesn't reflect the wave of recent African diasporic immigrants of the last decade coming from the Caribbean Islands and the Motherland. This demographic group is overwhelmingly underreported and under-served—for fear of not only deportation but also of homophobic insults and assaults from their communities.

In 2022, why is HIV/AIDS still an overwhelmingly Black disease in the United States?

There are many persistent social and economic determinants contributing to the high rates of the epidemic in the African American community—poverty, homelessness, health care disparity, industrial prison complex, and violence, to name a few. And while we know that the epidemic moves along the fault lines of race, class, gender and sexual orientation, homophobia, stigma, and the Black Church continue to be barriers to ending the AIDS epidemic. However, the most significant obstacle is systemic racism.

"I would not expect anything other than the data quoted. No matter what is being measured in America, you already know who will fare worse. Systems in America are designed to have this outcome," said Dr. Thea James of Boston Medical Center, my spouse.

In 2021, The CDC declared racism a serious public health threat and its impact on health outcomes. World Aids Day 2021, the "National HIV/AIDS Strategy (2022–2025)" was released, bringing shockwaves to people of color with its

goal to center people living with HIV and address racism.

"The Strategy recognizes racism as a public health threat that directly affects the well-being of millions of Americans," the strategy states. "Over generations, these structural inequities have resulted in racial and ethnic health disparities that are severe, far-reaching, and unacceptable."

The UNAIDS 2022 theme is "Putting Ourselves to the Test: Achieving Equity to End HIV."

I hope the Poz Poll is incorrect and that many will participate in a World Aids Day event. But I feel assured that no matter who does or doesn't participate on that day, Black Lives living with HIV/AIDS are beginning to matter.

"We can end AIDS – if we end the inequalities which perpetuate it. This World AIDS Day, we need everyone to get involved in sharing the message that we will all benefit when we tackle inequalities," says UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima. "To keep everyone safe, to protect everyone's health, we need to Equalize."

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Mombian

Continued from page 1

equality 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 to win almost every other federal decision on marriage equality, including the 2015 *Obergefell* decision that established marriage equality nationwide. More than half of the *Obergefell* plaintiffs were parents.

“Think of the children” is still a sentiment being wielded against LGBTQ people, however. In the past few years, anti-LGBTQ people and organizations have used that concern, sometimes successfully, to ban LGBTQ-inclusive children’s books from schools and libraries, to block discussion of LGBTQ identities and history in classrooms, to stop transgender youth from using facilities and playing on sports teams aligned with their genders, and to criminalize those helping them access proven, gender-affirming health care.

Additionally, in 2022, there have been 124 incidents of anti-LGBTQ protests and threats targeting drag events, and eight proposed anti-drag

ills, according to GLAAD, who note that right-wing media outlets “often misrepresented what would occur at upcoming drag events, spinning them as harmful to children, and protests or threats would follow.”

But wait. According to UCLA’s Williams Institute, 2 million to 3.7 million American children under age 18 have an LGBTQ parent, with the number rising to as many as six million if we include those already grown. They also estimate that 3.2 million youth between the ages of eight and 18 are LGBTQ themselves.

The anti-LGBTQ attacks ignore these millions. How can we show instead that LGBTQ inclusion and equality are in fact in the best interests of children—all children?

First and foremost, as during the marriage equality battles, we LGBTQ people need to keep sharing—with neighbors, our elected officials, and the media—the stories of how we and our children have benefited from LGBTQ equality and inclusion or been harmed by stigma, bias, and exclusion. If we cannot share our own stories without risking our safety or our children’s safety and privacy, we should lift up the voices of others.

We must also keep reiterating more generally how LGBTQ equality and inclusion have a positive impact on the lives of the millions of LGBTQ children and those with LGBTQ parents—and also on their peers. Marriage equality

is part of this, as we have seen above. Additionally, adoption equality makes more homes available for children of all identities, and employment and housing non-discrimination means LGBTQ parents are better able to provide for and shelter their children, which may relieve burdens on social services for all. LGBTQ-inclusive curricula can mean increased psychological well-being, better attendance, and higher GPAs for LGBTQ students, according to GLSEN’s 2021 National School Climate Survey. Raising those metrics can also help a school’s overall reputation, benefiting all its students.

Family and school environments in which LGBTQ children are supported in their identities may also reduce the high risk of suicide and suicide attempts among LGBTQ youth, according to The Trevor Project. For trans youth in particular, this support includes best practice, gender affirming medical care. (See “LGBTQ Policy Spotlight: Efforts to Ban Health Care for Transgender Youth,” Movement Advancement Project, April 2021.) There is also research which has found that among youth in general, a friend or acquaintance’s suicide or attempted suicide is associated with an increase in the risk of suicidal thoughts and behavior. This means that helping LGBTQ youth here may also help many others as well.

We must remind people, too, that there is no demonstrated harm to children who learn about

LGBTQ identities, as children of LGBTQ parents have done for decades. There is no demonstrated harm in their attending a drag story time or family friendly drag show.

In all this, we need to lean heavily on authoritative, peer-reviewed, medical and social science research, as we did during the marriage equality battles. Yes, anti-LGBTQ politicians have ignored or dismissed much of this research. We need to keep touting it, ever more loudly. Some extremists may never be convinced—but we just have to convince enough in the middle to stop anti-LGBTQ legislation.

If we can reclaim the “think of the children” argument, LGBTQ equality and inclusion will seem less like an outside agenda being thrust upon young minds, and more like a way to give all children the environment they need to learn and grow. Moreover, it will undercut a huge part of the anti-LGBTQ rhetoric that has allowed hatred and violence to flourish. Will this strategy solve the problem of anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, legislation, and violence entirely? No; the situation is too complex for that and its roots go too deep. But this feels like a key place to put a good deal of effort right now.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books, music, and more.

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SCOTUS

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accommodation law to compel an artist to speak or stay silent violates the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment."

"The court framed the question to presuppose that designing a website for money in a business open to the general public is 'artistic expression' rather than an ordinary commercial service," explained Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights. "That is a radical departure from existing law. It's one thing for the court to change the law. It's another for the court to do so surreptitiously by framing the question in such a highly loaded and novel way."

Arguing for web designer: Kristen Waggoner, director of the Alliance Defending Freedom.

Arguing for Colorado's anti-discrimination law: Colorado Solicitor General Eric Olson and U.S. Deputy Solicitor General Brian Fletcher.

How to take in the argument: Interested parties can attempt to go in person, read a transcript of the argument, or listen to an audio recording. Written transcripts and audio recordings of the argument are available on the court's website either 90 minutes after the argument or soon thereafter.

The prospects: The current composition of the court—with six conservatives and three progressives—has been aggressively pursuing decisions that square with Catholic and evangelical doctrine. Most notably, the six issued a decision in June overturning two longstanding precedents and, in doing so, gave the green light for states to enact laws prohibiting abortion. One of the six, Clarence Thomas, wrote a concurring opinion urging his colleagues to "reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*." *Lawrence* struck down state bans against same-sex sexual relations; *Obergefell* struck state bans against marriage for same-sex couples; and *Griswold* struck bans against couples using contraceptive. The fact that the court accepted the *303 Creative* appeal even though the plaintiff never had a same-sex couple seeking a wedding web design, suggests an eagerness to fulfill Thomas' wishes.

How bad could it be: A worst case scenario decision in *303 Creative* could allow any business in the public marketplace (hotels, restaurants, bakeries, web designers, etc.) to refuse service to a customer by claiming to have some personal objection to treating that customer the same as all others.

Outcome LGBTQ people would prefer: A much better outcome for LGBTQ people would be for the court to rule that laws prohibiting

discrimination in public accommodations protect people with religious beliefs, as well as others, from discrimination and only incidentally implicate free speech concerns. And, as a brief from the NAACP stated: "Public accommodations laws are vital to ensuring free and full access to society and its benefits on an equal basis to all. When merchants exclude individuals from commercial transactions based on their identity—as Petitioner wishes to do here—the excluded individuals suffer a stigma that the law is meant to guard against."

Footnote 1-Hiding behind a beard: The oral argument comes just two weeks after the *New York Times* reported that Justice Samuel Alito has for years been carrying on cozy relationships with religious conservative groups. The *Times* obtained a June 7 letter from a former anti-abortion activist to Chief Justice John Roberts in which the activist claims that Alito leaked the outcome of a 2014 religious exemptions case to a personal gathering of anti-abortion donors leaders at his home. The leak enabled anti-abortion groups to move swiftly to capitalize on the decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*. Alito wrote the 5 to 4 majority decision, denied leaking the opinion which held that a federal law may not require a closely held commercial employer to provide health insurance coverage for contraception if that employer claims that to do so violates his or her personal religious beliefs. LGBTQ legal activists said the decision was a "dangerous and radical departure from existing law" with repercussions for LGBTQ employees. Alito, who told an audience in Italy last summer that attacks on religious liberty grow out of "a tendency to distrust and dislike people who are not like ourselves," was almost unrecognizable due to his newly adopted facial hair.

Footnote 2-Up front and center: Ten transgender lawyers are scheduled to be sworn into the U.S. Supreme Court Bar just days before the historic *303 Creative* argument. The plan to swear in transgender attorneys as a group was initiated two years ago but delayed because of the pandemic. To be sworn into the Supreme Court bar, an applicant "must appear to the Court to be of good moral and professional character," according to the Supreme Court's application instructions. The application asks applicants to indicate if they have ever "changed your name or been known by any name or surname other than those appearing on this application." The ten transgender attorneys include Rook Ringer from Florida, Jesse McGrath from California, Ames Simmons from Georgia, and Zsea Ofure Bowman from Illinois.

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BAY WINDOWS

World Cup

Continued from page 1

wear multi-colored "One Love" armbands during World Cup matches and some fans complained they weren't allowed to bring items with rainbow colors, a symbol of LGBTQ rights, into the stadiums of the conservative Islamic emirate.

Qatar, where gay sex is illegal, faced intense international scrutiny and criticism in the run-up to the tournament over rights issues, including questions on whether LGBTQ visitors would feel safe and welcome. The Gulf nation has said all are welcome, including LGBTQ fans, and that it would ensure safety for everyone, regardless of background, but that visitors should respect the nation's culture.

Piara Powar, executive director of Fare, the anti-discrimination group that is reporting incidents in and around stadiums to world soccer body FIFA, said he believes the Qatari hosts felt that the debate about LGBTQ rights has been given too much space and that they need to clamp down internally.

"We have talked to them about rainbow flags and the symbolism that it has across the world, not just in western Europe. There are Latin Americans who recognize that, there are Asians who recognize the Pride flag," Powar said.

Just before the tournament started, FIFA stopped plans by seven European teams including England and Germany to have their captains play with "One Love" anti-discrimination armbands, saying they would receive yellow cards if they did. The decision sparked outrage by some in the countries involved.

One of the teams, Belgium, tweeted a team photo Friday showing captain Eden Hazard wearing the "One Love" armband. The country's foreign minister, Hadja Lahbib, wore it as she watched Belgium's World Cup opener against Canada on Wednesday.

Former Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt turned up at Denmark's match against Tunisia wearing an outfit with rainbow-colored sleeves. In an Instagram post a day later, she appeared conflicted about the choice of clothing.

"I've been reflecting on whether showing up in rainbow colors is actually helping gay and queer folks in Qatar," Thorning-Schmidt wrote in the post. She wondered whether it could "make things worse by hardening the Qatar government against them? I don't know the answer but doesn't it show us that nothing is binary, only good or only bad?"

Some fans have said that they were asked to remove and discard their rainbow hats at a World Cup stadium earlier this week despite assurances by FIFA before the tournament that such items would be allowed in stadiums.

Justin Martin, a U.S. citizen living in Qatar, said he was holding a small rainbow flag on the metro on his way to the U.S. opener against Wales when two people wearing shirts that identified them as volunteers asked him to put the flag away. He didn't want to.

"One of them became agitated and ... referred to me as 'disgusting,'" said Martin, an associate professor of journalism at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

At the stadium, however, a woman in Qatari police uniform who was searching his bag found the rainbow flag, looked at it and put it back, he said. "I actually wasn't prohibited from bringing that into the stadium."

Martin said he had previously worn a pride T-shirt in Qatar to the grocery store or to exercise without any issues.

Some Wales fans said they were prevented from taking rainbow bucket hats to the game against the U.S., prompting the Wales soccer federation to raise the issue with FIFA, which assured them that rainbow symbols would be allowed for Friday's game against Iran.

Laura McAllister, a former Wales captain who acts as ambassador to the World Cup, said she and other fans wore rainbow hats to Friday's game without problems. She said she was among those asked to remove their hats before the earlier game with the U.S.

The Qatari World Cup organizing committee did not provide answers to questions by The Associated Press on the instructions to stadium security and volunteers about rainbow symbols.

In April, a Qatari official suggested that fans carrying rainbow flags could have them removed to protect them from possible attacks.

The issue has been debated frequently in Qatar and the wider Middle East, where many believe it's only fair for visitors to respect the country's laws, customs and religious beliefs, just like people from the region are expected to honor other nations' rules when they travel. Others counter that rights' issues are universal and that sports must be inclusive.

Ahead of the tournament, some LGBTQ rights activists sought to raise concerns about how LGBTQ people in Qatar may be treated after the World Cup ends. Some of them have also argued that international attention was disproportionately focused on the visitors and not enough on LGBTQ people in the country.

Associated Press writers Karl Ritter and Graham Dunbar contributed.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

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