'Mayor Pete' joins 2020 Dem race as face of a new generation

By SARA BURNETT
Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP)—Pete Buttigieg, the little-known Indiana mayor who has risen to prominence in the early stages of the 2020 Democratic presidential race, made his official campaign entrance Sunday by claiming the mantle of a youthful generation ready to reshape the country.

“I recognize the audacity of doing this as a Midwestern millennial mayor,” he said to cheers of “Pete, Pete, Pete” from an audience assembled in a former Studebaker auto plant. “More than a little bold, at age 37, to seek the highest office in the land.” In the hours after his announcement, more than $1 million in donations poured in, said Lis Smith, speaking for the campaign.

The South Bend mayor, a Rhodes scholar and Afghanistan War veteran who has been essentially campaigning since January, has joined a dozen-plus rivals vying to take on President Donald Trump.

“The forces of change in our country today are rextonic,” he said. “Forces that help to explain what made this current presidency even possible. That’s why, this time, it’s not just about winning an election—it’s about winning an era.”

Buttigieg will return this week to Iowa and New Hampshire, which hold the nation’s first nominating contests, to campaign as a full-fledged candidate.

LGBT donors helping Buttigieg defy 2020 expectations

By SARA BURNETT
Associated Press

GREENVILLE, South Carolina (AP)—Jonathan Burrell first contributed to Pete Buttigieg’s campaign after watching the first prominent openly gay presidential candidate on television. When Burrell later saw him in person in a cramped upstate South Carolina auditorium, he knew he had to do it again.

“I felt compelled to help,” Burrell, a nursing student who is gay, said after the event. “It makes me proud he’s a gay man.”

Financial support from the LGBT community has helped Buttigieg defy expectations by raising in more than $7 million in just over two months. The money has come from grassroots supporters like Burrell and big-dollar Hollywood donors who hope Buttigieg will make history—or at least the summer debate stage.

The Buttigieg appeal was on display again this weekend when the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and his husband separately headlined galas for two of the country’s largest LGBT organizations.

And the early haul shows no sign of slowing. Victory Fund, which invested $2 million in LGBT candidates in 2018, expects to endorse Buttigieg shortly after he formally joins the race, President and CEO Annise Parker said.

The board that makes endorsements—made up of 100 “bundlers,” or people who commit to raising $5,000 annually for candidates—has been “champing at the bit” to endorse him, she said. Once they do, the group will appeal to its donor network to directly support Buttigieg’s campaign and promote his events.

Of the candidates who’ve released their first-quarter fundraising totals, Buttigieg outraised New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who each brought in over $5 million, and entrepreneur Andrew Yang. Other candidates exceeded his total, including California Sen. Kamala Harris ($12 million) and Sen. Kamala Harris ($12 million).

The high holy holidays of Passover and Easter are fast approaching, and Ramadan is in May. Attacks, however, on places of worship are becoming too frequent in this global climate of intolerance. As a worshiper, I need our president to make us safe.

The Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue mass shooting occurred in October 2018, injuring seven and killing 11 people. It was the deadliest anti-Semitic attack on the Jewish community in the country.

Last month, the Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand were two consecutive terrorist attacks at mosques, killing 50 people and injuring over 50 more. The gunman, a self-described eco-fascist and ethno-nationalist, live-streamed his first attack on Facebook Live.

When news broke this month that three historically African American Baptist churches had burned within 10 days in rural Louisiana’s St. Landry Parish, sadly, the horror was all too familiar. The only good news in these recent incidents is that there were no casualties.

Before the assailant was apprehended, none of the church burnings had

PASSOVER begins the evening of April 19, and although I’m somewhat casual in my observance, I love that the holiday, which commemorates Jewish people’s journey out of slavery in Egypt, has become a time for reflection on freedom and social justice. This year, I’ve been thinking about how we LGBTQ parents might use the traditional “Four Questions” of Passover to guide our modern-day journeys.

During the Passover seder, a ritual meal, we use a book called a Haggadah to retell and symbolically relive the story. Some of the passages come from traditional texts and liturgy, but much of the Haggadah is open to creative input. Because of the theme of freedom from oppression, many Haggadot

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Pete
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needs “a new generation of leadership.”

Buttigieg’s poll numbers have climbed. Some polls put him behind only Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who sought the party’s nomination in 2016, and former Vice President Joe Biden, who has not yet said he’s running.

Buttigieg’s campaign has raised more than $7 million in the first three months of this year, a total eclipsed by Sanders’ leading $18 million but more than Sens. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

“If it’s pretty fun,” Buttigieg told The Associated Press last month while visiting South Carolina, where he was met by larger-than-expected crowds.

His challenge is finding a way to sustain the momentum over the long term and avoiding becoming a “flavor-of-the-month” candidate. Scrutiny of his leadership in South Bend has increased, as has his criticism of Vice President Mike Pence, who was Indiana’s governor when Buttigieg was in his first term as mayor.

Buttigieg would be the first openly gay nominee of a major presidential party; he married his husband, Chasten, last year. He would be the first mayor to go directly to the White House. And he would be the youngest person to become president, turning 39 the day before the next inauguration, on Jan. 20, 2021. Theodore Roosevelt was 42 when he took office, while John F. Kennedy was 43 and Bill Clinton 46.

The campaign kickoff speech echoed themes that have resonated with voters during Buttigieg’s exploratory phase.

He talks often about how political decisions shape people’s lives, including his own—from serving as a lieutenant in the Navy Reserve in 2014, to being able to marry his husband and to not having to worry about how to pay for his father’s hospital bills after his father’s death this year.

Buttigieg also says the best way for Democrats to defeat Trump may be to nominate a mayor experienced in helping to revive a Midwestern city once described as “dying,” rather than a politician who has spent years “marinating” in Washington.

He has criticized Trump’s campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” saying the way to move the country forward is not to look backward or cling to an old way of life.

“There’s a myth being sold to industrial and rural communities: the myth that we can stop the clock and turn it back,” he said. “It comes from people who think the only way to reach communities like ours is through resentment and nostalgia, selling an impossible promise of returning to a bygone era that was never as great as advertised to begin with.”

South Bend, which neighbors the University of Notre Dame, was hit hard by the decline of manufacturing, dating to the 1963 closing of the Studebaker auto plant that costs thousands of residents their jobs.

The bulking, dilapidated factory loomed over the city for much of the past 60 years as what Buttigieg called a daily reminder of South Bend’s city’s past. Partially remodeled, it’s now a mixed-use technology center outside downtown—and the setting for Buttigieg’s announcement.

The South Bend fire marshal’s office said the rally drew over 4,500 inside and 1,500 outside. A steady stream of raindrops fell on speakers on the stage through the leaky roof.

“I like that he’s young,” said Tom Lacy, a 62-year-old retiree who came from Peoria, Illinois, for the event with his wife, Candy, on their 35th wedding anniversary. “He’s so relatable. He doesn’t seem like a politician to me.” Lacy said: “The contrast between him and our current president is unbelievable.”

Nausher Ahmad Sial, a 68-year-old developer from South Bend, said “we need to try new blood.”

Sial, who came to the U.S. from Pakistan 35 years ago, said he has worked with Buttigieg on development projects in the city and described the mayor as a “very honest, very fair guy.”
Would you like a wedge with that?

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

Our ever-projecting president, being (as he fancies) a law unto himself, has declared himself exonerated and his opponents treasonous. To deflect attention, he gets his personal consigliere (a.k.a. Attorney General Barr) to assert that the previous administration spied on his campaign, when in fact his operatives showed up on surveillance tapes only because they were consorting with Russia, a top American adversary.

Trump promises a pardon to the head of Customs and Border Protection if he is jailed for violating immigration law. He laments that border guards cannot get “rough” with migrants, whom he considers subhuman. Rather than work with the existing network of nonprofits for the placement of asylum seekers, he wants to weaponize the latter against sanctuary cities.

Meanwhile, Trump ally Franklin Graham, chummy with Putin’s Russia because of its anti-gay zeal and authoritarianism, feels duty-bound to impose his faith dictates on the rest of us in the name of—get this—religious freedom, while Trump all but encourages Bibi Netanyahu to annex the West Bank, which is doubtless the fault of a liberal Muslim congresswoman from Minnesota. Welcome to Holy Week.

But you knew all that. Allow me to fill you in on something that may have flown under your radar.

If “hashtag movement” sounds like an oxymoron, consider the strange circumstance that, even as I write, one such social media creation is on the verge of getting a black media figure fired.

My friend Rev. Mark Thompson, morning drive host at SiriusXM Progress and a frequent MSNBC commentator, was suspended on April 9 after defending himself when accosted in Newark by professional provocateur Thomas “Afrika” Ibiang. The hashtag movement #ADOS, which stands for American Descendants Of Slaves and has been attacking Thompson for months, is defending Ibiang and exploiting the incident to get Thompson fired.

ADOS, like Thompson, supports reparations, but from a very different angle. Co-founder Yvette Carnell, as musician and social activist Talib Kweli Greene writes, “has videos titled ‘Why Is Everyone So Afraid of Steve Bannon’ and ‘Trump Is Right About Black Poverty.’ ... She has tweets ... about how Trump is correct about birthright citizenship. She uses her Twitter account to push anti immigration propaganda, and she uses nazi slogans like ‘blood and soil.’” Carnell is also a board member of white nationalist think tank PFIR.

If all of this sounds bizarre, I feel you. Just understand that Carnell is deliberately driving a wedge between descendants of slaves and other black Americans. Thus Sen. Kamala Harris, of Indian and Jamaican heritage, has her authenticity questioned. But the malign fruits of four centuries of American racism hit all black people regardless of how or when their ancestors got here.

One more eccentric fissure in the progressive ranks would mean little by itself. Bruce A. Dixon of Black Agenda Report calls ADOS “a shrunken, shrill, shriveled and tribal version of reparationist politics.” But ADOS is not progressive; and remember that Twitter was used in the 2016 election to confuse and divide. ADOS targets include Joy Ann Reid, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Roland Martin, Malcolm Nance, and Rev. William Barber. If Thompson is purged on such a thin basis, it will encourage further mischief.

Mark and I were brought together by coalition politics. I served on the NAACP-DC Metropolitan Police and Criminal Justice Review Task Force that he set up in 1997, which won restoration of independent police review in the District of Columbia. Mark began broadcasting in 1988 under Radio One founder Cathy Hughes. He supports LGBT equality. I have been a regular guest on his show Make It Plain (SXM’s first talk show) since the 2000s. His extensive movement credentials include emceeing the Million Man March and the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration in Selma, Alabama. He is a progressive bridge builder. ADOS, contrastingly, builds bridges to white supremacists.

Mark was targeted in part for joining critics of SXM’s December 2017 decision to hire former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon as a host, which was rescinded a month later. Why would the black activists of ADOS defend the likes of Bannon and Trump? As we are warned in Matthew Chapter 7 about false prophets, “Know them by their fruits.”

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

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Donors
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Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders (more than $18 million).

Buttigieg says he’s using the money to double his roughly 20-person staff and build teams in early-voting states like Iowa and New Hampshire.

While his upstart campaign benefited from the gay community’s support, he didn’t rely on it. Buttigieg says he received donations from nearly 160,000 people between late January and March 31. About 65% of contributions were less than $200, with an average donation of about $36.

“It certainly helps to have people who are excited about the historic quality of a possible candidacy, but we really have a broad range,” he said. “They’re still crunching the numbers to understand some of the dimensions of all our support because it came, it seems, from every corner of the country and very different types of donors.”

Parker said while there’s “huge excitement” among the gay community, the man known as ‘Mayor Pete’ is catching on with all kinds of people she meets while traveling the country.

“One of the most astounding things about Pete’s candidacy is that it’s not the LGBTQ community alone that’s fueling it,” she said. “The average guy says ‘That Mayor Pete guy, he makes sense. He’s smart, he’s thoughtful, he’s kind of a guy we ought to have as president.’ It has nothing to do with whether they will ultimately vote for him. But they want him to be out there."

“He’s not a gay candidate for president,” she added. “He’s a candidate for president and part of his life experience that he brings is being an openly gay man. And you know, an openly gay first man.”

Buttigieg often campaigns alongside his husband, Chasten. He talks about how important their marriage is, sometimes taking aim at Vice President Mike Pence, who as Indiana governor signed a “religious freedom” bill decried as anti-gay.

Meanwhile, Chasten Buttigieg has developed a following of his own on Twitter and the campaign trail. On Saturday, he was the featured speaker at the Human Rights Campaign Houston gala, where he thanked the group for its support when he was an 18-year-old who left home after coming out, and for helping him potentially become “the first man in history to pick out the White House china.”

He also talked about violence against transgender people, particularly black transgender women, and the importance of passing the Equality Act, a sweeping LGBT nondiscrimination measure.

“We need someone in the White House who will sign the Equality Act into law,” Chasten Buttigieg told the cheering crowd. “Lucky I know a guy.”

Associated Press writer Hunter Woodall contributed from Concord, New Hampshire.

Mombian
Continued from page 1
(plural) aim at exploring various areas of social justice and include readings from modern civil rights leaders, poets, and other thinkers.

A key part of the seder is the asking of the Four Questions, which explain the symbols and rituals and are traditionally asked by the youngest child at the table who is able to do so. Many modern Haggadot, however, add extra questions for personal reflection or to delve into a particular area of social justice. Here, therefore, are some additional questions queer families could ask at the seder or, if you do not observe Passover, any time your family gathers for a meal and discussion.

The Four Questions actually begin with a fifth over-arching question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” This prompts me to ask: How are we, as an LGBTQ family, different from all other families—and how are we the same? I believe that our similarities—in loving our children and helping them grow and learn—go deeper than our differences. At the same time, it can sometimes be useful to think about our differences as a way of finding pride in our identities. What can we learn from exploring points of connection and places of difference? How can we use our similarities to build bridges? Where, too, do our intersecting identities of ethnicity, race, geographic origin, gender, ability, religion, and more offer us connection with other people and families, LGBTQ and not?

We move on to the first of the four traditional Passover questions: “On all other nights, we eat leavened food or matzo [an unleavened cracker]. Why on this night, only matzo?” The usual answer is that when Pharaoh finally let the Jews leave Egypt, they went quickly, grabbing their bread before it could rise. They were willing to adapt to eating unleavened bread in order to gain their freedom. As an additional question, therefore, I would ask: How has your family adapted to any challenges you may have encountered, either in starting your family or afterwards, and what have you learned from that experience?

The second seder question is: “On all other nights, we eat various vegetables. Why, on this night do we eat only bitter herbs [represented by horseradish and romaine lettuce on the seder plate]?” The usual answer is that they remind us of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. My new question, then, in this year that marks the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, is: How can we and our children be reminded of the lives and struggles of LGBTQ families before us, and how can the stories of their lives help us today? (One answer is to look at the booklists I’ve compiled at mombian.com.)

The third Passover question is: “On all other nights, we don’t dip [our food] even once. Why on this night do we dip twice?” This is a reference to the seder ritual of first dipping parsley in salt water to remind us of the tears of slavery and then dipping bitter herbs in charoset, a sweet paste of fruit and nuts that symbolizes the mortar used by the Hebrew slaves. I’ve heard it explained that dipping food in other food was something no slave had the wherewithal to do, and was therefore a sign of freedom. The second dip, into charoset, is to remind us there is sweetness even in bitter times. My question therefore is: How do we sweeten the bitterness of...
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been labeled as hate crimes, suggesting that the over 100-year-old churches were perhaps subject to accidental ignition due to old and crumbling infrastructures, faulty wiring, or thunderstorms that can cause power outages and occasional fires.

Instead, Holden Matthews, the son of St. Landry Parish’s sheriff deputy, was arrested as the arsonist, igniting a wave of panic throughout its Black community. Matthews, 21, is White. He was influenced by “black metal” music, a subgenre of heavy metal is known for its anti-Christian and demagogic rhetoric and promoting neo-Nazism.

While Matthews’ behavior is undoubtedly disturbing to its residents — both Black and White — his actions are not new.

The link between White supremacy and attacks on African American churches in this country has been both historically documented, and anecdotally known in Black communities.

For example, the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killed four little African American girls. It is one of the iconic images of White supremacist domestic terrorism. Massachusetts, however, which is known as the bluest of blue states, proved that church burnings are not the sole province of the South.

Church burnings were one more persistent reminder why during antebellum America, bush harbors were places where my enslaved ancestors gathered in secret to worship. These recent fires remind me how African Americans’ desire for safe and sacred spaces — especially places of worship — continue to be challenged with acts of violence.

The McDonough Church of God in Christ in Springfield was burned just hours after Obama was elected that historic night of November 2008 as our country’s first African American president. In 2015, African American church burnings occurred suspiciously in rapid succession following the Charleston Black church massacre, which left nine dead — including its senior pastor. The day before the church massacre, precisely 197 years prior, “Mother” Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church was burned to the ground due to the racial violence of a mob of White slave owners.

However, African Americans are not the only ones confronted with this challenge.

The roots of the Tree of Life massacre were White supremacy and anti-Semitism. When the gunman was apprehended by a SWAT officer he allegedly told him, “I wanted all Jews to die, and that Jews were committing genocide against his people.”

The roots of the Christchurch massacre were White supremacy and Islamophobia. The gunman praised President Trump in his 74-page manifesto posted online, in which he lauded Trump as a symbol “of renewed White identity and common purpose.”

This attack has our Muslim brothers and sisters on edge. Just blocks from me, the mosque in Cambridge was on 24-hour surveillance for fear of a copycat incident.

During a press conference, Trump was asked if he “see(s) today that White nationalism is a rising threat around the world” in the wake of mosques attacks in New Zealand.

“I don’t really. I think it’s a small group of people that have very, very serious problems, I guess,” Trump replied.

Trump’s statement reminded me of his repugnant “blame on both sides” comment about the Charlottesville mayhem that took place the summer of 2017. By condemning counter protesters similarly as White supremacists and swastikawielding neo-Nazis at the rally, Trump suggested both groups were at fault, and one was equally in the wrong as the other.

It is these type of statements that keep White supremacist terrorism alive, here and abroad, and our places of worship in danger.

Places of worship are supposed to be sanctuaries. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in our constitution, and it’s a freedom that should be upheld globally. With many of us approaching the high holy holidays these coming days and weeks ahead, nothing would be more comforting than knowing our places of worship are safe.

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LGBTQ winners at IRNE Awards

By Jules Becker

King George of course proved wrong about defeating the American colonists in a hilarious first act number in “Hamilton.” The bufoonish monarch was also sent up in the clever parody “Stamp’don” as he spoke of gays as though their time had come and gone in the theater. At the recent Independent Reviewers of New England Awards, that time continued to bring honor to LGBTQ themes, characters and talent.

During the 23rd annual IRNE’s—once again all at the Inn at Brookline, real life and fictional closeted and out characters figured prominently in several big award-winning plays and musicals. The Huntington Theatre Company area premiere of “Man in the Ring,” a Michael Cristofer drama centered on the actual bi-sexual boxing champion Emile Griffith, took home six large stage prizes including best play production direction — Michael Greif, lighting and projection design. John Douglas Thompson won best actor in a play honors portraying Griffiths and Gordon Clapp best supporting actor as the boxer’s manager.

Moonbox Productions’ edition of “Cabaret” also became a six-time small stage winner. As always, the revival of this Broadway masterwork calls on the point of view of Berlin-visitng bi-sexual novelist Cliff Bradshaw and rails against anti-Semitism and homophobia. The club Emcee is a gay master of ceremonies who will eventually wear the pink triangle. The Boston Center for the Arts effort took home best musical and director and choreographer honors — both to Rachel Ber- tone. Bertone, alluding to the show’s criticism of inaction by many Germans in the face of the Third Reich, stressed: We need to be upstanders not bystanders.” Aimee Doherty won an IRNE for playing apathetic Kit Kat Club singer Sally Bowles. The musical also received honors for set design and costumes. A second BCA musical winner was SpeakEasy Stage’s production of “Fun Home.” The Tony winning musical (with book and lyrics by our talent Lisa Kron) centered on actual graphic artist Alison Bechdel and her coming of age as a lesbian and a woman—took two awards—best ensemble and best promising young performer, namely Marisa Tomei as Young Alison. The staging of another Tony winner—the Kander and Ebb musical “Kiss of the Spider Woman”—also won two: actor-Eddy Cavazos and projection-Johnathon Carter.

Yet another acclaimed staging—this one a Zeitgeist Stage Company revival of the Terrence McNally play “Love! Valor! Compassion!” took home three honors: best fringe production, best director-out artistic director David J. Miller, and actor-David Anderson. “Moulin Rouge!” a world premiere musical that tried out at the Emerson Colonial Theatre pre-Broadway and re-opened it, led all shows with seven large stage prizes among them best new work, best production of a musical best music director and best scenic, costume and sound designs. Danny Burstein was honored with the best supporting actor in a musical award for playing gay impresario Harold Zidler. Burstein was in New York laying Alfred P. Doolittle in the Broadway production of “My Fair Lady” at Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont Theatre at the time of the awards.

Davey Tines received the large stage actor in a musical award for playing gay poet and Harlem Renaissance man of letters Langston Hughes in the American Repertory Theatre production of “The Black Clown.” Tines marveled at the artistic process: “We come together to create something

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South End Community Health Center, a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation, is holding a meeting of its members on Monday, April 29, 2019 at 8pm at the health center, located at 1601 Washington St. Boston, MA, 02118. The purpose of the meeting is to amend the corporation’s Articles of Organization to provide that, going forward, the corporation shall no longer have voting members. Instead, the board of directors shall have all the powers afforded to voting members under Massachusetts law. Members are all adult residents of the South End and all South End Community Health Center patients age 16 and above. To RSVP or for additional information, please contact Henry Goodrow at 857-206-7625, hgoodrow@sechc.org

IRNE

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magical.” A.R.T. also won the supporting actress in a musical award for Lauren Patten’s portrayal of a transgender best friend in “Jagged Little Pill.” Her rendition of the Alanis Morissette song “You Oughta Know” during the show received a well-deserved standing ovation. An A.R.T. collaboration with Company One on the musical “Wig Out” brought former Boston Metro arts reviewer Nick Dussault a small stage best supporting actor award for firing up Café Oberon as a dress-wearing reveler.

“Fun Home” returns by popular demand June 2-30 at the Calderwood Pavilion’s Roberts Theatre. “Moulin Rouge” begins previews June 28 at Broadway’s Abe Hirschfeld Theatre and opens July 25.

For a complete list of 2019 IRNE winners, go to IRNE Awards or Theater Mirror on Facebook.
With the beginning of the baseball season, I’ve been reading reports about teammates being overly familiar. The paparazzi at a Texas Rangers game snapped Joey Gallo and Nomar Mazara grabbing each other’s crotches after a homerun. Call me old-fashioned, but I usually grab someone’s crotch to ensure a home run. But all this fondling by straight men? I don’t get it—and, presumably, neither do they!

I was flabbergasted when I read that Karen Pence—Vice President Mike Pence’s handsome wife—felt that openly gay presidential candidate Mayor Pete Buttigieg was bringing up her husband for publicity. She took issue with Mayor Pete mentioning Pence’s support for conversion therapy. The specific quote which set her off was this: “That’s the thing I wish the Mike Pences of the world would understand, that if you have a problem with who I am, your quarrel is not with me. Your quarrel, sir, is with my creator.” Mrs. Pence and her daughter Charlotte were promoting that precious little bunny book on Brian Kilmeade’s radio program. Karen said, “It’s kind of funny because I don’t think the vice president does have a problem with him. But I think it’s helping Pete to get some notoriety.”

In case you don’t know, prior to becoming vice president, Pence was the governor of Indiana, and Buttigieg is mayor of South Bend. It should be noted that Pence never specifically attacked Mayor Pete—just like it should be noted that Mayor Pete didn’t call out Mr. Pence; he called out “the Mike Pences of the world”. But Mrs. Pence might actually be onto something. Pete Buttigieg is currently polling third in New Hampshire—behind Senator Bernie Sanders and former VP Joe Biden, who hasn’t even declared his candidacy.

Fallout from Ramin Setoodeh’s book about “The View” continues. At the opening night of the Broadway revival of “Oklahoma!”, Rosie O’Donnell said, “My biggest regret was ever sitting down with him for 20 minutes, and that’s exactly what I did to appease my publicist. But it’s my biggest regret.” In the book, Rosie predicted her misgivings: “I don’t lie. So I’m going to tell you too much and it’s going to be bad for me in the end.”

Daytime drama is not limited to “The View”. Sara Gilbert just announced that she will be leaving “The Talk”. Although she created the show, she was barely comfortable being on the panel, let alone hosting. But with the abrupt departure of Mrs. Moonves, she stepped up and has proven to be an effective leader. However, it was never an effortless fit. The workload has gotten to her, and she feels the need to cut back—leaving an inconsolable Sharon Osbourne (as the sole remaining original co-host) also contemplating jumping ship. So, when people call “The View” a train wreck, remember it has survived for 22 years. “The Talk” is just ending its ninth.

What a year it’s been for Gilbert. In two instances, she was forced to step into shoes somewhat larger than her own. As we said, she helmed “The Talk”. At the same time, she produced the reboot of “Roseanne”. And, with Barr’s departure, her character became the focal point of “The Conners”. That show was just renewed, but not everyone is happy. And by “not everyone”, we mean Roseanne. Although Barr’s Tweet is what led to her premature ejection, she puts much of the blame on Gilbert chiming in and saying the views in her Tweet were “abhorrent and do not reflect the beliefs of our cast and crew or anyone associated with our show.” According to Roseanne, “She destroyed the show and my life with that tweet. She will never get enough until she consumes my liver with a fine Chianti.” In response, Sara said this: “While I’m extremely disappointed and heartbroken over the dissolution of the original show, she will always be family, and I will always love Roseanne.” Sad, sad, sad.

Then there’s Wendy Williams. After weeks, months, years of speculation, Wendy has filed for divorce from Kevin Hunter. It seems like forever that the press has been reporting that he has a mistress. But I suppose it all got real when that other woman got pregnant! Not coincidentally, that’s when Wendy went MIA from her talk show and ended up in a sober house. But even then, she put the kibosh on speculation that the couple was splitting up. She’d point to her wedding band and say, “Don’t ask me about mine until you see this gone—and it ain’t going anywhere. Not in this lifetime.” Apparently a lifetime is roughly a month—that band of gold is now gone. This ain’t Kevin’s first time cheating. Wendy previously revealed he had an affair when she was pregnant with Kevin Jr. In her 2001 memoir “Wendy’s Got the Heat”, she talked about what it would take to make her walk away from the marriage. “The only thing that would make me walk out for good is if he lied about anything—if he was in love, if she was just as successful at what she does as I am in my career, if she had his baby.” To be continued, I’m sure.

Shawn Mendes has once again asserted his heterosexuality. But now he’s angry about the gay rumors. “You fucking guys...
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are so lucky I’m not actually gay and terrified of coming out. That’s something that kills people. That’s how sensitive it is. Do you like the songs? Do you like me? Who cares if I’m gay?” So lemme see if I understand this—Mendes is obviously straight because if he were gay, the speculation would make him kill himself? There’s something not particularly healthy about that statement.

The media has poked some holes in allegations presented in “Leaving Neverland”. The biggest issue surrounds two of James Safechuck’s claims. First, he said that the sexual abuse stopped when he was 14—implying Michael Jackson was only interested in pre-pubescent boys. He also says that they had sex in a room above the Neverland train station. But he turned 14 in 1992, and the train station wasn’t built until 1994. Oops! Another wrinkle is that Jackson spent most of 1994 living in NYC’s Trump Tower. “Leaving Neverland” director Dan Reed pushed back, saying there was no proof when the train station was built—until he was presented with proof. Reed then Tweeted, “Yeah there seems to be no doubt about the station date. The date they have wrong is the end of the abuse.” You mean, the date Safechuck claimed the abuse ended? Which also would change the whole hypothesis of the doc? I realize that one discrepancy doesn’t mean the rest didn’t happen, but it does throw everything into question.

Last year, the gay romcom “Love, Simon” brought in over $60 million at the box office. Admittedly, that’s not a blockbuster, but the flick cost only about $15 million to make. Although talk of a potential sequel has stalled (the book it was based on does have a sequel), last week it was announced that a television series based on the movie is coming to Disney+, which is apparently one of those many network streaming services out there.

As I’ve previously told you, the Broadway musical “The Prom” is about a group of actors who save a high school prom after the PTA cancels it rather than let a lesbian couple attend. At least, that’s what I’m told it’s about since I haven’t seen it. Strangely, every time I’m in NYC, my press requests are denied. However, it’s pretty hard to deny auteur Ryan Murphy, and he loves the show. So much so that he’s planning to turn the musical into a “MOVIE EVENT for Netflix”. He says it has “a hilarious and moving book and some of the most show stopping direction, choreography and performance I’ve ever seen on Broadway.” At least I’ll finally get to see it.

Our “Ask Billy” question comes from Henry in Chicago: “I just saw some photos of Jude Law in a white Speedo. Are they recent? Damn, he still looks hot.”

Thank you for bringing this up. This past year, Jude Law filmed “The New Pope”—which is a sequel to the 2017 HBO series called “The Young Pope”. At the end of that limited series, Law’s character appeared to have a stroke and died. But I guess not—at least judging from the numerous photos we’ve snagged of him in a mighty skimpy Speedo. You’ll think you died and went to heaven when you see the pics on BillyMasters.com.

When Popes are strutting in see-through Speedos, it’s time to end yet another column. So, did I piss off enough people? Liberals, conservatives, daytime talk fans, and the pious? Check, check, check, and check! That’s what we do here at www.BillyMasters.com—even on the brink of Easter/Passover. If you have a question, send it to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I round third (preferably with Jude Law). So, until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
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