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MOMBIAN

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
 contributing writer

7 Recent LGBTQ-Inclusive Kids' Books for Great British Bake Off Fans

Baking, cooking competitions, family recipes, and a little bit of magic—these terrific recent LGBTQ-inclusive kids' books will get you and your kids in the mood for the latest season of the Great British Bake Off. Several even include recipes!

Let's start with an obvious one: "David Atherton's Baking Book for Kids: Delicious Recipes for Budding Bakers," by David Atherton,

the gay, 2019 winner of The Great British Bake Off, and illustrated by Harry Woodgate, author/illustrator of the award-winning "Grandad's

see **BAKE**, page 5

Dinosaurs, Discrimination, and Tackling Tough Topics With Our Children

My three-and-a-half-year-old son is starting to show signs of the reptilian obsession that seems to consume most small children. He's still in the early stages—his favorite species is the "Dinosaur Rex"—but

I'm sure it's only a matter of time before he knows forty different kinds and what they like to eat. At the moment, he's stomping two of them along the carpet as I write. But dinosaurs scare me.

Dinosaurs represent a shift from my son's interests as a toddler to his interests as a preschooler. Dinosaurs are fierce. They are predators

see **TOUGH TOPICS**, page 9

GUEST OPINION

Time to support the Passage of the Massachusetts Parentage Act

by Joyce Kauffman
 Kauffman Law & Mediation

When my daughter was born in 1984, I was not yet a lawyer and, honestly, I knew nothing about parentage law. I just wanted to have a baby. Lesbians were not able to purchase donor sperm directly; doctors would not assist a lesbian to access donor sperm; health insurers would not pay for fertility treatment. My daughter's father (who is gay and with whom I had a written agreement) and I were on the birth certificate but there was no way for my daughter's other



Photo by RDNE Stock project, via Pexels.

see **PARANTAGE**, page 7

Dianne Feinstein was at the center of a key LGBTQ+ moment

She's being lauded as an evolving ally

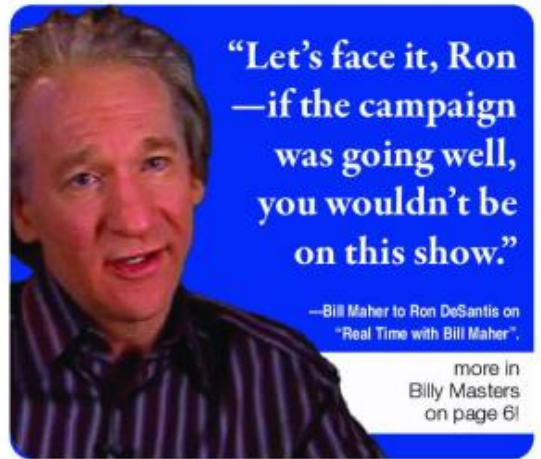
By Jeff McMillan
 Associated Press

Dianne Feinstein once stood at the center of a pivotal moment in LGBTQ+ history. Decades later, in death, she's being lauded by LGBTQ+ leaders as a longtime ally who, if she didn't always initially do the right thing, was able to learn and evolve.

see **FEINSTEIN**, page 8



San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein carries a candle as she leads an estimated 15,000 marchers also carrying candles during a march in memory of slain Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk in San Francisco, Nov. 28, 1979. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, File)



—Bill Maher to Ron DeSantis on "Real Time with Bill Maher".

more in Billy Masters on page 6!



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*Emcee at Pride 1981
Photo by Susan Fleischmann*

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FALL FAMILY GUIDE



Banned Books Week: Not Just About the Books

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

This week marks Banned Book Week, the American Library Association's (ALA's) annual celebrating "the freedom to read" and drawing attention to the "harms of censorship." With record numbers of bans across the country, the need for such awareness is greater than ever. But I'm also here to remind us: It's about more than just the books.

First, let's look at the ban numbers. The ALA has documented 1,915 unique titles that were challenged (targeted for removal or restriction) in libraries between January 1 - August 31, 2023, an increase of 20% from the same period in 2022, putting us on track for another record year.

PEN America, which looks specifically at bans in public schools, has documented 3,362 instances of books banned (removed or restricted) during the 2022-23 school year, an increase of 33 percent from the same period in 2021-22. Over 40 percent of all book bans were in school districts in Florida, followed by Texas, Missouri, Utah, and Pennsylvania.

National conservative organizations are behind many of the bans, PEN America said, creating lists of objectionable books, training people on how to challenge books in their schools and libraries, and advocating for state legislation such as Florida's "Don't Say Gay/Trans" law that creates sweeping bans. "Eighty-seven percent of all bans were recorded in school districts with a nearby chapter or local affiliate of a national advocacy group known to advocate for book censorship," it said, noting that 63% of all bans were in eight states with legislation "that has either directly facilitated book bans or created the conditions for local groups to pressure and intimidate educators and librarians into removing books."

PEN America also found that, as in recent years, the bans "overwhelmingly" targeted books (from picture books through young adult titles) on race or racism and those featuring characters of color and/or LGBTQ characters. They also include "books on physical abuse, health and well-being, and themes of grief and death." The ALA likewise found that most challenges were to books "written by or about a person of color or a member of the LGBTQ community."

If you think the bans are just about books with sexual content, think again. Many schools have banned LGBTQ-inclusive books that simply show LGBTQ characters in their daily lives. In a recent example in Florida, the Charlotte County School District in July ordered librarians to remove all books with LGBTQ characters or themes from classrooms and libraries, according to reporting by journalist Judd Legum of Popular Information (popular.info). Furthermore, when asked whether student-selected books for silent reading or book reports could include LGBTQ characters or themes, as long as they weren't pornographic, Superintendent Mark Vianello responded, "These characters and themes cannot exist." (While the district

later asserted that such books are still allowed in high school libraries, Legum obtained logs showing that "numerous" books with LGBTQ characters were removed from the district's high school libraries just before the start of the school year. As of this writing, he is awaiting a response from the district on why they were removed.)

These thousands of bans impact millions of children—both those whose identities and family members' identities are found in the banned books, and children of other identities who are being denied the opportunity to understand the world and people around them. As ALA President Emily Drabinski observed in a press statement, the banned book numbers alone do not reveal "the people who want books that speak to their lived experience and librarians who want to make books accessible to people who find them relevant. Both are under attack."

The problem goes beyond just wanting to see one's own and others' lived experiences in books, though. There's a fine and fuzzy line between banning books about certain identities and stopping people of those identities (or with family members of those identities) from being themselves, talking honestly about their experiences, or even being part of the community. The book bans, in prohibiting certain representation, raise the question of whether children who themselves embody that representation will be allowed to speak or write at school about their own identities and families. This is a particular concern in the 11 states with so-called "Don't Say Gay/Trans" laws—but even in other states, book bans and the discourse around them may make teachers and administrators reluctant to allow such expression in classrooms (or even in hallways), and students themselves may hesitate.

Erasure of identities is happening at schools in other ways, too, notably through laws and policies that ban or restrict transgender and nonbinary students from using the names, pronouns, and bathroom facilities aligned with their genders, from playing on sports teams aligned with their genders, and that allow school personnel and other students to misgender them. These are often driven by the same conservative organizations behind the book bans.

As we continue to fight book bans, then, we must remember that ultimately, the reason for doing so is not only about the books, nor even about giving children diverse, inclusive representation (although that is an important component). At heart, it's about creating environments in which children are able and encouraged to express who they truly are. It's not just about the freedom to read. It's about the freedom to be.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of *Mombian* (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1400+ LGBTQ family books.

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Fantasia soars



Maurice Emmanuel Parent as Belize and Eddie Shields as Prior in Part 2: Perestroika of "Angels in America." (Courtesy Nile Scott Studios)

By Jules Becke
Contributing Writer

Forty years after "Angels in America" flew to theater heaven with a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony award, Tony Kushner's prescient "A Gay Fantasia on National Themes" still soars. The two-part phenomenon continues to blaze with timely insights about humanity's need for lasting connections in another era of hate and homophobia. Bedlam artistic director Eric Tucker captured the developing connections and diabolical furor of McCarthy Era disciple Roy Cohn of "Part I: Millennium Approaches" earlier this year at Central Square Theatre with an amazingly fluid staging.

Now Bedlam is teaming with Central Square Theatre once again for the sharply intersecting storylines

and angels-busy "Part II: Perestroika," and the result is equally satisfying. If the staging stretches to a formidable four hours (including two intermissions), the individual and ensemble performances are once again both riveting and inspired. In the production card brochure, dramaturg AJ Helman is right to note the lethal similarity between Trump's response to the COVID epidemic and Reagan's prolonged denial of AIDS. At the same time co-dramaturg Ryan Rappaport makes a telling point about the relevance of Kushner's observations in an era of racial injustice, rising anti-Semitism, eroded reproductive rights and escalating anti-trans legislation.

Curiously—at least to this critic—the eventual meeting of diverse angels seems less consequential than the connections and breakups of mortal characters and

Angels in America, A Gay Fantasia on National Themes,
Central Square Theater and Bedlam,
Cambridge, through October 8.

human efforts at unity. Prior Walter, seen as a kind of modern day Jonah running away from the responsibility of being a prophet, does strike up an unusual friendship with Mormon Hannah Pitt. Black nurse-queen Belize becomes an anchor of help for Prior and tough love truth-telling for overly intellectual Louis Ironson—who has trouble caring for his often agony-ridden lover Prior. At the same time, Louis continues to find himself attracted to judge's clerk Joe Pitt though repelled by the latter's conservative Republican politics and close association with Roy Cohn. By contrast, once closeted Joe declares his love for Louis and admits his sexual preference to his mother. Joe's suffering wife Harper will eventually reject her conflicted husband and embrace the need for self-discovery and personal growth.

Will unity—here seemingly represented by the coming together in 1990 of Prior, Louis, Belize and Hannah on the rim of the Bethesda Fountain in Central Park—finally arrive? Here Prior is like Jonah redeemed.

In the redemptive Bedlam-Central Square Theatre collaboration, Kushner's words light up the stage as hauntingly as the mystical book Aleph (the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet) found under tile in Prior's kitchen. Gifted Eddie Shields finds all of Prior's moral vitality even as he captures his moving fragility and vulnerability. He also catches the dark humor of Prior's arousal when The Angel approaches. Zach Fike Hodges captures Louis' maddening intellectualizing but never loses sight of his emotional conflict. Alexander Platt is a standout portraying Joe as a flawed and often clueless but frequently touching once repressed gay man.

Maurice Emmanuel Parent is a total wonder as Belize—sardonic with racist, disrespectful Roy and supportive with Prior. His entrance in Belize's blingy queen outfit—kudos to costume designer Daniele Tyler Mathews—receives well-deserved cheers. Barlow Adamson makes Cohn a fitting AZT-obsessed serpent as he slithers and rages. Debra Wise—an actress of tremendous rage—captures Hannah's openness with Prior and the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg's tantalizing tone with Cohn—particularly with the Yiddish "Tumbalalaika" song. Kari Buckley finds all of Harper's early despair and growing sense of self-worth. Helen Hy-Yuen Swanson has good authority as The Angel.

Kushner has Prior close the play with the blessing "More Life" and the declaration "The Great Work Begins." At the Central Square Theater, Kushner's own great work continues at full speed in "Perestroika."

LGBTQ+ Museum to be launched in Boston

Submitted by Boston LGBTQ Museum of Art, History and Culture

A newly formed group of LGBTQ leaders is proud to announce the launch of an LGBTQ+ Museum in the City of Boston. The museum will be named the Boston LGBTQ Museum of Art, History and Culture. It will have the unique mission of researching, collecting, conserving, interpreting, and exhibiting art and historic collections that honor the history of the LGBTQ community in Massachusetts. It will celebrate the lives and narratives of LGBTQ people through the arts by centering queer artistry and supporting Boston's Queer community of artists.

"There is no art institution in Boston that focuses on supporting Boston LGBTQ artists and telling the

vast history of the LGBTQ movement that this state has led for decades. Working with great partners like The History Project, we will have access to a huge archive of materials, and stories to tell and this museum will do that through a variety of art and historic exhibits and programming." Jean Dolin, Founder of the initiative.

"Jean is an artistic and community visionary. He developed, designed and curated the "Portraits of Pride" exhibits in 2022 on the Boston Common and in 2023 on City Hall Plaza. If anyone can bring the vision of the LGBTQ Museum to life, it is Jean Dolin," said board member Arline Isaacson.

Jean explained "We recognize the historic nature of the initiative and the rich cultural and social impact it will have on our city and state. As we begin Octo-

ber, which is LGBTQ History Month, we invite our community to engage with us with ideas and guidance about how they believe we can best achieve our mission with everyone in mind. We welcome donors to assist us with our seed funding needs as we build capacity for this important endeavor."

Jean added further: "Over the next five months we will foster community convenings to hear from artists, leaders and the community at large, as we plan our first exhibit for next spring which will celebrate 20 years of Marriage Equality."

Along with Jean Dolin, the founding board members are: Arline Isaacson, Jean-Philippe Brignol, Lynda Jeremie, James Wetzel and Amanda Lafleur. Latham & Watkins has graciously agreed to represent the group as they launch this groundbreaking initiative.

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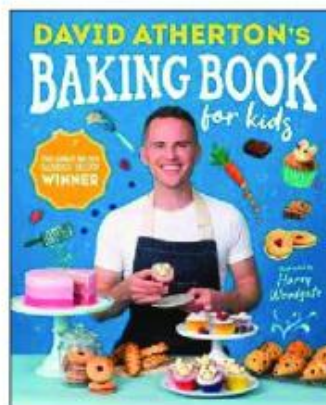


FALL FAMILY GUIDE

Bake

Continued from page 1

Camper," about a girl and her queer grandpa. This is a delightful cookbook geared for kids (though some adult guidance may be necessary), with fun recipes like like Hot Cross Hedgehogs and Iced Bear Buns (no actual hedgehogs or bears involved). Woodgate's illustrations show ingredients, tools, and techniques for each of the baking steps, and also give us images of children baking, eating, and playing across the pages. Several are of am-



biguous gender, and there are at least two who read as assigned male at birth who are wearing skirts or dresses. Alternatively, they could be read as short-haired girls or nonbinary kids. It's a nice bit of effortless inclusion no matter what. You may also want to check out Atherton's "Bake, Make & Learn to Cook: Fun and Healthy Recipes for Young Cooks" and his "Bake, Make & Learn to Cook Vegetarian: Healthy and Green Recipes for Young Cooks." "Just a Pinch of Magic," by Alechia Dow

(Feiwel & Friends). A sweet and satisfying modern fantasy novel about two very different girls, Wini and Kal, who each feel like outsiders, but who must unite to try and save their magical town from a spell gone awry—and maybe get their dads to date in the process. Dow gives us the action and thrill of classic fantasy tales, with magical objects, haunted woods, and evil ghosts, but also looks thoughtfully at each girl's struggle to find her place, weaving in a powerful but not pedantic theme about the power of love and family.



The richly imagined world has a depth and originality that rivals that of many other stories about magical enclaves. (I'm looking at you, Harry.) Several actual baking recipes are included throughout the book—Dow is a former pastry chef, so you know they'll be good. A tasty treat.

"Basil and Oregano," by Melissa Capriglione (Dark Horse). Basil Eyles, who has two dads, is a young witch starting her senior year at the Porta Bella Magiculinary Academy. Arabella ("Bella") Oregano is joining the school after having studied abroad. She's the daughter of an acclaimed magiculinary chef who expects her to excel. Basil, however, must maintain her status as top student or lose the scholarship that she needs to stay. But Basil and Oregano are instantly smitten with each other even as they work to prove themselves. The two are also paired for the school's Senior Festival, a cooking competition. But is Arabella hiding a secret that could endanger their chance for success and Basil's future? A sweet, fun graphic novel with a refreshingly uncomplicated queer romance and plenty of additional queer representation.

"Eli Over Easy," by Phil Stamper (HarperCollins). A thoughtful novel about grief, change, and moving forward. Thirteen-year-old Eli and his family moved from their small Minnesota town to New York City because his mom got a new job as a test kitchen chef—but

see **BAKE**, page 10

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billy masters

Continued from page 1

I don't know what to make of this story about Cher, so prepare yourself for a healthy dose of "allegedlies". One rarely hears about Cher's son, **Elijah Blue** (and you thought crazy names started with Apple). Elijah has allegedly had a troubled relationship with his mom for decades. In 2013, he eloped with **Marie Angela King**—known to her friends as Queenie. Elijah claims Cher never acknowledged the union. What did he hear from her? "Crickets," says Elijah. "I wasn't going to wait for anyone's approval and congratulations just like I've never waited for any of that my whole life." More pressing is that Elijah has had a drug problem for decades. Well, he is an Allman. He's admitted to starting to take drugs at 11 and has been addicted to numerous substances, including heroin.

Although Elijah filed for divorce from Queenie in 2021, the couple's on-again/off-again relationship continued. Queenie claims that on November 30, 2022, they were in a hotel room in NYC celebrating their anniversary when four men burst in to abduct Elijah—I hate when that happens. Queenie claims one of the abductors told her they were hired by Cher! This is sounding a whole lot like **Jussie Smollett** and those Nigerian bodybuilders—or maybe I just want to be alone in a hotel room with two Nigerian bodybuilders. Queenie filed court papers on December 5, 2022, stating, "I am currently unaware of my husband's wellbeing or whereabouts...I was told by one of the four men who took him that they were hired by [Elijah's] mother." She adds that Elijah is "currently in lockdown at a treatment facility that is undisclosed to me." So, why is this story only going public a year later? It was part of the couple's divorce case, and the next court date is October 27th. Presumably, both Elijah and Queenie will be there.

The one person I don't expect to see in the courtroom is Cher. She's releasing a holiday collection on October 20th—so she'll be busy. The collection features a number of duets, including one with her good friend (and former backup singer) **Darlene Love**—they'll sing "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)". Other partners include **Cyndi Lauper**, **Michael Bublé**, **Stevie Wonder**, and **Tyga**. As Cher said, "It's not your mother's Christmas album. It's a Cher Christmas album, whatever that brings along with the new. It's definitely my idea of a Christmas album. I had to do what I felt. There's no 'Silent Night.' We can only hope there's an 'O Holy Night.'" —for **Paul Shaffer**.

Not to be outdone, **Barbra Streisand** will be releasing TWO collections of music on October 27th. One is called "Evergreens: Celebrating Six Decades on Columbia Records"—and it will include Streisand's favorite songs from her extensive catalogue (in many cases, album cuts instead of singles). The second will be "Yentl: 40th Anniversary Edition", which is a 2-disc set which includes demos and alternate takes. These are just the opening acts for Babs' autobio, which drops on November 7th. If I were a betting man, I'd expect absolutely nothing juicy in the book.

Continuing our theme of "singers" (and I am using that term loosely), we turn to **Britney Spears**. Look, I've never been a Britney basher. She's fun, she's kooky, she's kooky, she's crazy. But unless she's auditioning to become a chef at **Bisnuteki**, I don't understand the dance of the seven knives. OK, there were only two knives—but what do you think the chances are that one of those dogs is no longer with us? And why in that outfit? Unless she's also auditioning for **Hooters**, Spears was quick to allay our fears: "I started playing in the kitchen with knives today. Don't worry they are NOT real knives !!! Halloween is soon." The question remains—Why?

Last weekend, someone came up to me on Commercial Street in Provincetown and said, "I thought you left." What can I say? I can't quit Ptown. I zipped down to the Provincetown Theater to see the return engagement of **Harvey Fierstein's** "Casa Valentina". Readers of a certain age will recall that in the '70s, many TV shows had an episode about a guy who was what they'd call a "cross-dresser". He was typically straight and just wanted to express his feminine side in women's clothing. Hell, Dorothy's brother Phil did it—and he was married with kids. I dunno whatever happened to these alleged straight men who dressed up in drag. We never hear about them anymore, which makes me question if they ever existed.

And that's what Fierstein's "Casa Valentina" is about—straight men who would go to a resort in the Catskills to live life as a woman (based on a true story—there's a great PBS documentary about it called "Casa Susanna"). Since it's by Fierstein, you know it's going to be well-written,

touching, and funny. It's all of the above. It's also troublesome because, like all good plays, it leaves you with more questions than answers. The direction by artistic director **David Drake** is effective, fluid, unfussy, and straightforward. The special sauce in this production is the cast. There is nary a weak link—and, as a testament to the Provincetown Theater, everyone who appeared in the sold-out spring run came back for this reprise (well, there is one recast extremely minor role). I don't like to single people out...so I'll mention two. **Scott Cunningham** (of Ptown's "Scottcakes") takes on the role of the resort proprietor and is so effective at conveying pathos and conflict—while looking extremely fetching as both a boy and a girl. Then there's **Dustin Ross**, who has the most difficult journey as the new girl of the bunch—and the catalyst for an explosive encounter. The show will have closed by the time you read this, but I'd urge you to keep the Provincetown Theater in mind when you're on Cape Cod. You can find them online at ProvincetownTheater.org.

The other reason I returned to the Cape was to see my pal **John Hill's** solo show. You may recall that I reviewed his show in August. And if you didn't know, Hill made sure the audience at the Post Office Café and Cabaret knew—because he announced that the show's first review came courtesy of Billy Masters. After acknowledging me from the stage, he pointed out that after he performed for about an hour, my takeaway was you get to see his testicles (both in the show and on BillyMasters.com). What can I say? First rule of showbiz—know your audience! I am delighted to say that the show has progressed exponentially. While I thought the August show had lots of good material and ideas, I told Hill privately that I thought he needed a director to whip it into shape (my whipping skills are solely reserved for recreational purposes). I didn't know he'd enlist the aid of **Marissa Jaret Winokur!** Her guidance in the show (now aptly titled "Wellness Check") has made a world of difference. Previously, it meandered along in a disjointed fashion. It still retains some of that spontaneity, but it now has a spine to wrap around. Hill is still as winning as ever, and I'm curious to see where this all leads.

Speaking of shows, I'm thrilled to announce the return of "Billy Masters LIVE". You know, I got busy. And then I got **Charles Busch's** new memoir—"Leading Lady: A Memoir of a Most Unusual Boy". While I was reading it, I heard that the film he shot during the pandemic, "The Sixth Reel", was getting a limited theatrical release. So, why not celebrate the Divine Charles, alongside some of his most notorious collaborators? In addition to Charles, we'll have his frequent muse and co-star (including in the film), **Julie Halston**, and his frequent director (including of the film), **Carl Anders**. This special episode will take place on Monday, October 2nd at 4PM Eastern, so grab a cocktail and watch us live. Or replay at your leisure on Facebook, YouTube, or at BillyMasters.tv.

Could it be that **Pauly Shore** is poised for a comeback? So hopes the comic, who has gotten tongues wagging after he announced his new idea—he'd like to play fitness guru **Richard Simmons** in a biopic! He posted a photo of the two side-by-side and, son of a bitch, they really do look alike! OK, the hair isn't right, but I know a groomer in West Hollywood who did wonders with my friend's poodle. Pauly wrote, "I've noticed all the reactions to me playing Richard Simmons in a new biopic. So I reached out to him. I heard he's living deep in Big Bear. We've been play phone tag (yes, he still has a phone)." Let me stop here for a second—if Richard Simmons is living in Big Bear, why the hell can't he answer his phone? It's not like I think he's at the local Walmart! Continuing: "I'm trying to make it happen for you guys. Be optimistic. In the meantime, hit up Hulu, Amazon, Disney, HBO and all the big producers. I definitely can morph into this guy. I'll see you at the Academy Awards 2025."

When Pauly Shore could be up for an Oscar, we've definitely come to the end of yet another column. I hate to burst his bubble, but films that debut on streaming services don't typically qualify for an Academy Award. But that's the least of his problems! This week, I'm in Las Vegas seeing **Varla Jean Merman** at the Westgate October 3-5 (I'll be there the 5th) and **Kathy Griffin** at the Mirage on October 6th. No matter where I am, I'm never too busy to update www.BillyMasters.com—the site that's a sure thing. If you have a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Cher sends some Nigerian bodybuilders to abduct me! So, until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Cher

Photo by Gaige Skumof, via Wikimedia Commons



Britney Spears

Photo via Britney Spears, Instagram



Richard Simmons

Photo by Angela George, via Wikimedia Commons

FALL FAMILY GUIDE

Parantage

Continued from page 1

mother to establish legal parentage.

Nine years later (and ten years before marriage became legal), I was a lawyer and lucky enough to be involved with the first case that made it possible for unmarried lesbian couples to jointly adopt their children. Subsequently, in the late 1990s, adoptions by more than two parents became possible. My daughter now has three legal parents, an adoption decree to prove it, and a Massachusetts birth certificate that is (finally) accurate.

All this was historic and Massachusetts was one of the first two states to establish the right of same-sex parents to adopt (Vermont being the other). It was only thirty years ago that non-biological LGBTQ parents were able to establish legal relationships with their children. And there are still a few states where unmarried people cannot adopt.

Before this monumental change in the law, children's relationships with their non-biological parents were more often than not severed when the adult relationship ended. I'd like to tell you that this ended when adoption became possible. It did not. Over the past thirty years, many, many non-biological parents have been deprived of ongoing relationships with their children because they could not or did not adopt. This is a trauma a child may never recover from. And I'd like to tell you that since same-sex marriage became legal, this has not been a problem. I cannot. Not everyone gets married and not everyone goes through the adoption process. Over and over again, LGBTQ parents either refuse or fail to protect their parent/child relationships and when there's a break-up, the non-legal parents and their children lose.

But even if you are married and both of you are on the child's birth certificate, this is not enough. In the current extremely hostile environment where rampant homophobia and transphobia are constant threats, it is ESSENTIAL that we protect our relationships with our children or risk losing them. Many jurisdictions (not Massachusetts) refuse to recognize the "marital presumption." That is the presumption that the spouse of a married per-

son who gives birth is also a legal parent. These jurisdictions have refused to recognize that the marital presumption applies to same-sex couples, and numerous non-biological parents have been deprived of their relationships with their children as a result. Although this situation usually arises in the context of a divorce, it could come up in other ways. For example, if you are traveling through a hostile state and have a car accident and the biological parent is in a coma and/or children's protective services becomes involved with your family and refuses to recognize the non-biological parent.

A birth certificate, while an important public document, is not definitive proof of parentage. An adoption decree, on the other hand, is entitled to full faith and credit – this means it must be respected in all jurisdictions. Until all jurisdictions apply the marital presumption to LGBTQ married couples, you must adopt in order to insure that your parentage will be respected in other states. Unmarried Massachusetts couples are now able to sign a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Parentage when a child is born and establish legal parentage. This is a very recent development and is only possible in a handful of states, but still an important legal right. Unmarried couples are still encouraged to adopt. Families that include one or more transgender parents are encouraged to adopt, particularly where a parent does not have a biological relationship with the child. Families where there are more than two parents must adopt in order for all the adults to have legal parentage.

I've been representing LGBTQ families for thirty years and I have seen firsthand the damage that can be done when an individual does not have a legal connection to a child. It is devastating for the child and devastating for the parent. The law is always evolving (sometimes for the better and sometimes not) and it is important to protect yourselves. Although Massachusetts law provides our community with many protections, there is still a need for reform. Passage of the Massachusetts Parentage Act which will clarify who is a parent and how parentage is established, is an essential step towards progress. Call your legislators and encourage them to support the MPA!

And, as I've said so many times, do your children a favor – adopt!



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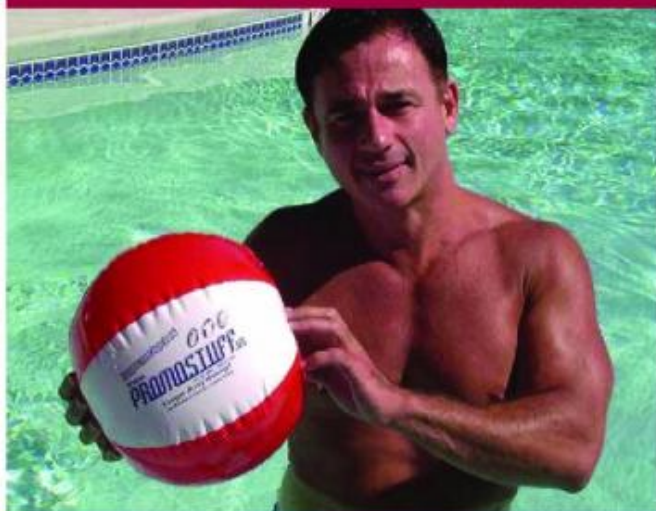
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Feinstein

Continued from page 1

Feinstein was president of the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors when she stood behind reporters' microphones in November 1978 and grimly announced: "Both Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk have been shot and killed. The suspect is Supervisor Dan White."

George Moscone was the liberal mayor of San Francisco; Milk was California's first openly gay elected official. White was a disgruntled former fellow county supervisor who was the board's sole vote against a gay anti-discrimination ordinance. And Feinstein, at age 45, found herself at the helm of a global center of gay life that, already roiled by the violence, was about to be further upended by AIDS.

She rose to the challenge and then some, advocates said after Feinstein, the nation's oldest sitting U.S. senator, died Thursday at age 90.

"Senator Feinstein stood with our community back when few others did, fighting for funding and action to combat the AIDS crisis when most elected officials chose to look away," the advocacy group Equality California said in a news release Friday.

Feinstein had a tense relationship with Milk but later championed his legacy. Stuart Milk, the assassinated supervisor's nephew and a family spokesperson, said in an interview.

"She had become a consistent supporter of LGBTQ inclusion after a harder road for her to get there," Milk said, noting that she was a sponsor of the Navy ship named for his uncle.

The Human Rights Campaign, a large LGBTQ+ advocacy group, cited Feinstein's "sterling record of support for the LGBTQ+ community."

Feinstein, a Democrat, voted against the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which banned federal recognition of same sex marriage, and the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that required LGBTQ+ military service members to stay in the closet.

"It makes no sense to ask our gay and lesbian soldiers to put their lives on the line, while at the same time asking them to live in the shadows," Feinstein said in a 2010 statement when "don't ask, don't tell" was being repealed.

The Human Rights Campaign pointed out she was also a sponsor of the Respect for Marriage Act, which President Joe Biden signed in 2022 to solidify the right to same-sex marriage.

But Feinstein could be polarizing, especially on

her home turf.

She drew the ire of Gavin Newsom, the San Francisco mayor and future California governor, by saying that his issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples in 2004, in violation of state law, was an action that was "too much, too fast, too soon" and motivated conservative voters who gave Republican President George W. Bush a second term.

And, in the 1980s, her mayoral administration caused an outcry in some quarters for closing gay bathhouses to help stem the spread of HIV/AIDS.

But at the same time, "she dedicated huge amounts of city resources and funding, more so than the federal government was doing at that time, to try to stem the spread of this disease that was killing gay men in the city," said Matthew S. Bajko, an editor and political columnist for the Bay Area Reporter, an influential LGBTQ+ newspaper.

Feinstein visited an AIDS hospice in Los Angeles in 1990 during her unsuccessful campaigns for governor, telling patients, "I was there at the beginning and I hope I'm there at the end," the Los Angeles Times reported at the time.

"No one could ever say she was, you know, the biggest champion of LGBTQ issues and people when she started her journey," said Kiera Johnson, executive director of the National LGBTQ Task Force. "What I think is so powerful about who she is, is that we saw her evolve over time."

Feinstein was the one who had found the bullet-riddled body of her colleague Milk, who was later celebrated in the book "The Mayor of Castro Street" by journalist Randy Shilts, the Academy Award-winning documentary "The Times of Harvey Milk," and the Hollywood biopic "Milk," starring Sean Penn.

"I remember it, actually, as if it was yesterday. And it was one of the hardest moments, if not the hardest moment, of my life," Feinstein told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2008. "It was a devastating moment. For San Francisco, it was a day of infamy."

She told the newspaper she believed White, who was convicted of manslaughter and died by suicide in 1985 after his release, was motivated by feelings of personal and political betrayal, not homophobia.

Still, she said, the assassinations "helped form who I am and what I believe."

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FALL FAMILY GUIDE

Tough Topics

Continued from page 1

or prey. We're stepping away from the world of stuffed animals and smiling, anthropomorphic trains into something larger and more ominous. Dinosaurs are also extinct, and extinction means death—a topic no parent relishes having to discuss with a child. Dinosaurs scare me because they symbolize the host of difficult things we have to explain to our children, the revelation of a world that is sometimes harsh and where Mommy and Momma can't always fix everything.

Discrimination and difference loom large in that world for LGBTQ families. Research has shown that by primary school, many children are already aware of stereotyped gender roles, and will use homophobic slurs even if not fully aware of what they mean. Chances are, someone will say to him in the next few years, "Everybody has a father," or "Your moms are dykes."

I wonder, therefore, how to prepare him but not scare him. I don't want to put fears in his head that were not there before. Most parents would not say, "Don't worry, there are no monsters in your closet" to a child who has never expressed any concern about monsters there. Simply mentioning them can make them seem real.

Books showing positive images of LGBTQ families and people can help create a core of confidence in our children. Some such books, however, pose a risk of revealing new monsters, as many depict children experiencing

bias or people casting doubt on the validity of their families or identities. That's not to say these can't be good books—for children who have experienced such things, they may be vital—but as parents, we should think carefully about when to introduce them.

There's no simple answer. Much depends on the individual child as well as circumstance. A child in daycare may hear "Where's your mommy?" sooner than one still at home. Children who frequently see other LGBTQ families may not perceive they are in a minority. At the same time, children often pick up on things long before we suspect they have. We don't want to leave them with too many unanswered questions.

Even if you favor waiting until your child brings up the subject, you can still read books that show LGBTQ families without stressing our difference. (My Database of LGBTQ Family Books includes ones tagged "Inciden-

tal queerness" or "Family types" for just this purpose.) We must remember, however, to leave space in these conversations for questions and comments. We must listen to our children's words and their silences, in order to address concerns about difference when they do arise, and bring in books dealing with situations of bias or questioning when we feel their messages will be helpful.

It's also important to be open and positive about how we created our families, though this should be tailored for the age and maturity of the child (and there are books for that, too). Knowing how they were created, a child will have both self-understanding and an explanation when another says something like, "You have to have a dad [mom]."

Education about diversity must begin at home. At the same time, we must also educate teachers, childcare providers, coaches, librarians, and other parents about our families. How are we the same? How are we different? What happens if a child calls another's child's parents "lesbian" or "gay" or "queer"? What about "dyke" and "fag"? Are these slurs? Inappropriately sexual terms? Accurate descrip-

tions? What if the child using the term is using them about their own family? Or themselves? Context and tone are key (although states with "Don't Say Gay/Trans" laws seem to find them all inappropriate).

I sometimes resent having to teach people things I find self-evident. At the same time, I knew what I was signing up for when I chose to become a parent. LGBTQ parents share the same burden as those whose families differ by reason

of racial/ethnic identity, religion, physical or mental abilities, or other factors—needing to explain difference and bias early on to our children, and needing to educate the wider world. It may not be how we'd prefer to spend our time, but, like changing diapers or chaperoning field trips, it's one of those parenting duties we assume because it is for our children's benefit.

I turn towards my son, who has the smaller dinosaur balanced on the back of the larger one. "Look," he says to me. "The mommy is giving the baby a ride on her back."

Together, maybe we'll tame those dinosaurs. Originally published with slight variation in 2007.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, plus a searchable database of 1400+ LGBTQ family books.

Books showing positive images of LGBTQ families and people can help create a core of confidence in our children.

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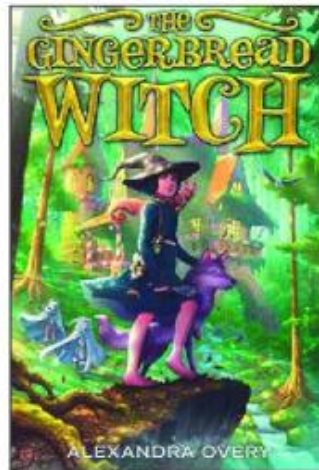
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FALL FAMILY GUIDE

Bake

Continued from page 5

then she died of COVID, so Eli and his dad are living by themselves in a small apartment in a big, unfamiliar city. As Eli grapples with grief and loneliness, he finds some old cooking videos of his mom. With the encouragement of a neighbor boy, Matthias (Mac), he begins to teach himself the recipes, though his overprotective dad worries that his absorption is keeping him mired in his grief. Eli has



to show his dad that cooking is actually helping him, and that the shared food memories might even help his dad as well. The relationship between Eli and Mac also deepens into a crush, and the slow, gentle building of their relationship is just lovely. An uplifting but not Pollyannish tale about resilience and growth.

"The Gingerbread Witch" and "The Unsleeping Witch," by Alexandra Overy (Ink-yard). Maud has grown up in a house made of gingerbread and sugar, crafted by Mother Agatha. Maud herself is made of gingerbread,

too, but unlike Mother Agatha's other creations, like a talking hazelnut mousse squirrel or a bird with spun-sugar feathers, Maud looks like a human. She is also a witch, though Mother Agatha has yet to teach her any spells. Witch hunters endanger them in the first volume, setting Maud off on an action-packed quest for a magical object in this fairy-tale inspired but wholly original world. In the second volume, Maud ventures out to help a friend, encountering evil witches, a dragon library, enchanted gummy snakes, exploding jelly beans, and more. Queer characters are



seamlessly woven into the enchanting narratives.

"Pride and Joy: A Story about Becoming an LGBTQIA+ Ally," by Frank J. Sileo and Kate Lum-Porvin, illustrated by Emmi Smid (Jessica Kingsley). When Joy's beloved brother Noah and his boyfriend Miguel are harassed for being gay, Joy feels angry and scared. She wants to do something, but isn't sure how, until she enlists the aid of several friends in creating a bake sale for the Teen Center. A helpful picture book about the increasingly important topic of being an ally in the face of anti-LGBTQ harassment.

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SCHOOL NAME	CITY/TOWN	AGES AND GRADES	OPEN HOUSE DATE(S), TIME(S)	WEB ADDRESS
•The Fessenden School	West Newton	4-15 years (boys PK-9)	September 30, 1-3 p.m.	fessenden.org
•The Roxbury Latin School	West Roxbury	12-18 years (boys 7-12)	September 30, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and November 12, 12:30-4 p.m.	roxburylatin.org
•Boston University Academy	Boston	13-18 years (9-12)	October 1, 12:30-2:30 p.m. and November 29, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	buacademy.org
•Commonwealth School	Boston	14-18 years (9-12)	October 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and November 12, 2:30-4:30 p.m. (both VIRTUAL)	commschool.org
•St. Sebastian's School	Needham	12-18 years (boys 7-12)	October 5, 5:30 p.m. and November 7, 6 p.m.	stsebs.org
•Kingsley Montessori School	Boston	2-12 years (Tdl-6)	October 10 and 26, 8:30 a.m.	kingsley.org
•The Winsor School	Boston	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	October 11, 7 - 8:45 p.m.	winsor.edu
•International School of Boston	Cambridge	2-18 years (PS-12)	October 12, 6:30 p.m. and October 28, 10:00 a.m.	isbos.org
•The Woodward School for Girls	Quincy	10-18 years (6-12)	October 12, 5:30-7:30 p.m. and December 2, 10-12 p.m.	woodwardschool.org
•Dedham Country Day School	Dedham	4-14 years (PK-6)	October 13 and October 27, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.	dedhamcountryday.org
•The Advent School	Boston	4-12 years (PK-6)	Oct. 14, 9-11 a.m. (ALL) and Oct. 25, (ECC-Second) 8:30-10 a.m.	adventschool.org
•Dexter Southfield	Brookline	4-18 years (PK-12)	October 14, 9 a.m.- 12 p.m.	dextersouthfield.org
•Boston Trinity Academy	Boston	11-18 years (6-12)	October 14, 12- 2 p.m. and November 14, 6-8 p.m.	bostontrinity.org
•Belmont Day School	Belmont	4-14 years (PK-6)	October 15, 9 - 1 p.m. (IN PERSON), and Nov. 18, 9-10:30 a.m. (VIRTUAL)	belmontday.org
•Beaver Country Day School	Chestnut Hill	11-18 years (6-12)	October 17, and December 12, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	bcdschool.org
•Concord Academy	Concord	14-18 years (9-12)	October 21, 8:30 a.m. -12:15 p.m.	concordacademy.org
•Jackson Walnut Park Schools	Newton	18 mo -12 years (T-6)	October 21, 11:30-1:30 p.m. & November 9, 9:30-11 a.m.	jwpschools.org
•Falmouth Academy	Falmouth	12-18 years (7-12)	October 21 and January 20, 9:30-11:30 a.m.	falmouthacademy.org
•The Learning Project	Boston	5-12 years (K-6)	October 21 9-11 a.m. and Oct. 22, 3-5 p.m. (more info on website)	learningproject.org
•Noble and Greenough School	Dedham	11-18 years (7-12)	October 21 8:30-11:30 a.m. (Grades 9-11) Visit website for additional dates	nobles.edu
•Pingree School	S. Hamilton	14-18 years (9-12)	October 21, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m.	pingree.org
•Thayer Academy	Braintree	10-18 years (5-12)	October 21, 9-12 p.m. (US) and October 28, 9-12 p.m. (MS)	thayer.org
•Waring School	Beverly	11-18 (6-12)	October 21, 9-11:30 a.m. and November 10, 10-12:30 p.m.	waringschool.org
•Atrium School	Watertown	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 22, 10-1 p.m.	atrium.org
•Brimmer and May School	Chestnut Hill	4-18 years (PK-12)	October 22, 10 a.m.- (LS), 1p.m.(MS) 2p.m. (US) & Nov. 8, 8:15 a.m.	brimmer.org
•Montrose School	Medfield	11-18 years (girls 6-12)	October 22, 1-3:30 p.m. and November 15, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	montroseschool.org
•Chapel Hill-Chaucary Hall School	Waltham	12-18 years (7-12/PG)	October 22 and November 5, 9-11 a.m. MS 1-3 p.m. US	chch.org
•Meridian Academy	Boston	11-18 years (6-12)	October 23, 6:50 p.m. and November 14, 8:50 a.m.	meridianacademy.org
•Park Street School	Boston	2-12 (Toddler-6)	October 23, 6 p.m. & November 15, 9 a.m.	parkstreetsschool.org
•The Cambridge School of Weston	Weston	14-19 years (9-PG)	October 28, 9-12 p.m (IN PERSON) and Oct.18, 7-8:30 p.m. (VIRTUAL)	csww.org
•The Chestnut Hill School	Chestnut Hill	3-12 years (Beginners-6)	October 29, 10 a.m. -12 p.m.	tchs.org
•The Sage School	Foxboro	3 -14 years (PK-8)	October 29, 11 - 12:30 p.m.	sageschool.org
•Shady Hill School	Cambridge	4-14 years (PK- 8)	October 29 1-3 p.m. (Lower School) and 2:30-5 p.m. (Middle School)	shs.org
•Milton Academy Lower and Middle School	Milton	5 -14 years (K-8)	November 4, 2-4 p.m.	milton.edu
•Thacher Montessori School	Milton	18 mos. to 14 years (T-8)	November 4, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	thacherschool.org
•Dana Hall School	Wellesley	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	November 4, 9-11 a.m. (Upper School) and 1-3 p.m. (Middle School)	danahall.org
•The Rivers School	Weston	11-18 years (6-12)	November 4, 9-11:30 a.m. (US) 1-3:30 p.m.(MS)	rivers.org
•Riverbend School	S. Natick	15 mo-14 years (T-8)	November 4, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	riverbendschool.org
•Fayweather Street School	Cambridge	3-14 years (PK-8)	November 4, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.	fayweather.org
•Tenacre Country Day School	Wellesley	4-12 years (PK-6)	November 4, 10 a.m. -12 p.m. and November 14, (Zoom)7-8:30 p.m.	tenacreds.org
•Fay School	Southborough	5-15 years (K-9)	November 5, 1-3 p.m.	fayschool.org
•The Newnan School	Boston	12-19 years (7-12)	October 11 and 25, 6-7 p.m. (both VIRTUAL)	newnanboston.org
•Lesley Ellis School	Arlington	2.9-14 years (PS-8)	November 5, 2-4 p.m.	lesleyellis.org
•The Park School	Brookline	4-14 years (PK-8)	November 5, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.	parkschool.org
•Wellan Montessori School	Newton	15mo-14 years (T-8)	November 5, 11:00-12:30 p.m. (Tod-Grade 3)1:00-3:00 p.m. (Grades 4-8)	wellan.org
•Ursuline Academy	Dedham	12-18 (girls 7-12)	November 5, 11-2 p.m.	ursulineacademy.net
•Newton Country Day School	Newton	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	November 5, 1-3:30 p.m.	newtoncountryday.org
•The Fenn School	Concord	9-15 years (boys 4-9)	November 19: 10-12 p.m.	whereboysthrive.org
•The Rashi School	Dedham	4-14 years (PK-8)	Please contact the school for more information regarding visits.	rashl.org
•Meadowbrook School	Weston	4-14 years (Jr.K-8)	Please visit the school's website for open house information.	meadowbrook-ma.org
•German International School	Boston	3-18 years (PS-12)	Please contact the school for more information regarding visits.	gibos.org

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