

# The Boston Globe

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## Parents confront bigotry in the classroom

As Melrose cases rise, some turn to federal government for action

By James Vaznis  
GLOBE STAFF

When a first-grade seat opened up for Nita Holder's son seven years ago in Melrose through Metco, a public school integration program, it seemed like an opportunity too good to pass up, a chance for a better education for her son than the one she had in Boston, where she shared tattered, outdated textbooks with classmates.

But instead of her son coming home enthusiastic about what he was learning,

Holder found herself consoling him after school as he questioned who he was as a Black youth. "Why do they treat me this way?" he'd ask.

The pattern has continued in recent years, she said. In April 2023, she said, a white classmate called her son the N-word in the cafeteria at Melrose Veterans Memorial Middle School; another white student directed the racial slur at him last September outside the library before he and another student attacked her son; and in January, a white student lobbed the same slur at him in a group chat before attacking him two days later. Holder said administrators and staff didn't take their concerns about racism seriously.

MELROSE, Page A10



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

At a City Hall rally last month, two Melrose students described racial slurs they have endured.

## Far right projected to win big in France

In setback for Macron, National Rally party has strong showing in voting

By Roger Cohen  
NEW YORK TIMES

PARIS — The National Rally party on Sunday won a crushing victory in the first round of voting for the French National Assembly, according to early projections, bringing its long-taboo brand of nationalist and anti-immigrant politics to the threshold of power for the first time.

Pollster projections, which are normally reliable and are based on preliminary results, suggested that the party would take about 34 percent of the vote, far ahead of President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Renaissance party and its allies, which took about 22 percent to end in third place.

A coalition of left-wing parties, called the New Popular Front and ranging from the moderate socialists to the far-left France Unbowed, won about 29 percent of the vote boosted by strong support among young people, according to the projections.

Turnout was high, at about 67 percent, compared with 47.5 percent in the first round of the last parliamentary election in 2022, reflecting the importance accorded by voters to the snap election. To many, it seemed that no less than the future of France was on the line with a far-right party long considered unelectable to high office because of its extreme views surging.

FRANCE, Page A5

'People have started to get married in their home states and their hometowns.'  
It's a wonderful reason to lose wedding business.'

REV. KATE WILKINSON, a minister at an oceanside chapel in Provincetown



KAYLA BARTKOWSKI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

The Rev. Kate Wilkinson of the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Provincetown has officiated at 100 LGBTQ+ weddings.

## Knots still tied, but not as often

Since 2015 high court ruling, gay weddings in Provincetown have dipped



EWERTON DECASTRO

Lauren Christie-Bennett (left) and Kaylin Christie-Bennett posed for a wedding photo in Provincetown.

By Esha Walia  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Summertime used to be prime wedding season for Kate Wilkinson, a minister at an oceanside chapel in Provincetown.

When Massachusetts made history in 2004 as the first US state to legalize gay marriage, Provincetown became one of the most sought-after destinations in America, and the world, for LGBTQ+ couples to wed. And Wilkinson's Unitarian Universalist Meeting House was a popular venue. She'd sometimes officiate three weddings a weekend, and up to 20 a year, mostly crammed into the summer. She had to hire four wedding chaplains.

That all changed in 2015, when the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. That year, the number of LGBTQ+ weddings Wilkinson officiated dropped to nine. Ever since, she's done about five a year.

Most wedding vendors would bemoan such a large drop in customers. But in Wilkinson's eyes, it's a positive turn of events.

"People have started to get married in their home states and

PROVINCETOWN, Page A10

NUMBER OF GAY  
WEDDINGS IN  
PROVINCETOWN

2013

652



2019

104

## Question of continuity or renewal at BC

Search for a new president underscores divergent views at the university

By Mike Damiano  
GLOBE STAFF

There were two very different types of reactions to the news, last month, that Boston College's long-time president plans to retire.

"You can't deny his success," the Rev. Michael Garanzini, president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities said after the school announced that the Rev. William Leahy would step down in 2026 after a 30-year run.

"FINALLY!!!" an LGBTQ+ advocacy group called BC Equality posted on social media.

Under Leahy's leadership, Boston College has become richer, bigger, more selective, and more academically prestigious. At the same time, however, Leahy has been criticized for slow-walking efforts to make the school more welcoming to LGBTQ+ students. After publicly opposing same-sex marriage 20 years ago, he has never publicly stated a different position. That split legacy has left BC professors and students with divergent views on how the school should select its next leader, a process

BOSTON COLLEGE, Page A7

## Battling climate change, exhibit by cultural exhibit

By Ivy Scott  
GLOBE STAFF

Two Bactrian camels lumbered out of the June sun into the shade at the edge of their enclosure, to the delight of dozens of squealing school children. Above them, a canopy of tree branches spread wide, offering reprieve from the heat that baked the Franklin Park Zoo's paved walkways.

The shady grove is now flourishing, in part because of a rain garden nestled next to the camel exhibit. Only months earlier, a strong storm would have sent water rushing down the walkways, away from the trees and into the city's sewer system. But the new gardens, planted strategically alongside the camels and by other tree clusters around the zoo, allow trees to suck up the rain before it drains away, minimizing the resources required to care for them during a dry spell.

The gardens are one small but visible step Zoo New England, which operates the Franklin Park Zoo, is taking to reduce its energy and water use in the face of a city ordinance urging Boston's largest

CLIMATE, Page A7



LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Letise LaFeir, chief of conservation at the New England Aquarium, stresses the importance of what she called "early wins: all these really small things we can do to start to reduce our footprint."



Bursting in air . . .

**Monday:** Thundershowers.  
High 72-77, low 62-67.

**Tuesday:** Clearing, pleasant.  
High 76-81, low 64-69.

Sunrise: 5:11. Sunset: 8:25.  
Weather and comics, **D4-5**  
Obituaries, **C9**.

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There was little in the extensive preparations for President Biden's debate that hinted at his difficulties, sources said. **A2.**

**Federal protections no longer cover most of the water** draining into American rivers, a Yale and UMass study found. **B1.**

**The ability of AI to turn a request into a crafted-on-the-spot song is a stunning achievement. It's also, writes Hiawatha Bray, a legal nightmare** for artists and an area startup. **D1.**

**The rapid, unprecedented growth of Beryl into a potentially devastating hurricane** stunned meteorologists. **A4.**

**The Red Sox rode Josh Winckowski's five shutout innings** to a victory over the Padres. **C1.**