Gov't says she'll sign Maine 'conversion therapy' ban

By MARINA VILLENEUVE

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP)—Maine’s governor said Thursday that she would sign a bill to ban so-called gay conversion therapy for minors that advanced in Maine’s House and Senate this week.

If the bill becomes law, Maine would join 16 states that have banned the practice, which aims to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Maine Senate on Thursday gave initial approval to the bill, which was signed recently in Massachusetts, while states including North Carolina are considering such legislation this year.

Maine senators push to add LGBT people to Fair Housing Act

PORTLAND, Maine (AP)—Maine’s former Republican governor vetoed a similar measure last year, but the bill has gained momentum this year under a Democratic-led Legislature.

“I look forward to signing it!” Mills tweeted Thursday. “It is time for all LGBT people to Fair Housing Act.”

Supporters decry the practice as a harmful and infringes on parental choice and religious freedom.

The bill downplays the “tried and true values and traditions of parents and the church,” said Belgrade resident Joy Enmons, who told lawmakers she was a certified counselor with the American Association of Christian Counselors.

A Republican failed to gain support for an amendment to exclude talk therapy and counseling from counting as “conversion therapy.”

But, under that amendment, the use of punishment or “unpleasant stimuli,” such as ice baths, pornographic materials and electroconvulsive therapy, would be banned.

A law against “conversion therapy” was signed recently in Massachusetts, but the bill in its current form is filled with poison pills that threaten to undermine parental and conscience rights,” the official emailed.

Polished Boots

By Jules Becker

Call “Kinky Boots” a perfect fit. If you have seen the affecting 2006 British film of the same name and/or the 2013 Tony-winning musical, you know that this Harvey Feinstein (book)—Cyndi Lauper (score) show—is a sexy call for human outreach and understanding. Make no mistake; the transformation of Charlie Price and his respected but old-fashioned family shoe factory has universal implications, and charismatic

Kinky Boots,
National tour presented by Broadway in Boston
at Opera House, Boston, through May 19.

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NewEnglandBriefs

Making Babies the New-Fashioned Way

By Mombian

When my spouse and I first tried to start our family 17 years ago, we searched vainly for a book on assisted reproduction that was authoritative, detailed, and inclusive. A new book by a fertility expert—who also happens to be a lesbian mom herself—is just the book we would have hoped to have.

Your Future Family: The Essential Guide to Assisted Reproduction, by Kim Bergman, Ph.D., (Conari Press), offers a detailed look at assisted reproductive technology (ART), including assisted insemination, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and surrogacy, written in a way that doesn’t take a medical degree to understand. Her goal, she explains, “is not just to provide the nuts and bolts of assisted reproduction but also to share the human element of the process.”

To this end, the book is filled with stories of real individuals and couples (same- and different-sex) on their paths to parenthood.

Bergman tells us the book is for

Trump opposes Equality Act

By Sue O’Connell

The Washington Blade reports that President Donald Trump opposes the Equality Act, according to a senior administration official.

“The Trump administration absolutely opposes discrimination of any kind and supports the equal treatment of all; however, this bill in its current form is filled with poison pills that threaten to undermine parental and conscience rights,” the official emailed.

In contrast to the Equality Act, which would protect LGBTQ people against newfound workplace protections for LGBTQ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.

The Equality Act would provide consistent and explicit non-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people across key areas of life, including employment, housing, education, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, and jury service.

The full Blade item is at www.washingtonblade.com/2019/05/13/exclusive-trump-comes-out-against-equality-act/
Dreams reflected.

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Defusing Donnie’s deadly toys
For now, let’s take fireworks follies over a real war
by Richard J. Rosendall | rrosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

NE Briefs
Continued from page 1

Mombian
Continued from page 1

America has become a graveyard of entitlement and ineptitude, riding on his horse Boastful Ignorance, has left our reputation in a state similar to the limestone relief sculptures atop the old Boston Tiler building: smashed for the sheer spiteful pleasure of it.

More than our good name is imperiled. Despite grousing over John Bolton’s interventionist stance on Venezuela, 45 retains his national security advisor, who is busy ratcheting up tensions with Iran. Belligerence, bluster, and alienating allies are Bolton’s gift to unhinged statecraft.

Meanwhile, instead of reading his daily brief, Genghis Con is launching sweet storms, reorganizing Washington’s Independence Day celebration into a rally about himself, and promising fireworks next year at Mount Rushmore. He suggested launching the District’s display from a barge in the Potomac. He should consider lighting it himself.

We don’t like to admit that there is such a thing as an American empire, despite our military expenditures being roughly equal to those of the next eight countries combined. Trump’s July 4 preparations are a substitute for the brassy military parade he craved. We can put another burger on the grill and chase him from our minds, but for all his clownery he is rattling enough sabers to start several wars.

This is where faith comes in. Rev. William H. Lamar IV, pastor of Washington’s Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, told The Washington Post in August 2017, “The movement of Jesus was violently persecuted by Rome and religious leaders who served as chaplains to the empire.” Today, he says, “Churches and preachers who claim to be apolitical are usually firmly aligned with the politics of American empire.” At a May 10 memorial service for former congressman Ron Dellums, he said that Dellums, like the biblical Daniel, had “refused to eat the king’s meat”—meaning he put his conscience before political expediency.

So far in May, our wannabe king backed North Korea after it fired projectile in the direction of Japan. He talked of ordering DOJ to investigate Democratic presidential frontrunner Joe Biden and former Secretary of State John Kerry. He joked about shooting immigrants. He expanded a “conscience rule” to allow medical workers to deny care to women, LGBT people, and others.

All readers will appreciate Bergman’s sensible and sexual orientation to the classes that are protected from discrimination by the Fair Housing Act. The senators say 21 states and more than 200 localities around the country extend housing discrimination protections in this way. The senators cite studies that say same-sex applicants are more likely to be denied a mortgage than heterosexual couples. The legislation is co-sponsored by 10 senators, all of whom are Democrats.

“anyone who is contemplating having a baby with the help of others.” Additionally, she hopes that families, friends, and others, “in particular, grandparents, aunts, and uncles,” will read it in order to support them. She is as inclusive of families who choose ART from the start (mostly same-sex couples and single parents by choice) as of those who turn to it because of fertility problems.

Bergman herself is a licensed psychologist who for nearly three decades has specialized in helping same-sex couples, single parents, and others using assisted reproduction. She is a senior partner at Growing Generations, an egg donation and surrogacy agency; and serves on the Corporate Board of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, where she also chairs the LGBTQ Special Interest Group.

Just as relevant as her professional expertise is the fact that she and her spouse Natalie of (now) 35 years started their own family through assisted reproduction. Their two daughters are now in college and graduate school, meaning that Kim and Natalie “were in the vanguard” of queer families forming through assisted reproduction. She weaves in parts of her own story when relevant (e.g., describing her feelings about an early miscarriage), but also does so for families whose stories differ from hers.

All readers will appreciate Bergman’s sensible and calm tone and her holistic understanding of what goes into creating a family. “Being aware of where you’re at emotionally, spiritually, and financially is an important first step in the process,” she advises. She then introduces readers to the people they are likely to meet in their journey, such as a reproductive endocrinologist and a reproductive attorney. It is perhaps her own professional bias as a psychologist, however, that leads her to opine, “Having the support of a mental health professional specializing in fertility and ART to help you through the process is not just a luxury; it is essential.” Having gone through reciprocal IVF with my spouse without such a professional, I question whether that is true in all cases—but I would agree that they can provide much value.

Bergman dives into the details of what it takes to make a baby, including finding sperm and egg (as needed), conception and embryo formation, and what happens in the womb and during the birth process. People wondering “How should I choose a sperm or egg donor?” “Which partner’s sperm should we use?” “How many eggs should I transfer through IVF?” or “How should I choose a surrogate?” will find much information to help guide them to their own decisions. Bergman also assures readers that research shows children born through ART are just as healthy as non-ART ones.

Throughout, Bergman offers encouragement and optimism, even titling one section, “You Can Build a Family, No Matter What.” At the same time, she doesn’t shrink from describing the challenges people may encounter. She also suggests ways of coping with them, such as finding an online or in-person support group, journaling, and meeting with a mental health professional.

Bergman devotes a whole chapter, too, to ways of talking about their creation to your child(ren) and to the outside world. This is the one area where she expresses her own definite opinion about how to do things, writing, “I believe very strongly that you should tell your child the truth about how he or she came into the world. And the earlier you do this, the better.” As for the rest of the world, she says, “Your story belongs to you and your child, so you can share it or withhold it as you please. Just don’t withhold it from your child.”

My one criticism is that the book could be fast-track a decision on President Trump’s bid to quash a House subpoena for financial records from his accounting firm, saying he will decide the full case, not just whether to temporar-ily block the subpoena while the case proceeds. Bloomberg reported on May 10, “President Don-
ald Trump’s 25 percent tariff on goods from Chi-

Mombian is the founder and publisher of Mombian.com, a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory for LGBTQ parents.
When I moved to Boston from Columbus, Ohio back in 1987, I was thrilled at the thought of living in a large Northeastern city, and of being where the action was. Though I wasn’t a fan of long winters, the climate in Ohio wasn’t much different than New England’s, and I’d recently learned to ski, which gave me something to do during the winter months.

But now, three decades later, I look back and wonder, what was I thinking? I gave up downhill skiing twenty years ago, when the idea of schlepping my skis, boots and other gear to outweighed the fun I could have on the mountain. And over time, I’ve become more sensitive to cold—dry skin and dry eyes—with a pinch of seasonal affective disorder thrown into the mix.

But winter is finite, and with a week in Florida here, and another week south of the Mason-Dixon Line there, I could cope. What’s harder to deal with is that tomorrow will be “noticeably cooler” and our heat would be shut off the following week. At the management company in my condo building sent out notice of “spring,” a euphemism for late winter, which is rolling through May, with no end in sight.

Several weeks ago, after a mild week in April, the management company in my condo building sent out notice of our heat would be shut off the following week. At the time, that was fine with me, as my apartment was warm and snuggly, absorbing heat from the units below. Then the weather cooled, the rain returned, and nighttime temps dipped below 40 degrees. Suddenly I was huddled under my comforter, a space heater buzzing in the background as I nursed a sore throat and cursed the building management for shutting down our boiler for the season.

As I cursed, I reflected on our spring so far, or lack of it. We locals become warmer; we don’t take the good days for granted. During those brief but brutal periods—such as our two-month summer—I remember why I moved here in the first place, and the cold and darkness recede into the past, almost but not quite forgotten.

Until November, when we start the cycle over once again.

Judah Leblang is a writer, teacher and storyteller. He will be performing his one-man show “It’s Now or Never: My Life in the Late Middle Ages,” at the Beacon Hill Friends House, 6 Chermay Street in Boston on Saturday, June 1 at 7:30 PM. Tickets ($16 advance/$20 at the door) and more info at www.judahleblang.com or call 617-466-9637.

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March in May
by Judah Leblang | www.judahleblang.com
contributing writer

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Noho Pride attracts thousands

The 38th Annual Parade and Pride Event was held on Saturday, May 4 in Northampton. Noho Pride spokesperson J.M. Sorrell estimated that around 30,000 to 40,000 people participated in parade and event at the Three County Fairgrounds.
NoHo Pride

Continued from page 6

Shienne and Victoria Halsted. Photo by Monika Normand Photography
Jocelyn Bioh’s “School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play” has come to the Speakeasy Stage Company in Boston. It is the 2018 winner of the Lortel Award for Outstanding Play. And, for 75 taut yet hilarious minutes, Bioh has adeptly touched the third rail in African-American, African and African diasporic communities: colorism. Colorism still today is a running theme, thorn and tragedy played out in these communities as well as the larger society. It’s a topic that cannot be explored enough.

“School Girls,” which is also a nod to Tina Fey’s 2004 teen comedy film “Mean Girls” now on Broadway, explores the theme of colorism between the two main protagonists Paulina and Ericka. Paulina is a Ghanian born dark-skinned, queen bee. She’s the personification of “mean girl culture” and thinks she’s a sure-shot in being selected to become Miss Ghana and proudly represent West African nations at the Miss Global Universe. Ericka, a biracial native Ohioan returns to Ghana, her father’s birthplace, after the death of her mother who is white. Ericka personifies the trope of the “tragic mulatto.” Tension reaches a crescendo when Ericka is chosen to represent Miss Ghana.

Paulina who is awash in Eurocentric notions of beauty and self-worth thinks Ericka is blessed to be light-skinned and embraced by white society. Ericka, however, disabuses Paulina of the notion by revealing her difficulties being biracial. Ericka’s disabusing of Paulina is a classic example of colorism as Ericka states: “You think those white kids wanted anything to do with me? You think there were any other black kids in Portsmouth? I was always alone! ...And my father...was here. With his cocoa factory... And his wife and children. Living this perfect life... Not even thinking about me... Ashamed of me... His white daughter.”

Bioh’s inspiration for the play is derived from a true story. In 2011, Minnesota native Yayra Nego, who is biracial and never resided in Ghana, won the Miss Ghana title. Nego’s win touched off a global debate about colorism throughout the African diaspora as well as in Africa. Due to the deleterious effects of American slavery and European colonialism, the preferential treatment given to lighter-skinned blacks was intentionally executed to sow deep-seated resentment, dissent, and competition among blacks at the same time keeping in place the racist concept of black inferiority.

And, among us sisters, Spike Lee’s 1988 film “School Daze” brilliantly dramatizes the warring tension of colorism, showing two sororities—one light skin and the other dark skin—at a historically black college fiercely competing with each other.

As a little girl I heard the children’s rhyme on colorism which told me my place in the world before I stepped out in it.

“If you’re black, stay back; If you’re brown, stick around; If you’re yellow, you’re mellow; If you’re white, you’re all right.”

The enduring legacy of colorism is a pall that still hovers over black women today—both within our communities and in the larger society. Lupita Nyong’o, an Oscar-winning actress, is a dark-skinned Mexico-born Kenyan. In a 2014 interview with “Her” magazine, Nyong’o opened up about her inner struggle and society’s obsession with lighter skin blacks, especially women.

“European standards of beauty are something that plagues the entire world. The idea that darker skin is not beautiful, that light skin is the key to success and love. Africa is no exception. When I was in the second grade, one of my teachers said, ‘Where are you going to find someone darker than you?’ I was mortified.”

While African American sisters are opening doors, cracking glass ceilings, and disrupting Eurocentric paradigms of beauty more has to be done in terms of allowing chocolate-complexion and darker-skinned sisters, like our former First Lady, Michelle Obama, to be pageant queens, too.

This year sisters of African descent have done a trifecta in being crowned the winners in three major national pageants: Miss Teen USA, Miss USA, and Miss America. All, however, are light-complexioned.

I recently read headlines stating that Diane Ross had run-in with TSA. My initial thought was that this must be a summer rumor—their stories didn’t happen this year. So I searched the extensive archives on BillyMasters.com where I found every lurid detail from the September 1999 incident. That one took place in London’s Heathrow Airport, where Ross objected to being patted down by security. In retaliation, she reportedly grabbed the female officer’s breasts and said, “How do you like it?” The officer liked it enough to detain her.

But, no, there’s a brand-new TSA incident. We first heard about it via Ross’ Tweet: “OK so one hand I’m treated like royalty in New Orleans and at the airport I was treated like shit.” She followed that up by saying TSA was “over the top”. “It’s not what was done but how. I am feeling violated—I still feel her hands between my legs, front and back (saying to me ‘it her job’). Really mixed emotions. I always like to see the good things but not feeling good right now.” Maybe it’s Halley’s Comet—something that happens to Ross every 20 years.

Then there’s the story about Jerry Falwell Jr. and the pool boy. So many questions. Let’s start with the basics—who is Jerry Falwell Jr.? Don’t confuse him with his father—co-founder of the Moral Majority (which is neither), a televangelist, and, if I’m not mistaken, stole the PTL Club right out from under Jim and Tammy Faye and then went down a water slide fully clothed. This story isn’t about him. This is about his spawn. From what I’ve read, Junior is kinda like a smarter Bobby in “Company” soon. His singing voice was superb in the Broadway production of “Company”. He actually compared Donald to Turk? Somehow he got a phone interview with the president’s lackey/patsy and try to have an answer for you by the end of the column.

If I did better on my SATs, I probably could have calculated those Buttigieg numbers in my head. But, alas, Big Mama and Big Daddy Masters didn’t have a spare half million dollars to ensure those higher scores. What I do know is that the college admissions scandal is headed for the small screen. A limited series based on the book “Accept” is in development. No network or casting has been announced, but I bet Lori Loughlin is on the lookout for a new gig. Of course, she may not be available for about 5-10 years.

I’m so perplexed by this “Beverly Hills, 90210” reboot. Don’t get me wrong—I’m not confused about the show. It’s a loosely scripted reality show about the original cast getting back together to make a reboot. Got it. But in the videos and stills from the cast’s first table read, why are Shannen Doherty and Tori Spelling always together? Has hell frozen over and no-one told me? Damn you, global warming! You can see them on BillyMasters.com.

This is the time of year when TV execs decide which shows are coming back, which shows aren’t, and which new ones we can look forward to next season. Some of these decisions were made long ago. For example, “This Is Us” already got renewed for three more seasons. And, we already knew FOX was bringing back “Empire”—even if we just learned that Jamal is “stuck in the Seychelles”. Since there are no plans for Jussie Smollett to return anytime soon, perhaps his character will sell sea shells by the sea shore in the Seychelles. “Dynasty” is returning, but I’m convinced none of you are watching it. I was sad to note that “The Cool Kids” was cancelled, along with the “Murphy Brown” reboot. Happenings as I write this, I was thrilled to hear that Fran Drescher is coming back in “Indebted” with the sexy Steven Weber on NBC. And congrats to Pauley Perrette on her CBS sitcom “Broke”.

The reboot of “NYPD Blue” featuring our own Bill Brochtrup had hoped to find a slot on ABC’s schedule, but the network sent it back for retooling and hopes to consider it as a mid-season replacement. Happily, Bill is busy in the West Coast premiere of Michael McKeever’s play “Daniel’s Husband”. I’m sure it says something about the Fountain Theatre that they snatched the rights to this play so quickly after its off-Broadway run. And with a truly exceptional cast led by Brochtrup, I’m not surprised. The play poses this question—just because gay people can get married and be like “everybody else”, should they? Either way, what are the consequences? The Fountain Theatre’s production is absolutely breathtaking—and on the off nights, they could make a fortune renting it out as an AirBnB. The performances are exceptional—not a weak link in the bunch. I highly recommend seeing this timely and provocative play if you’re in the area. It runs through June 23rd, and you can get tix at FountainTheatre.com.

I’ve previously told you how excited I was about the national tour of “Falsettos”—even though PBS televised the Broadway revival. Since I saw it on Broadway, on TV, and now on tour, I can sum up the reason to buy a ticket in three words—Max von Essen. Although Andrew Rannells was superb in the Broadway revival, Max has a little something extra. His years of experience, challenging roles, and paying his dues give him a gravitas as Marvin, while somehow maintaining a boyish charm and innocence. I easily see him as a brilliant Bobby in “Company” soon. His singing voice is, as always, solid with no notable break (save for one actual “falsetto” note towards the end). It was truly a staggering performance. Speaking of staggering, Nick Adams has never looked better (but he wore much less in “Priscilla”). He’s a fine actor and may sing the role better than Andrew Rannells. But while Adams is by far a more appealing performer, Rannells has the edge in delivering perhaps the definitive Whizzer. All in all, if you haven’t seen this show, it’s a perfect production and cast to catch when it comes to a city near you.

Way back when, performers were often called stars of stage, screen, and television. Well, throw in radio and that sums up Charles Busch to a T. On several occasions, the divine Charles has appeared with LA Theatre Works, a group that has recorded well over 500 plays for posterity. This week, he returns to record “Die, Mommie, Die!” for four performances May 17-19, and you can get tix on their website LATW.org. He recently quipped, “I’ve played Angela Arden on film, stage and radio. I just gotta figure out a way of bringing it to TV.” There’s still time!

Could it be that a certain semi-star is spiraling out of control? So say people close to the actress who claim she has as much in common with the name of her last megahit as she does with a Jeffrey Osborne song. While all her success should thrill her, she’s dangerously close to the borderline and possibly requires medical intervention. Some are concerned for her well-being, while those in her clan have a blasé attitude. You only have one life to live.

When we’re hustling blind items, it’s definitely time to end yet another column. As full as this column was, there’s even more waiting for you on www.BillyMasters.com—the site that always delivers. If you have a question, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Ross’ next tussle with TSA. So, until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
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