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US Capitol: public domain photo, via Wikimedia Commons. Transgender flag: photo via Adobe Firefly.

PART 2: THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

By Sue O'Connell and Bay Windows Staff

While Massachusetts advanced protections for LGBTQ+ residents in 2025, the national picture moved in a sharply different direction. Federal executive actions, court rulings, and congressional battles reshaped LGBTQ+ rights across the country, particularly for transgender Americans.

across federal agencies. The administration directed agencies to recognize sex as binary—male or female—and to apply that definition across federal policy.

One immediate impact was on passports. The State Department moved to end issuance of "X" gender markers and restrict gender marker changes under the government's definition, reversing policies that had allowed transgender and nonbinary Americans to obtain identity documents reflecting their lived gender. LGBTQ+ advocates warned that these changes would increase the risk of harassment, travel complications,

Executive Actions Reshape Federal Policy

In January 2025, the federal government issued a series of executive actions that fundamentally altered how sex and gender are recognized

see **YEAR IN REVIEW**, page 5



Protecting Your LGBTQ+ Family in 2026

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

A new year offers new motivation to set goals and make changes. For LGBTQ+ families, one of the most important goals should be to ensure our parent-child relationships are as legally secure as possible.

married and on their children's birth certificates. Birth certificates are key documents that reflect parentage, but do not by themselves legally establish it. Additionally, while for heterosexual couples, all states presume any children born during a marriage are children of both spouses, and this presumption should extend to same-sex couples af-

see **MOMBIAN**, page 7

Breadon Makes History as Boston's First Openly LGBTQ+ City Council President

And the chamber's first immigrant president

By Sue O'Connell
Editor

In a stunning upset Monday, District 9 Councilor Liz Breadon secured the Boston City Council presidency with a 7-6 vote, becoming the first openly LGBTQ+ person to hold the position.

compromise candidate. The physical therapist, who immigrated from Northern Ireland in 1995 and lives in Brighton with her wife, defeated District 4 Councilor Brian Worrell in the closely contested race.

"I didn't know I'd be standing here this time yesterday, but that said, I'm ready to lead," Breadon told her colleagues during Monday's contentious meeting.

The path to victory came after Councilor Gigi Coletta Zapata with-

Breadon, who in 2020 became the first openly gay woman to serve on the council, emerged as a last-minute

see **BREADON**, page 3



District 9 Councilor Liz Breadon. Photo via boston.gov.

Massachusetts Removes LGBTQ+ Specific Foster Care Rule

By Bay Windows Staff

Massachusetts has removed foster-care licensing language that explicitly required foster parents to affirm a child's sexual orientation and gender identity, replacing it with a broader expectation that families support each child's "individual identity and needs."

Families (DCF) approved the change on December 17. The revision was first reported by The Advocate and confirmed through agency filings reviewed by GBH News.

Why the policy changed

The shift follows a federal lawsuit

see **FOSTER**, page 4

Federal Judge Allows Lexington Parent to Opt Child Out of LGBTQ-Inclusive Lessons

By Bay Windows Staff

A federal judge has temporarily blocked Lexington Public Schools from exposing a kindergarten student to classroom materials that depict LGBTQ+ people or families, granting a

parent's request to opt the child out on religious-freedom grounds.

U.S. District Judge F. Dennis Saylor IV issued the preliminary injunction this week, directing the district to honor the parent's objections at Joseph Estabrook Elementary School, accord-

ing to reporting by the Boston Globe and court filings.

The decision is one of the first to rely on the Supreme Court's recent ruling in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, which expand-

see **LEXINGTON**, page 3

Photo by Troy Hallahan

- Gayle King quotes a Matteo Lane joke to his face. While many people were outraged by Gayle's use of the word "faggotry", Matteo wasn't one of them. He said, "I love you, Gayle King."

more in Billy Masters on page 6!



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Federal employees file complaint against Trump administration's ban on gender-affirming care

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is facing a new legal complaint from a group of government employees who are affected by a new policy going into effect Thursday that eliminates coverage for gender-affirming care in federal health insurance programs.

The complaint, filed Thursday on the employees' behalf by the Human Rights Campaign, is in response to an August announcement from the Office of Personnel Management that it would no longer cover "chemical and surgical modification of an individual's sex traits through medical interventions" in health insurance programs for federal employees and U.S. Postal Service workers.

The complaint argues that denying coverage of gender-affirming care is sex-based discrimination and asks the personnel office to rescind the policy.

"This policy is not about cost or care — it is about driving transgender people and people with transgender spouses, children, and dependents out of the federal workforce," Human Rights Campaign Foundation President Kelley Robinson said in a statement announcing the move.

The complaint, filed with the Equal Employ-

ment Opportunity Commission, includes testimonies from four current federal workers at the State Department, Health and Human Services and the Postal Service who would be directly affected by the elimination of coverage.

For instance, the Postal Service employee has a daughter whose doctors recommended that she get puberty blockers and potentially hormone replacement therapy for her diagnosed gender dysphoria, which would not be covered under the new OPM policy, according to the complaint.

The complaint notes that the workers are making the claim on behalf of themselves and a "class of similarly situated federal employees."

The Trump administration has taken other steps to restrict care for transgender Americans, particularly minors. In December, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released proposals that would block gender-affirming care to minors, including a policy that would bar Medicare and Medicaid dollars to hospitals that provide such care to children.

Senior Trump officials, such as Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., call gender-affirming care "malpractice" for minors. But such restrictions go against recommendations from major medical groups such as the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

continue to lead by protecting immigrants, by advancing racial and economic justice, by investing in public education, by treating housing as a human right, and by standing firmly by our LGBTQ+ equality, reproductive freedom, and the dignity of all people."

"What I have to offer this body as the next elected city council president, if I am so lucky to be elected, is to be fair," she said.

Breadon succeeds Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune and has served on the council since 2020, now beginning her fourth term.

to such materials, according to the filings.

Court documents describe the plaintiff as a practicing Christian who believes that gender is God-given and that sexuality belongs within heterosexual marriage. The parent argued that allowing the child to participate in diversity and inclusion instruction taught from a secular perspective would violate those beliefs, the Globe reported.

Saylor acknowledged that creating notice and opt-out procedures could burden the district, but concluded that those burdens do not outweigh the parent's constitutional claim — especially where the district conceded some opt-outs would already be required.

The injunction will remain in effect until further court action or a final ruling after trial.

The case could shape how Massachusetts schools navigate LGBTQ-inclusive curricula alongside expanding parental rights grounded in religious objections.

LGBTQ-Inclusive Lessons "is the official title of the curriculum

Breadon

Continued from page 1

drew from the race Sunday evening, having previously claimed she had secured the votes. Councilors Enrique Pepén and Sharon Durkan made a late-night visit to Breadon's Brighton home to ask her to "consider being a compromise candidate."

In her floor speech, Breadon said, "In this context, cities matter more than ever, Boston must

Lexington

Continued from page 1

ed parents' ability to seek opt-outs where they claim instruction conflicts with sincerely held religious beliefs, the Globe reported.

Saylor wrote that the parent is likely to show that the lessons "burdened his constitutional right to freely exercise his religion" by undermining beliefs he seeks to teach at home. The court also found the parent would face "irreparable harm" without an injunction.

The injunction bars the district from providing the child materials that "depict or describe LGBTQ+ characters, relationships, or activities, or LGBTQ+ political or social advocacy" during the current school year.

Books cited in court papers include "Families, Families, Families!" and "All Are Welcome," which portray LGBTQ+ families. The order also applies to lesson plans, videos, and other instructional content, and requires the school to make "reasonable efforts" to avoid exposing the student

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The Mamdani magic

The face of a new political generation ruins the GOP playbook

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

Zohran Mamdani is a quintessential New Yorker. His outdoor swearing-in ceremony on a frigid New Year's Day was a joyous celebration of the diversity of America's largest city. It was also an object lesson in the folly of underestimating a political opponent.

The trolls on social media were as unwilling to let go of their failed demonization of him as the New York Post, which made a big deal of the fact that the charismatic young mayor took his oath of office on the holy book of his faith, just because it isn't theirs. Israel chimed in with a predictable insult.

In comments below other people's Facebook posts, haters predicted doom for the city. Regarding Sen. Bernie Sanders administering the oath of office, one troll wrote, "He must have forgotten 9/11."

There they go with the group blame. Never mind that Mamdani was 10 years old on 9/11. The radical right cannot resist treating the world's 2 billion Muslims as if they are all terrorists. Never mind that the greatest threat of domestic terrorism in the U.S. is from white supremacists like Dylann Roof, who sought to ignite a race war when he murdered pastor and state senator Clementa Pinckney of Mother Emanuel AME Church and eight members of his congregation at a Bible study in Charleston in 2015.

"Othering" people may work for supremacists eager to start a civil war, but it may look different to people trying to make ends meet who notice that workers they depend on are starting to disappear.

If it's any comfort to my Muslim friends, the

Trump administration is taking an expansive view of terrorism. At this point, essentially anyone who disagrees with Glorious Leader is deemed a terrorist. The fact that this trivializes a grave matter in service of a partisan power grab, and that targeted groups like transgender people face increased danger of hate crimes, doesn't trouble the administration.

How remarkable, then, that a smart, handsome democratic socialist ruined Republican midterm plans by charming Trump during a post-election visit to the Oval Office. One flash of Mamdani's smile, coupled with his impressive electoral victory, and Trump displayed a crush he normally reserves for dictators.

So as we look ahead to the midterms, what can the rest of us do who lack the new mayor's gifts? One thing we can try is to emulate his message discipline. He had an appealing message and never let the media get him off track. His platform page had the following heading: "New York is too expensive. Zohran will lower costs and make life easier."

Contrary to opponents' claims, his economic appeal did not make the democratic socialist a communist. It is true that New York City is more liberal than many other parts of the country. But at a time when voters are souring on Trump, trying to scare them about a man who understands their concerns better than their president is looking less and less like a brilliant move.

The word "ad hoc" has been used to describe Trump's habit of making things up as he goes. But this can be disastrous when applied to fields like science, engineering and public health

that require a more careful methodology. Another problem with Trump's ad hoc approach is that industry thrives on stability, which is undermined when he changes his mind on tariffs from day to day according to his latest whim.

Speaking of Trumpian recklessness, I bet Mamdani is happy he's mayor of New York and not Caracas.

We'll have to wait for a violent regime change and its consequences for another discussion; but Mamdani's priorities are looking a good deal less radical in contrast to President Peace Prize and his ongoing search for new places to bomb.

Trump's base, however belatedly, is beginning to splinter. On the day after Christmas, Reason magazine ran a headline, "Justice Department Says Filming Immigration Raids Is 'Domestic Terrorism.'" Reason is a Libertarian magazine, not an organ of the far left. When ICE Police wrestle a grandmother to the ground for pointing her phone camera at them, it starts dawning on more people that this was not exactly what they had in mind.

Mamdani's focus on what we have in common is the antidote to Trump's politics of division. His emphasis on checkbook issues resonates better than Trump's insistence that their affordability concerns are a Democratic hoax.

Gaslighting, it turns out, has its limits. How unfortunate for the gaslighters that their scary Muslim turned out to be the nice boy next door.

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

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Foster

Continued from page 1

filed by the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) on behalf of two Christian couples who said the rules violated their religious beliefs. (The Southern Poverty Law Center designates ADF a hate group; ADF rejects the label.)

In September, the federal Administration for Children and Families warned Massachusetts that parts of the earlier rule were "deeply troubling" and likely raised First Amendment concerns, according to correspondence obtained by GBH. DCF said in its emergency filing that the update was intended

"to preempt any potential escalation" from federal regulators.

DCF Commissioner Staverne Miller said the agency remains focused on safety while ensuring applicants are not discouraged "because of their religious beliefs."

What changed — and what remains

Adopted in 2022, the prior rule required homes "safe, affirming, and free from discrimination" and spelled out expectations such as using chosen names and pronouns and allowing youth to live in accordance with their gender identity, according to court records.

Those specifics are now gone. However, DCF still

controls placements and can match youth with families who are affirming.

Shaplaie Brooks of the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth told GBH that the state "maintains oversight" to place children where they are safe. GLAD attorney Polly Crozier added that the state remains responsible for the well-being of "every child in its care — including LGBTQ children."

Nationally, about one-third of foster youth identify as LGBTQ+ and 5 percent as transgender, according to a 2019 study by Children's Rights. Massachusetts currently has roughly 6,500 children in care and about 5,100 licensed foster homes.

ADF has paused its request for an injunction but is continuing the lawsuit.

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Year in Review

Continued from page 1

and discrimination.

At the same time, the administration ordered a sweeping rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs across the federal government. Agencies were instructed to dismantle DEI offices, end equity action plans, and restructure or eliminate DEI-related staffing. While supporters framed the changes as restoring neutrality, civil rights groups described them as a direct attack on decades of progress addressing systemic discrimination.

The Supreme Court and Transgender Youth

The most consequential legal development of the year came in June, when the Supreme Court decided *U.S. v. Skrmetti*, a challenge to Tennessee's ban on gender-affirming medical care for minors. In a 6-3 ruling, the Court upheld the law, rejecting arguments that it violated the Equal Protection Clause.

The decision allowed many existing state bans on gender-affirming care for minors to remain in effect, dramatically reshaping access to care across much of the country. While some state laws continued to be challenged on other legal grounds, advocates described the ruling as a devastating setback for transgender youth and their families.

Later in the year, in November, the Supreme Court granted the federal government a stay allowing its new passport policy to take effect while litigation continues. The ruling was procedural rather than a final decision on the merits, but it immediately enabled enforcement of the policy nationwide as legal challenges moved forward.

Congress: History and Hostility

In January, history was made when Sarah McBride of Delaware was sworn in as the first openly transgender member of Congress. Her election marked a milestone for LGBTQ+ representation at the federal level.

At the same time, McBride's arrival triggered one of the most visible culture-war battles of the year. In the weeks surrounding the start of the new Congress, House leadership adopted bathroom restrictions affecting certain Capitol facilities—moves widely viewed as targeting transgender members, staff, and visitors. The episode underscored the increasingly hostile environment facing transgender people in national politics.

Later in the year, the House passed the "Protect Children's Innocence Act", legislation imposing severe criminal penalties related to gender-affirming medical care for minors and creating potential criminal exposure for physicians and others involved in that care. While the bill faced an uncertain future beyond the House, its passage highlighted how aggressively federal lawmakers were pursuing restrictions on transgender healthcare.

Federal Health Policy Shifts

In December, the Department of Health and Human Services announced proposed rulemaking that would sharply restrict access to gender-affirming care for minors through Medicare and Medicaid participation requirements. Advocates warned that the proposal could effectively override state-level protections by conditioning federal funding on compliance with new restrictions, with ripple effects across hospitals and healthcare systems nationwide.

State-Level Rollbacks Accelerate

Beyond Washington, state legislatures across the country continued to pass laws restricting LGBTQ+ rights. Many of these measures targeted transgender people directly—limiting access to healthcare, restricting participation in school activities, narrowing bathroom access, or rolling back protections related to diversity and inclusion.

By the end of 2025, advocates described a deeply uneven national landscape, where LGBTQ+ rights depended heavily on geography. In some states, protections expanded; in others, basic access to healthcare, identity documents, or public accommodations was increasingly constrained.

Corporate and Cultural Fallout

The political climate also reshaped corporate America. Throughout 2025, many major companies reduced, rebranded, or restructured diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives amid political pressure and legal uncertainty. While some companies framed these changes as compliance-driven, critics argued they reflected a broader retreat from public commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion.

The impact extended beyond boardrooms. LGBTQ+ media outlets and community organizations reported increasing financial strain as corporate advertising tied to DEI initiatives declined, threatening the sustainability of local and national LGBTQ+ journalism.

A Year of Stark Contrasts

Taken together, 2025 revealed a nation moving in two directions at once. At the federal level and in many states, LGBTQ+ rights—particularly those affecting transgender people—faced intensified legal and political attacks. At the same time, states like Massachusetts demonstrated that robust protections and inclusive policies remain possible at the local level.

For LGBTQ+ communities, the year underscored a central reality: progress is no longer uniform or guaranteed. Rights increasingly depend on where people live, which courts hear their cases, and which lawmakers hold power.

As the country moves into 2026, the divide between state-level protections and federal policy is likely to remain one of the defining dynamics shaping LGBTQ+ life in America.

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billy masters

Another year, another Year End Review. And not just any Year End Review. This is our 30th. Which makes me...well, a little tired. Days after I celebrated this professional milestone, Big Daddy Masters said farewell. Well, he didn't actually say farewell. I believe his last words to me were, "I'm not sure who you are, but you look like a young **Jack Palace**." Well, at least he said "young". Rest in peace, Daddy.

When I started this little column in 1995, the **Menendez boys** were young men, and the murder of their parents had happened six years earlier. Here we are, looking at them through the lens of 2025 sensibilities. Certain evidence has come forward backing up their claims of sexual abuse (just don't back up). They qualified for parole, but were denied. They can try again in three years. I'll still be here.

If we've learned nothing, we've learned that scooters are a death trap. Despite my many tumbles, I never tumbled as hard as **Danny Pintauro**—but enough about our sex lives! Last Thanksgiving, he was riding a scooter in the bike lane when it was suddenly blocked by a cone pylon. He went to swerve, but a van was there. Danny was literally stuck between a van and a hard pylon. He chose the pylon and was able to report, "The pylons hurt!" His injuries were mostly internal—a tear in his stomach lining, an infection in his bloodstream, and an ICU stay while intubated. His astronomical medical bills required the assistance of a GoFundMe campaign.

Meanwhile in England, **Dame Joan Collins** was feeling frisky since finishing her flick about the **Duchess of Windsor** (coming to a streaming channel near you, I'm sure). "I'm seeing an invasion of a different sort—the proliferation of rental bikes and powered scooters that litter our pavements. I've recently been almost run over twice by 'Lime bikes'. I've also tripped over a bunch of discarded bicycles on the streets of Belgravia." I believe **Joanna Lumley** starred in "The Streets of Belgravia". Anyway, Joan tried to get to the other side of the street, but there were barricades on the crosswalk. Take my word for it—there is nothing better than watching a video of Dame Joan Collins trying to cross a street. See it for yourself on BillyMasters.com.

Heidi Klum announced that she negotiated a reunion deal and was returning to "Project Runway". When **Tim Gunn** called to ask for the details, he got the bad news. "And as Heidi would say, you're either in or you're out. And I'm out. So I wasn't asked to join."

The long-awaited "Mid-Century Modern" debuted on Hulu with a body count. Close to wrapping production, **Linda Lavin** passed away. Well, that put a crimp in the whole endeavor. That, and the fact that someone cast **Matt Bomer** on a sitcom known as the gay "Golden Girls" and only had him take off his shirt twice! Stop the insanity!

Queer Eye v2 has come to an end. **Bobby Berk** leaving the penultimate year was kinda like when Jane left **The Go-Go's** (look it up). But he's having the last laugh. Berk just announced a deal with HGTV to host "Junk or Jackpot", executive produced by **John Cena**.

Not a great year for **Lil Nas X**. First, he was struck with Bell's palsy. That led to canceling several performances, including the Out-loud Music Festival in Los Angeles. He seemed to be on the mend until August 21st. At 4AM, he was seen walking (well, strutting) down Ventura Boulevard in Studio City clad in only white Speedo-style undies and white cowboy boots. At 6AM, Nas "charged at officers and was taken into custody". He was brought to a hospital to be checked out and then was formally charged with "resisting or obstructing an officer".

Billy Porter found himself in a precarious health crisis—the details of which have been disclosed to me after I swore an oath of secrecy. All I can tell you is that he's doing better. Rumor has it that a revival of "La Cage" with him as Albin is in the air. Interestingly, the only one not excited about the endeavor is Billy himself.

Didya know **David Geffen** got married? We learned that news when he filed for divorce! I wasn't surprised that his estranged spouse was a go-go boy, a former gay porn star, and a hooker. What DID surprise me was that they didn't have a prenup! They apparently met via a website and David paid \$10K for the first "date"—the way all great love affairs have commenced since the beginning of time. Geffen later paid for dental and skin treatments along with

some plastic surgery. Geffen also allegedly supplied "cocaine, molly and cannabis". Sign me up!

The coupling of **Lukas Gage** and **Chris Appleton** was even briefer. Appleton publicly took the high road. "You can love someone and there not be a forever happy ending. And just because it's not forever doesn't mean it didn't mean something." Lukas called getting married after dating for two months, "unhinged". "I don't know literally what went through my head, but we live and we learn." He said an NDA stopped him from saying more, but didn't stop him from writing a memoir—a questionable choice for any 30-year-old. "I Wrote This For Attention" was the most honest title of all time. He claims an ex gave him two STDs. Who is the ex? I dunno—I didn't read the book.

Back in June of 2024, gay porn superstar **Austin Wolf's** home was raided by the FBI. He awaited an arraignment for close to a year. I don't care who you are—sometimes you can have too much sex! After lengthy negotiations, he pled guilty to interstate commerce, enticing a minor to engage in activity in the facility of another individual, and oral sex with an individual younger than 17 years old.

After two years, gay porn legend **Brent Corrigan** resurfaced. Turns out he had a massive seizure back in 2023 and was on life support—at one point the hospital said "they weren't able to register any brain activity". Recuperation required learning how to walk, talk, eat, etc. We're told he's doing better every day.

Someone else wasn't so lucky. Legendary porn actor **Colton Ford** died during a hiking accident. Please, don't let Colton die in vain. Learn from this tragedy. Physical activity will KILL you!

One of the juiciest stories of 2025 was **Tyler Perry** being sued for \$260 million. The complaint was filed by a hot actor, **Derek Dixon**... and he had receipts! Derek made Perry's acquaintance while cater waiting. Like virtually all cater waiters, he had a script to pitch. Perry was intrigued enough to cast Dixon in "Ruthless" and "The Oval". He even bought Derek a new Jeep! All was fine until Dixon spent a night in one of Perry's guest rooms and woke up to find himself the small spoon to Perry's significantly larger ladle! Derek enumerated all of the incidents in a sit-down with ABC News Live anchor Linsey Davis. Not one to take these matters lying down, Perry called the lawsuit "profoundly disappointing, cynical, and—most of all—false". His lawyers say that Perry "looks forward to refuting each and every false accusation in court."

Didya know **Darren Criss** is Asian? No? Me neither. Apparently 50% of his ethnicity is a mix of Chinese, Filipino and Spanish. I suppose that makes him Asian-ish, which may be how he got cast as a Korean robot in Broadway's "Maybe Happy Ending"—and if you find me a robot who can provide a happy ending, I don't care what ethnicity it is! Criss won the Tony, talked about "acceptance", and then left the show. He was replaced by **Andrew Barth Feldman**, who like Criss is not Korean (nor is he a robot, for that matter). He is, however, the boyfriend of the leading lady—which may have given him the edge. People got their robotic panties in a tizzy—how could a non-Korean play the role? The role previously played by a non-Korean. Suddenly Criss wasn't leaving the show—he was just going on vacation. If the Asians want to get upset about something, perhaps start by going after the non-Korean Criss. Oh, yeah, he's a name and got the show produced in the first place!

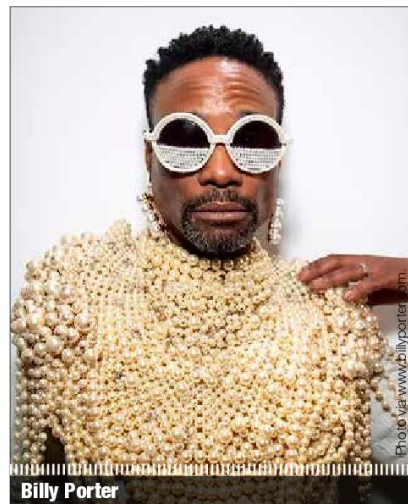
The "Ask Billy" question that stuck out was when I was asked about **Anthony Boyle's** nude scene in "House of Guinness". Was that really his semi-fluffed phallus? Anthony answered the question for me. "It's not a prosthetic. It's my own body". Oh, yes, the body is also impressive. Every inch of it can be found on BillyMasters.com.

When we're ending with a bang, it's time to wrap up another year of columns. I don't know about you, but I'm eagerly awaiting 2026—it couldn't be any worse (famous last words). But whatever the news, you'll find a unique perspective on www.BillyMasters.com—the site that can answer the question, "Why did Dame Joan cross the street?" If you've got a question of your own, send a note to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Tyler Perry's next accuser comes forward (which has already happened—but we'll tackle that next week). Until next year, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.



Tim Gunn

Photo by Christa Hickey, via Wikimedia Commons



Billy Porter

Photo via www.billyporter.com



Anthony Boyle

Photo by Ben Blackall/Netflix

Mombian

Continued from page 1

ter the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in Obergefell (2015) and Pavan (2017), a few state trial courts have ruled otherwise.

That means that LGBTQ+ families need to take additional steps to secure the parentage of non-gestational parents. Polly Crozier, director of family advocacy at GLAD Law, said in an interview that LGBTQ+ parents "should be doing anything they can to take some action" to protect themselves and their children. She advises that they do as much as their resources allow to legally secure their parentage, which could mean going through an adoption process, getting a parentage judgment in court, or signing a voluntary acknowledgement of parentage (VAP).

VAPs are simple, free forms that can be completed at the hospital immediately after a birth (or later) to establish legal parentage. All states have long been required by federal law to have such forms for different-sex couples, but they are now also available to LGBTQ+ couples of any genders in 15 states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, though details vary by state. A VAP is the equivalent of a court decree of parentage and should therefore be recognized in all states, although VAPs have not yet been tested in court for LGBTQ+ parents. (Visit GLAD Law's "FAQ: Voluntary Acknowledgment of Parentage," at gladlaw.org, for more information.)

And parents whose name, gender, or parental status is incorrectly listed on their children's birth certificates (say, a transgender parent who transitioned after a child's birth) may wish to get an adoption or court order to "address any room for confusion," per "Protecting Your LGBTQ+ Marriage and Family," a guide from GLAD Law, the National Center for LGBTQ Rights, COLAGE, the Movement Advancement Project, and Family Equality.

Additionally, Crozier recommends that all LGBTQ+ parents should do estate plans. "You should have a simple will with guardianship provisions, a healthcare proxy, and a power of attorney," she explained. "I think it is a really important time to get your ducks in order and make sure that you have clearly stated your intent and your wishes regarding your children and your families, because those documents should work no matter what, and every state has estate planning documents."

Protecting our families also means doing our part to respect and protect other LGBTQ+ families. Crozier urged

that if a parents' relationship fractures, "Don't use this political time to get the upper hand in a personal situation. Having been a divorce lawyer, I know that adult relationships break down," she said. "I would encourage everybody to just commit to your children, take a breath, and not use inequalities in the law or the current environment against your former partner."

Lawsuits in several states last year, including Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, unfortunately revolved around just that type of situation: an LGBTQ+ parent trying to claim a former spouse or partner wasn't a legal parent. The Georgia and Pennsylvania courts both ruled in favor of the non-gestational mother's parental rights, but the Ohio case is still pending. Similar cases have been happening for decades, however, and when the rulings have gone against the non-gestational parent, they have sometimes had wider negative implications for other LGBTQ+ parents and their children.

As Crozier said, "You can argue all you want that your partner shouldn't have custody or parenting time, but don't argue that they're not a parent. That is such a different thing."

We cannot know exactly what 2026 will bring, but it seems reasonable to predict that it will continue to be a challenging time for LGBTQ+ families. Resources exist to help, however. For answers to frequently asked questions about LGBTQ+ parentage and the options that may be available to you, see "LGBTQ Paths to Parentage Security," a brief guide from GLAD Law and myself, at lgbtqparentage.org.

If you have further questions or need an attorney, GLAD Law and several other major LGBTQ+ legal organizations have helplines that offer free and confidential referrals, assistance, and information: GLAD Law Answers Legal InfoLine (gladlaw.org), Lambda Legal's Help Desk (lambdalegal.org), the National Center for LGBTQ Rights Legal Information Hotline (nclrights.org), and the Transgender Law Center (transgenderlawcenter.org). Additionally, the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association (lgbtqbar.org) maintains a Family Law Attorney Directory of experienced LGBTQ+ family law practitioners. Crozier noted that many lawyers are willing to help at a reasonable cost.

Yes, having to take extra steps to protect one's family can be burdensome and feel unfair. For the moment, though, it is necessary. Make it your 2026 resolution to do so, if you haven't already—but also know that you are a family in your hearts no matter what.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a two-time GLAAD Media Award-winning blog for LGBTQ+ parents, plus a searchable database of 1,900+ LGBTQ+ family books.



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