

GLBT Legal Protections

With the recent addition of New York, there are now 13 states with civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. They are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Nevada, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

Many of these states also have legislation which protects against discrimination in areas such as housing, education, public accommodation, and credit.

Boston has recently become the 50th jurisdiction in the country to include gender identity and expression in its protections.

Why Straight People Should ‘Come Out’ as Friends/Family

[Adapted From NYC PFLAG]

- 1) It educates the straight people we meet who are not gay-friendly. Many of them are more uncomfortable and frightened than hostile or intolerant. Our being open allows them to ask questions, learn, and reduce their fear and discomfort.
- 2) It supports straight people who have gay family members. Just as we don't always know who around us is gay, we're equally unlikely to know who has LGBT family members and friends. Openness helps those who are struggling quietly, whether we know it or not.
- 3) It openly supports our gay friends and family members in a pervasively homophobic culture and legal system.
- 4) It lets homophobic and hostile people know that straight people can be unashamed and proud of their gay loved ones, and that homophobia offends many people, both straight and gay.
- 5) It supports gays who are still closeted or quiet about their orientation. Our open support encourages them.
- 6) It is heartening to stand up for what you know is right. It builds your own strength and courage, especially when you do it in unfriendly situations.

Gayla Ball Feb. 8

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The third annual Gayla Ball will be held 8 pm to midnight, Feb. 8, at the Sheraton Hyannis Resort, West End Circle, Hyannis. This glamorous and fun event is sponsored by the Welcoming Congregation Committee of First Parish Brewster.

Dance music will be provided by The Dreamers, featuring Linda Delorey. There will be light refreshments and a cash bar. Snow date is Friday, February 14th. Tickets are \$50 per person (more if you can, less if you can't).

Proceeds go to the GALE Fund of the Community Foundation of Cape Cod, which funds projects in support of Cape Cod's GLBT community, and to First Parish Brewster, in honor of the church's historic commitment and ongoing welcome to the GLBT community of the Cape.

For information call 508-896-1997 or 508-896-3406.

“Love in the Air”

Celebrate Love at a Valentine Gala dinner-dance and silent auction at the Boston Park Plaza in Boston, Saturday, Feb. 15, 7 pm to midnight. This event is a benefit for The Freedom to Marry Coalition of Massachusetts and admission is \$85 per person. Tickets can be purchased online at equalmarriage.org or by calling 617-249-0234.

President Bush and AIDS

In his annual State of the Union Address to a joint session of Congress, President Bush outlined a new \$15 billion, five-year plan to combat AIDS in the Caribbean and Africa. "Seldom has history offered a greater opportunity to do so much for so many," Bush said in his televised address.

But on the home scene, President Bush appointed a conservative Christian activist to sit on the administration's Presidential Advisory Commission on HIV and AIDS. Jerry Thacker, a marketing consultant from Pennsylvania, who has called homosexuality a "deathstyle" in place of a "lifestyle," and AIDS the "gay plague," has fortunately withdrawn his name before being sworn in, following growing pressure from the country's leading gay and lesbian groups.

Also, one hopes that our renewed attention to the world's AIDS problem will change the administration's AIDS prevention policy from abstinence to condoms.

Transgender Birth Certificates

[Adapted from, PlanetOut.com 11/22/02]

A transgender truck driver who underwent sex reassignment surgery last year learned he could not legally change the sex listed on his birth certificate in a Pennsylvania court -- but only because it wasn't the court's jurisdiction.

Daniel Gryphon MacNeal, formerly Ellen Bernadine Thompson, went before Judge Thomas Ling in Bedford, PA, to update his birth certificate in order to change his other legal documents such as his driver's license and passport. Judge Ling told MacNeal he didn't have the authorization to grant the request.

"Gender is based on the number of matched genes and chromosomes. Sex organs are secondary," Ling said in an Associated Press report. "I would have to be presented with a blood test showing the gender."

The process to change gender identification on a birth certificate varies from state to state, and almost all 50 states in the nation make it a fairly easy process for people who've undergone sex reassignment surgery to obtain a new birth certificate, according to Shannon Minter, legal director for the

National Center for Lesbian Rights and a boardmember of the Transgender Law & Policy Institute. The three states that don't permit people to legally change their gender identity are Tennessee, Ohio, and Idaho.

In Pennsylvania, people who wish to amend their gender identity have to go through the Pennsylvania Department of Vital Statistics. You must submit a court order for the name change, a signed letter or affidavit from a physician who performed the surgery related to gender change, and a fee (about \$4) to receive a new birth certificate.

Only a small percentage of the U.S. population identifies as transgender, but state laws have become increasingly more favorable for transgender people, according to Minter. While the United States does not keep good statistics on the number of people who undergo sex reassignment surgery, Minter said about 1 in 50,000 seek out medical treatment.

In Massachusetts, the requirement for a sex-change amended birth certificate is an original letter from the SRS surgeon stating "completion" of sex change, a certified copy of the court order for name change, and \$25.,

Tony Blair Urges Repeal of Anti-Gay Law

Prime Minister Tony Blair's government said Tuesday it wants to repeal a law that bars the use of public funds to promote homosexuality, saying it served no purpose and offended gays.

The measure also bars schools from teaching the "acceptability of homosexuality as a family relationship."

The anti-gay law dates to 1988, when the Conservatives were in power and Margaret Thatcher was prime minister..

A Need for Shelter

[Raja Mishra, Boston Globe, 12/18/2002]

Curt Rogers's boyfriend searched for him all over Boston in a desperate, murderous rage. Yet every domestic violence shelter in the state told Rogers the same thing: women only. Gay domestic violence? Even mental health experts, he recalled, had no clue how to help him.

Last month, researchers released a groundbreaking study indicating Rogers was far from alone: gay men living in cities are as likely to be battered as heterosexual women, found the report, in this month's American Journal of Public Health. Two in five urban gay men were abused by a partner sometime in the last five years, the study found.

"Many believe that in same-sex male relationships, the potential for violence is less because both males are able to defend themselves," said Michael V. Relf, an assistant professor at the Georgetown University school of nursing and an author of the paper. "

This lack of public understanding can have calamitous results for victims: shelters turn them away; police officers discount their stories; doctors fail to ask questions that uncover abuse.

However, experts said that Boston, perhaps more than any US city, has openly grappled with the problem, thanks mostly to Rogers, now 40.

Rogers, after a desperate search, finally found shelter with his boss's parents. He stopped working and stayed indoors for six weeks. Then he rented another apartment, on the other side of town, bought a new car, and began arriving and leaving work erratically to avoid his violent boyfriend.

But true freedom came only with tragedy; months later, the boyfriend hanged himself.

Angered by his experience, Rogers began inquiring about gay domestic violence assistance programs. It didn't take long; there were none in the state.

The documentary filmmaker persuaded several Boston-area social service groups to give him grant money, and today he runs the nation's only gay domestic violence safe house program, matching victims with volunteers who open their homes. Last year, the Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project placed 17 victims, those with nowhere to go and in danger of serious harm or death.

Intersex Medical Guidelines

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) has created a set of comprehensive guidelines for the routine medical care of intersex patients. Many intersex people have apparently been so traumatized by negative clinical encounters that they avoid routine examinations.

The guidelines are available at www.glma.org. Sharing these guidelines will help further the goals of intersex activists in eliminating the shame and secrecy of being born with atypical genitals.

Supreme Court to Hear Sodomy Case

[Excerpted from LambdaLegal.org 1/16/03]

Lambda Legal filed its brief Jan. 16 urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn Texas's "Homosexual Conduct" law, which criminalizes oral and anal sex by consenting gay couples and is widely used to justify discrimination against lesbians and gay men. A diverse array of some of the nation's most respected organizations -- including conservative groups, civil rights organizations, religious groups, and health professionals -- filed friend-of-the-court briefs on Lambda Legal's behalf today, also asking the U.S. Supreme Court to declare the Texas law unconstitutional.

Lambda Legal represents John Lawrence and Tyron Garner, who were arrested in Lawrence's Houston home and jailed overnight after officers responding to a false report found the men engaged in private, consensual sex. Once convicted of violating the "Homosexual Conduct" law, they were forced to pay fines and are now considered sex offenders in several states.

"The state should not have the power to go into the bedrooms of consenting adults in the middle of the night and arrest them," said Ruth Harlow, Legal Director at Lambda Legal and the lead attorney in the case. "But that's only the beginning of the damage done by this law and others like it around the country. These laws are widely used to justify discrimination against gay people in everyday life; they're invoked in denying employment to gay people, in refusing custody or visitation for gay parents, and even in intimidating gay people out of exercising their free speech rights."

In addition to Texas, three states -- Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma -- still have consensual sodomy laws that apply only to gay people. Nine states -- Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and Utah -- and Puerto Rico still have consensual sodomy laws that apply to straight and gay adults, but are invoked almost exclusively against lesbians and gay men. These laws typically ban oral and anal sex with penalties that range from fines to 10 years in prison.

Organizations in Texas and all of the other states with sodomy laws are among the scores of groups that filed more than a dozen friend-of-the-court briefs urging the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down Texas's law. Briefs have been filed by legal scholars, historians, international human rights experts, public health authorities and others (including PFLAG!), telling the court that sodomy laws are unconstitutional and harm gay people in many ways.

"Some of the most diverse and respected voices in this country are lining up to tell the Supreme Court that these laws are contrary to American values," Harlow said. "Conservative groups are coming forward to say that the government has no business in people's bedrooms. Mainstream civil rights

organizations are speaking out about the inequalities and blatant discrimination these laws create. And our nation's leading health advocates are unequivocally saying that these laws don't serve any public interest." The Supreme Court's decision is expected by late spring.

Mixed Messages Confuse

[Excerpted Chicago Tribune 1/25/03].

Taunting and bullying can make high school a brutal experience for teens who are different, particularly when that difference is related to their homosexual orientation. Complain, and you run the risk of disapproval by teachers and parents and further ostracism by peers. Worse still, it usually confirms the rumors. So silence and shame are the typical responses, a self-imposed and particularly lonely hell for young teens struggling to find their place in the world.

About a year ago, following a teacher conference about harassment of gay and lesbian students, a suburban Chicago school opted for rainbow-striped triangular decals that teachers could use to designate their classrooms as slur- and harassment-free zones for gay students.

Most teachers chose to display the decals, though some complained about the implications. Did an absence of decals imply anti-gay slurs were tolerated in that classroom or that the teacher was homophobic? Why not ban any sort of bullying, for any reason, and just leave it at that? Wouldn't the decals tend to create divisions among the students?

Ironically, the storm of protests by some parents over the decals--ultimately leading to their removal--demonstrated that anti-gay prejudice is very much alive in this school district.

Administrators responded by creating after-school clubs where gay and straight students, or students grappling with their sexual orientation, could gather and talk. "The club is designed to acknowledge and support," administrators stated. "It is not designed to promote, recruit, or denigrate."

The rainbow triangles have been removed, but fortunately the clubs remain.

Homophobic? Game "Postal 2"

[Jon ben Asher, 365Gay.com 1/24/03]

A computer game made in the United States that lets players shoot different types of people, including gays, has been labeled a dangerous homophobic toy by some.

An earlier version of the game has already been banned in Australia, and a Dutch gay rights activist is attempting to have the government ensure it does not wind up on store shelves in the Netherlands. Postal 2 is scheduled for sale in the US in March.

Krol described the game as "disgusting" and said he hoped to make potential buyers aware of its content. "A lot of these games are being bought by parents and grandparents, and one of our goals is for people to understand what they are buying," he said.

In Postal 2, the player is a character called Postal Dude (a black guy), who lives in a town with a wide variety of people with different ethnicities, builds, and sexualities.

Vince Desi, the chief executive of Running with Scissors, the Arizona-based software company that produces Postal 2, said that while players could shoot gays, they did not have to and could not gain any advantage by doing so. "It's definitely not anti-gay," said Desi. "It's a game -- get over it."

Cyber Cafe at CISGYA

With a grant from The David Bohnett Foundation, CISGYA House in Hyannis will renovate the first floor of their house at 56 Barnstable Rd. to create a cyber center where youth will have access to state-

of-the-art computers. In phase two, the kitchen will be modified to allow for a youth-run cafe to be operative by late 2003.

Help for this project is needed, both for workers and donations of good furniture and supplies. Call Linda Milner, Director of Programs at 508-280-9931.

2002 Obituaries

[PlanetOut.com]

In 2002, several influential GLBT individuals died, including gay rights pioneers Harry Hay and Sylvia Rivera, makeup artist Kevyn Aucoin, photographer Herb Ritts, fashion designer Bill Blass, writer June Jordan, and Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn.

Harry Hay was a "homophile" activist in the 1940s and helped form one of the first gay rights organizations in the United States, the Mattachine Society, in 1950. He also founded the Radical Faeries in 1979 and remained a leading advocate for civil rights and sexual freedom until his death.

Transgender activist Sylvia Rivera, 50, was one of the ringleaders in the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City that galvanized the modern gay rights movement.

The fashion industry was stunned by the losses of Herb Ritts, whose photography appeared in magazines and books, Kevyn Aucoin, whose makeup artistry was in demand by models and celebrities, and well-known designer Bill Blass.

Acclaimed author and activist June Jordan wrote poetry, nonfiction, children's books, song lyrics, and an opera libretto. She died of breast cancer on June 14, 2002, at the age of 65.

In May, Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn was assassinated nine days before the national elections. His name and party remained on the ballot, winning second place in the Netherlands' coalition government.

New Year's Baby With 2 Moms

[Washington Post 1/2/03]

The "First Baby of the Year" at a Virginia hospital has two mommies.

"Can we get a picture of the baby with its mother?" someone from the media pack asked. "Sure -- which mother would you like?" one mother responded. Photos were taken both ways.

Last week, the lesbian couple moved to Maryland because in Virginia, they said, it would be impossible for them to share full parental rights.

GLBT Group Info

CISGYA meets in Hyannis Wed & Thur 7pm for age 22 & under

Straight Spouse meets third Thursday of each month. 896-9060

Metropolitan Community Church meets 1st and 3rd Sundays, 3pm, Sanctuary of First Parish Church. 385-2873 or 430-2682

Transgender Support meets second Sundays 2-4pm, Dawes Hall (across from Brewster UU on 6A) & fourth Mondays, 7pm, CIGSYA House, Hyannis.. 255-5354 or 362-4438.

Dates to Remember

Feb 17, Mar 17, Apr 21: Brewster PFLAG, 7 pm
Feb 20, Mar 20, Apr 17: Straight Spouse Support, 896-9060
Feb 9&24, Mar 9&24, Ap 14&28: Transgen Support 432-8119
Feb. 8: Gayla Ball in Hyannis (see article p. 1) 508-896-3406
March 8: Int'l Women's Day, 6pm, Falmouth Acad, 430-2940
Mar 17: Brewster PFLAG Board mtg, 5:30, bring sandwich.
July 19: 2003 Cape Cod Gay Pride Day in Hyannis

PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster

PO Box 1167 Orleans, MA 02653

MISSION: Promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, their families and friends, through Support, to cope with an adverse society; Education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and Advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights.

MEETINGS: 7 pm on the third Monday of each month at First Parish Church, Brewster; everyone is welcome. For information call 508-240-2737 or 508-432-8119.

MEMBERSHIP: Dues-paying members support the efforts of PFLAG both locally and nationally. Ten dollars goes to PFLAG National (includes subscription to Pflagpole), and the balance is used for our own Newsletter and the purchase of pamphlets, books, and videos. Our fiscal year begins October 1.

OFFICERS: Co-Leaders, Pem Schultz & Rob Lewis; Treasurer, Martha Berndt; Corresponding Sec'y, Betsy Cochran; Publicity, Martha Berndt; Newsletter, Doris Scherbak and Joann Figueras; Program, volunteer needed!; and Library, Randy Kendall;.

NEWSLETTER: Published four times a year. Send articles to above address or e-mail joann@pflagcapecod.org.

WEBPAGE: www.pflagcapecod.org

_____ \$35 Family _____ \$25 Individual _____ \$15 Limited income

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