50 years of LGBTQ pride showcased in protests, parades

By SABRINA CASERTA and REBECCA GIBIAN
Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP)—Crowds gathered outside New York’s historic Stonewall Inn on Sunday to celebrate five decades of LGBTQ pride, marking the 50th anniversary of the police raid that sparked the modern-day gay rights movement. Other cities throughout the country planned parades.

More than 2,000 people gathered outside the bar where patrons resisted a police raid on June 28, 1969. Thousands also turned out for a larger parade that packed Fifth Avenue, where rainbows were on display across everything from flags to T-shirts.

Eraina Clay, 63, of suburban New Rochelle, came to celebrate the anniversary. “I think that we should be able to say we’ve been here for so long, and so many people are gay that everybody should be able to have the chance to enjoy their lives and be who they are,” Clay said. “I have a family. I raised kids. I’m just like everybody else.”

Alyssa Christianson, 29, of New York City, was topless, wearing just sparkly pasties and boy shorts under her neck like a cape. “I’ve been to the Pride parade before, but this is the first year I kind of wanted to dress up and get into it,” she said.

Christianson said she is concerned that the movement could suffer setbacks if President Donald Trump is reelected.

“I think that we should be able to wear. A Pride flag was tied around her neck like a cape. “I’ve been to the Pride parade before, but this is the first year I kind of wanted to dress up and get into it,” she said.

Christianson said she is concerned that the movement could suffer setbacks if President Donald Trump is reelected.

New England Briefs

Vermont: Insurers can’t deny care for transgender youth

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP)—Vermont is clarifying that insurers cannot deny coverage of gender confirmation surgery due to age, unless there are other clinical factors.

Meanwhile, the federal government is proposing to roll back similar federal protections.

Republican Gov. Phil Scott’s administration proposed allowing individuals under age 21 to undergo gender confirmation surgery through Medicaid.

From bar raids to Buttigieg

Altered expectations are Stonewall’s greatest legacy

By Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net

The Stonewall uprising was a flashpoint that fueled a great broadening of the LGBTQ rights movement. It was not the start. Pre-Stonewall organizations included multiple Mattachine groups and the Daughters of Bilitis.

Pre-Stonewall incidents included the sit-in at Dewey’s Lunch Counter in Philadelphia in 1965 and the riot at Compton’s Cafeteria in San Francisco in 1966.

One of the most notable pre-Stonewall acts of resistance was when Frank Kameny went to court to fight his 1957 firing by the Army Map Service. The Supreme Court in 1961 refused to hear his appeal, but as Charles Francis writes, “Kameny’s powerfully argued petition to the Court marked day one in a revolution of legal argumentation and law for a vast homosexual minority demanding equal citizenship.”

Over the Corporate Rainbow

This Pride Month has seen an explosion of rainbows on products from sneakers to snack foods, reenergizing the debate over whether and how corporate America should be involved in Pride. For me, two things come to mind: My belief that companies should support LGBTQ equality if they are going to market to us—and the fact that my family would not exist without the benefits my spouse and I received from the company when she and I decided to start our family through reciprocal in vitro fertilization (IVF), using my egg, her womb, and donor sperm. The health insurance I had from my company covered all but the cost of the sperm for our two attempts, meaning our out-of-pocket expenses were hundreds of dollars.

With the partial list of achievements since 1969: removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. APA’s similar action on gender identity decades later. Workplace protections in Fortune 500 companies. Overturning anti-sodomy laws. Ending the military gay ban. Thejoyous Pride month could be one of those art-imitating-life-imitating-art moments.

“...But Winds of Change are blowing strong...

— Faye Dunaway as Katharine Hepburn in the play "Tea at Five". This may be one of those art-imitating-life-imitating-art moments.

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Maine Episcopal Diocese consecrates first openly gay bishop

PORTLAND, Maine (AP)—The Episcopal Diocese of Maine has consecrated an openly gay bishop for the first time.

The diocese says Rev. Thomas James Brown was ordained and consecrated its tenth bishop on Saturday in a ceremony that drew more than 900 people to St. Luke’s Cathedral in Portland. Twenty-seven Episcopal bishops and more than 100 clergy from Maine participated in the service.

Gene Robinson, the retired Diocese of New Hampshire bishop and the first openly gay bishop, says Brown “stands on the shoulders of many other LGBTQ priests.”

Brown is originally from Michigan and trained at parishes in California and his home state. He has also served in Vermont and Massachusetts.

Brown says he is “especially grateful to be welcomed by loving and wise bishops in New England.”

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or not covering fertility services unless a person
is a non-biological parent to take parental leave
for LGBTQ employees—for example, by not allow-
ing companies that make things difficult for their
employees, including parental leave, child care
assistance, and more. For some people, corporate
benefits were the only outside recognition of their
relationships until marriage became a possibility
and efforts towards an inclusive culture. Out of
the more than 1000 companies rated in the 2019
CEI, 572 earned a perfect 100. And more than
200 major brands and businesses have joined
HRC's Business Coalition for the Equality Act, a
federal bill that would offer numerous protections
against discrimination.

Still, this doesn't reveal the whole picture—and
sometimes the picture isn't pretty. Journalist Judd
Legum, in his "Popular Information" newsletter
on June 17 (popular.info), highlighted "nine cor-
porations that received a perfect score from HRC
but donated $1 million or more in the last elec-
tion cycle to politicians that received a zero on the
HRC Congressional scorecard." In other words,
these companies are donating to politicians who
are working against LGBTQ equality. While the
CEI does deduct points for "a large-scale official
or public anti-LGBTQ blemish on their recent
records," those blemishes may be harder to spot if
the companies donated to politicians because of
some issue unrelated to LGBTQ rights.

My point here is not to debate the usefulness
of the CEI, however, but only to show that some
companies both support LGBTQ equality and
do things that work against it. I can't say whether
this is deliberate, or simply the result of different
parts of a big, sprawling corporation doing differ-
ent things. The answer probably varies from com-
pany to company. We are right, however, to look
critically at any company that targets LGBTQ
people as consumers, to see if it is simultaneously
supporting and hobbling us. If it is, then we need
to take action. We should point out when compa-
nies are simply "rainbow washing" products but
have no real commitment to LGBTQ rights, or if
they are backing politicians who are actively caus-
ing harm to LGBTQ employees and customers.
We have the power to create change—the profu-
sion of rainbow products this year proves we are
now seen as an economic market that matters.
Pride committees, LGBTQ advocacy organiza-
tions, and consumers can all have an impact here.

Let us not forget, though, that many compa-
nies have done genuine good for LGBTQ people
by providing benefits that helped us form our
families and live as our true selves, by offering
 nondiscrimination protections and relationship
recognition long before the government would,
and by supporting pro-LGBTQ politicians and
legislation. This is not to say that even some of
these can't do better—but let's thank them for
what they've done even as we ask them to do
more.

I will always be grateful to the companies that
helped my spouse and I start our family. I won't
give any company a pass if it works against LG-
BTQ equality, but I'm happy to buy rainbow-
colored widgets from those who have shown
themselves true partners for our cause.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher
of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media
Award-winning blog and resource directory for
LGBTQ parents.

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always been marked by a divide between reformers and revolutionaries. At a recent rally in DC, a woman from No Justice No Pride called for abolishing police. I touted the police department’s LGBT Liaison Unit.

The self-styled revolutionaries among us appear to have modeled themselves after the Cuban revolution rather than the American one. By noting that Stonewall was a riot, they appear to advocate perpetual revolution. In contrast, the police department’s LGBT Liaison Unit exists to liquefy; I felt it shift, and for the first time I understood what the term “revolution” really meant.

About a week later, I was in the office of a dermatology surgeon at the Yawkey Cancer Center at MGH. “The word cancer is like an insect,” the surgeon said. “We could be talking about an ant or a locust. This cancer is very superficial.”

For once, being superficial was a good thing, and I quickly scheduled a 30-minute procedure, which left me with a six-inch long narrow scar down the center of my chest. But it beats having cancer, which a second biopsy confirmed was nowhere to be found. I had gotten off easy—no chemo, radiation, or medication—only twice-a-year follow ups at the Clinic. For the first year or two, I obsessed about my moles, and the birthmark that circles the left side of my chest and upper left arm, which leaves me more susceptible to developing skin cancer. But over time I realized that worry would erode my quality of life, and skin cancer is treatable if caught early. Still, last Friday as I sat in one of the Clinic’s over-air-conditioned rooms, shivering in my hospital johnnie, it was hard not to think about the ‘what if’s’ and to remember my experience of a decade ago.

The appointment itself was routine. The skin check revealed nothing of concern, and I was told to come back in a year. That afternoon, I checked in with the urologist—a new doctor I can add to my list—because my PSA was a bit elevated at my last physical, and I didn’t want to ignore the possibility of having prostate cancer.

“I’d recommend a blood test in six months, and then another check-up in about a year. PSA naturally goes up as we get older. We’ll just watch it for now,” the doctor said.

Three doctor appointments, three specialists, three conditions to watch. There are more. Sometimes I feel like someone on the TSA’s “watch list,” a person of interest, except that my observers are not security personnel but a cadre of physicians, along with an alternative healer or two, watching my every move.

And yet, by week’s end, I felt a sense of relief, knowing that I do not have cancer, and that as a whole my body is still working. At times I feel like a specimen, a lab rat, as samples are taken, blood and tissue, and results are posted in my medical records, numbers that often confuse me. These figures are interpreted, explained to me, and though these tests are not ‘pass or fail’ but (usually) a continuum, I know where I want to fall on that spectrum.

Judah Leblang is a teacher, writer, and storyteller in Boston. www.judahleblang.com

Rosendall

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At the Queer Liberation March near the Stonewall Inn, some participants said the larger Pride parade had become too commercialized and heavily policed.

“What’s important to remember is that this is a protest against the monetization of the Pride parade, against the police brutality of our community, against the poor treatment of sections of our community, of black and brown folk, of immigrants,” said Jake Seller, a 24-year-old Indiana native who now lives in Brooklyn and worked as one of the march’s volunteers.

Protesters carried anti-Trump and queer liberation signs, chanting, “Whose streets? Our streets!”

“We march for the liberation of our community so they can live and celebrate their identity. So they can reclaim it. This will always remain a protest, not an advertisement,” Seller said.

Other attendees focused on the progress that’s been made within the LGBTQ community over the last few decades.

“We’ve come so far in the past 20 years,” said 55-year-old Gary Piper, who came from Kansas to celebrate Pride with his partner. “I remember friends who would be snatched off the streets in Texas for dressing in drag. They’d have to worry about being persecuted for their identity.”

“But now we’re so much more accepted. I’m not saying we don’t have ways to go, but let’s celebrate how far we’ve come,” he said.

Police presence was high at the march, with several officers posted at every corner. Metal barricades were erected along the entire parade route.

In Illinois, Gov. J.B. Pritzker chose the parade day to sign an executive order creating a task force to study the rights of transgender students. The task force will look at what schools are doing to promote LGBTQ rights to make sure students have “welcoming” and “inclusive” environments.

Chicago planned its own Pride parade, with Lori Lightfoot, the city’s first openly gay mayor, as one of seven grand marshals.

The larger New York Pride parade had 677 contingents, including community groups, major corporations and cast members from FX’s “Pose.”

Organizers expected at least 150,000 people to march, with hundreds of thousands more lining the streets to watch.

The Pride march concludes a month of Stonewall commemorations in New York that included rallies, parties, film showings and a human rights conference. The celebration coincides with WorldPride, an international LGBTQ event that started in Rome in 2000 and was held in New York this past week.

Other Pride events will take place Sunday around the U.S. and the world.

In San Francisco, a contingent of Google employees petitioned the Pride parade’s board of directors to revoke Google’s sponsorship over what they called harassment and hate speech directed at LGBTQ people on YouTube and other Google platforms.

San Francisco Pride declined to revoke the sponsorship or remove the company from the parade, but Pride officials said the Google critics could protest the company’s policies as part of the parade’s “resistance contingent.”

Find complete AP Stonewall anniversary coverage here: https://apnews.com/Stonewallat50
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In years to come, when I contend that nothing exciting ever happens in June, please remind me about Faye Dunaway’s appearance as Katharine Hepburn in Matthew Lombardo’s “Tea at Five” at Boston’s Huntington Theatre. To enumerate Miss Dunaway’s theatrical talents is beyond the confines of this column. Surely she has the goods — skills that were honed at Boston University, which utilizes the Huntington Theatre for its productions. Alas, the necessary ingredients did not come together for an unforgettable evening of great acting.

To be fair, opening night was after only a handful of previews, Faye is 78, and she hasn’t been on stage since... well, don’t even go there. On the positive side, she does get through the show — although one can hardly say that in an ad. What is curiously absent is anything even slightly reminiscent of the Great Kate. In her red wig, Dunaway physically evokes memories of a latter-day Mary Tyler Moore. Her character may have a broken ankle, but Faye’s Hepburn walks around with ease. Where is she going? To take sips out of strategically placed glasses of water. After all, seniors need to stay hydrated. There is not the slightest tremor — although the malady is referred to in the script. Hepburn’s inimitable tight Yankee diction is all but missing. As to the words, they don’t come to Faye easily — despite the aid of an earpiece (unless she is also guiding planes into Logan Airport). Dunaway’s acting style is more of a slow, intense burn rather than Kate’s natural clip. It’s a strange confluence that simply doesn’t gel. As performed by La Dunaway, Lombardo’s script seems less engaging here than ever before. I suppose it could all come together during the course of the remaining two weeks in Boston. But Broadway? I don’t think so. Frankly, I’d advise all fans to swarm to Boston immediately. At least that way you’ll be able to say you saw it.

Broadway is not for the faint of heart. Every year, the post-Tony Awards period sees several shut-out shows shutter. Alas, this year is no different. Within days of the awards, “The Prom”, “King Kong”, and “The Cher Show” posted closing notices. Here’s an idea — why not combine all three? I can just see it now. Kong descends from the Empire State Building and asks Cher to be his date for the prom. Of course, people protest — interspecies dating is still such a taboo subject. I smell a hit...or maybe that’s just Kong. While costs are prohibitive for Kong to hit the road, “The Cher Show” will embark on an extensive national tour. However, the big news is that “The Prom” will be adapted by Ryan Murphy for Netflix. And he’s bringing along a starry cast which includes James Corden, Ariana Grande, Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, and Andrew Rannells.

A few weeks ago, I told you that Jesse Tyler Ferguson will return to Broadway next season in a revival of “Take Me Out”. In addition to his appearance on the Great White Way, Jesse has also been named host of the “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” reboot for HGTV. He’s gonna have an awfully busy life next year. While we’re sharing good news, it’s just been announced that two of the latest people to be getting stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame will be Billy Porter and Andy Cohen! Congrats!

Many of you will not like this next story, so just hold your nose till I get it out. Judi Dench has once again stood up for people currently seen as pariahs in today’s society. “Are we going to negate 10 years at the Old Vic when Kevin Spacey was artistic director? and everything that he did — how wonderful he’s been in all those films! Are we just not going to see all those films that Harvey [Weinstein] produced? You cannot deny somebody a talent. You might as well never look at a Caravaggio painting, you might as well never have gone to see Noel Coward.”

This brings up the age-old controversy — can one separate the art from the artist? If nothing else, one must admire Dench’s loyalty...through thick and thin.

While I’m sharing unsavory stories, here’s one I find fascinating. I’ve never heard of Israel Folau, but apparently he was a rugby star from Down Under. I say “was” because he was fired from his team, the Wallabies. Why? He took to social media to post a sign that said, “Warning: Drunks, Homosexuals, Adulterers, Liars, Fornicators, Thieves, Atheists, Idolaters — Hell Awaits You. REPENT! Only Jesus Saves.” Personally, I would laugh it off and move on. But Rugby Australia was concerned — probably because the people he says are headed to hell will first buy rugby tickets! They terminated Folau’s contract. Israel feels that his speech is protected under religious freedom, so he’s taking them to court. He is seeking $10 million in damages and reinstatement of his contract. He started a GoFundMe campaign with a goal of $3 million — until GoFundMe closed the account, saying, “As a company, we are absolutely committed to the fight for equality for LGBT-TIQ+ people and fostering an environment of inclusivity. While we welcome GoFundMe’s engaging in diverse civil debates, we do not tolerate the promotion of discrimination or exclusion. Our platform exists to help people help others.”

Then the Australian Christian Lobby stepped in, and raised over $1 million for Israel’s defense. The group donated the first $100K. Within a short time, the campaign was raising roughly $1K every minute. Australian Rugby defends the fanning, claiming they asked Israel to remove the posts and to clarify that he did not speak for the entire organization. Apparently there was a similar episode in 2018, where Folau posted several homophobic videos. Back then, he was close to termination. So this time around was his third strike — or whatever you call it in rugby. Didya hear that the owner of a Clearwater, Florida Chick-fil-A was arrested for molesting a teen? Not only that — the owner was a woman! And she molested a teenage GIRL! There’s them family values I keep hearing about.

Here’s a headline I just had to click on: “Accused NJ Pastor Extracted ‘Evil Spirits’ from Young Men Through Oral Sex.” The St. Louis priest made young boys dress like the baby Jesus before molesting them! How beatifical. And so obvious. I can’t believe it took this long for someone to come up with a new take on the traditional Christmas pageant. Now THAT’S the greatest story ever told!

Willow Smith has come out as bisexual. So, who knows? Maybe these things are genetic. For our “Ask Billy” question, Gary in Dallas asks, “What’s this about Aaron Schock and the go-go boy?”

Our favorite disgraced Congressman was seen at Mexico City’s Boy Bar — a gay club which features strippers and a dark room (if you’re into that sort of thing). On Saturday, June 22nd, a patron whipped out his cell photo to take a video of his favorite stripper when who walks into the frame? Yes, La Schock. He, too, is apparently a fan of the flexible fella and shoved some money into his G-string. And, wait...what’s he doing? Eh, probably just looking for change. You can see for yourself on BillyMasters.com — the site that already has every inch of Schock in countless photos and videos.

When nothing Aaron does is particularly schocking, it’s definitely time to end another column. Since I believe these one-woman shows about icons are not a good fit for Faye, what roles do you think she could do credibly? Maybe something like “A Lion in Winter”, “The Gin Game”, “The Importance of Being Earnest” or “Sweet Bird of Youth”. Maybe even an older version of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” Something she can sink her teeth into.

For you, my little carniverous, take a bite out of www.BillyMasters.com — the site that never skimps on beef. If you have a question, send it to me at Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Willow goes back and forth. Until next time, remember, one man’s filth is another man’s bible.
For 50 years, Stonewall has been the symbolic place where Pride began, lives and thrives. Comcast NBCUniversal honors this and all the monumental achievements made by the LGBTQ community and salutes the brave individuals continuing the fight.