

The Rainbow Times

The Freshest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Newspaper in New England

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PHOTO: JAMES DIMMOCK

LGBT hate disguised by religious freedoms and politics

By: Nicole Lashomb*/TRT Editor-in-Chief

OPINIONS According to many, religious conservatives have been defeated in the same-sex marriage battle. Although there are a few clinching tightly to their homophobic interpretation of the bible, a vast majority has succumbed to the idea that gay marriage will indeed become law of the land. As of April 28, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments from proponents and opponents of marriage equality. Many believe the ruling will be released by the end of June, which will afford the LGBT community the right to marry for love, not gender. I, too, am of such mindset.

With a likely impending ruling upon us, anti-LGBT states have been chomping at the bit in an expedited fashion introducing new legislation, which would allow individuals, and businesses, to continue to discriminate against the gay community. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), conceals the preferred weapon of choice to slaughter the spirit of the LGBT community, at least in an attempted homicide.

According to an article published in the Daily Beast, "The federal RFRA was passed in 1993, nearly unanimously, with liberals and conservatives uniting in response to a Supreme Court case, *Employment Division v. Smith*, which upheld anti-drug laws being used against Native Americans ingesting peyote. Outraged by this intrusion on a minority religious practice, RFRA provided that the government can only "substantially burden" the exercise of religion if it has a "compelling state interest."

What was intended to protect minority groups from religious persecution has now been contorted in an attempt to legalize discrimination. Thanks to right-wing activists, the RFRA has been redefined to suit their special interests in assuring that certain mi-

"The evangelical owner of a business providing a secular service can sue claiming that their personal faith empowers them to refuse to hire Jews, divorcees, or LGBT people. A landlord could claim the right to refuse to rent an apartment to a Muslim or a transgender person.

nority groups continue to be devalued as second-class citizens.

Sexual orientation has nothing to do with religious freedom. Discriminating against others who are members of the LGBT community and refusing to serve them as a result, amongst many other attempts to persecute it, has nothing to do with religious practice. No religious practice, to the best of my knowledge, instructs its disciples to discriminate against another human being while proclaiming themselves to be holy. Case in point.

Even if misguided "followers" through erred interpretations, pulpit brainwash or utter disgust of LGBT people believe that being gay is a "sin," it is not a sin to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, create flower arrangements, welcome children of LGBT parents into a particular school, allow same-sex adoptions, etc. Because no religion condemns those who offer services to the gay community, they cannot hide ...

See Religious Freedoms on page 12

Hearts and minds are changing, even those most opposed

By: Paul P. Jesepe*/TRT Columnist



Spring is here! Now is a good time to celebrate the renewal of life for ourselves and families while having renewed hope for the world. It's also a good time to do an annual spiritual check-in regarding one's inner wellbeing, and you don't need a belief in a higher authority to do it.

Too often there is an emphasis on mind and body health, but the soul, a necessary third part in overall wellbeing, is overlooked. Whether a person is a believer, questioner, or without faith in a divine power, everyone is a mystical being. Atheists and humanists are very spiritual beings, as evidenced when time stands still when two people fall in love, a couple adopts a child, or an individual experiences something transcendental in autumn's majesty in the Northeast.

Even a person without belief can pray. To whom? The cosmos. Have a conversation

Many in the LGBTQ community remain leery of getting involved with anything that even remotely sounds religious, yet the soul needs sustenance.

out loud in your car. Verbalize fears, hopes and needs. It can be grounding and cathartic, a soulful act reflecting a cosmological need to be connected with something bigger than self.

There is something sacred in every human being. Many in the LGBTQ community remain leery of getting involved with anything that even remotely sounds religious, yet the soul needs sustenance. Vocal, reactionary religious activists with an anti-civil and human rights agenda still cause many LGBTQ families and individuals angst about God, faith and religion. That said, if you and Rush...

To read the rest of this story visit:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-3tk>

Letters to the Editor: St. Patrick's, Trans vets, Veterans for Peace

Dear Editor,

[Re: St. Patrick's Parade: Paying Homage to VFP, Gay Inclusion]

This is the most comprehensive and accurate reporting on this subject I have ever seen.

Peace and Justice, reported here, have always been, and will continue to be, the central theme of our participation in the St. Patrick's Day saga.

You have provided incisive insight into the events, and represented the tone of our hopes, past and future.

With appreciation and thanks, Peace be with you,

—Doug Stuart, Smedley D. Butler Brigade, chapter 9, VFP, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Op-Ed: Boston Pride's Decision to March in the St. Patrick's Day Parade is an Abandonment of Solidarity]

Respect to VFP from Irish Queers in NYC. This is a great explanation of what has happened to a lot of struggles for inclusion, including ours, that started when including us meant actually having to open up. Now relatively conservative spaces can admit relatively conservative LGBT people and call it a day. The idea of openness that used to be represented by demands for LGBT inclusion is watered down as that happens. And those of us who are still working for real openness are easy to dismiss as "never happy." Let's stick together.

—Emmaia Gelman, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Transgender Vets Will Receive New Military Paperwork Reflecting Their Correct Names]

Where do you find the necessary forms to get the army started on the name change paperwork? my VA clinic was very swift in making the appropriate changes in their system and issued a new ID card promptly. would be really nice to have my DD214 reflect the change.

Does anyone know if they also re-issue the discharge certificate with the proper name?

—Willem Dunham, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Op-Ed: Boston Pride's Decision to March in the St. Patrick's Day Parade is an Abandonment of Solidarity]

Keegan, Ann:

Our struggles are interconnected and from my research I have found that following various food and money aspects seems to help me determine how human's behave....with that said.... I do believe that there is no BIG money to be made with peace....(the main unconscious or conscious reason/decision to exclude VFP)if there is peace there is no need for weapons of mass destruction and conflict and racism and poverty and pollution and plutocracy and usury and all the other conflicts.

—David Snieckus, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Transgender Vets Will Receive New Military Paperwork Reflecting Their Correct Names]

This is indeed great news as I am in the process of having all my 'legal papers' changed to my new Real name as well as having gender changed on birth Certificate.

This will hopefully make one more thing easier for me to do.

Formerly Robert W Myles discharged 72 honorable now am Bobbi Sue Myles after some cost and hassles

—Bobbi Sue Myles, Online

Dear Editor:

[Re: St. Patrick's Parade: Paying Homage to VFP, Gay Inclusion]

As Vice-Coordinator for Chapter 9 VFP, the Smedley Butler Bde, I think it is a great step forward for people who have been consistently overlooked and demeaned for so long. I stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters of the GLBT community. As a straight, white male, I have seen the way some people are treated and I find it reprehensible that any "group" be treated like second class citizens.

We are all human beings and each and every one of us should be treated with dignity and respect. I do not think that is too much to ask for, demonizing people does little more than make people appear less than human. The AWVC has this one day when anyone knows they exist; VFP on the other hand works tirelessly for Equality of everyone.

—Bob Funke, Online

The Rainbow Times

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Mass. Commission on LGBTQ Youth releases annual recommendations

By: Lauren Walliser/TRT Assistant Editor

IN THE LIMELIGHT BOSTON, Mass.—The Massachusetts Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth released a report in March recommending policy changes for state agencies that serve LGBTQ youth. Since 1992, the Commission has been tasked with making annual policy recommendations to address issues such as harassment, assault, suicide attempts, and homelessness, which affect LGBTQ youth at high rates.

“As Executive Director of BAGLY and a member of the Massachusetts LGBTQ Youth Commission, I enthusiastically support the Commission’s latest recommendations addressing the health and well-being of LGBTQ youth in the Commonwealth,” said Grace Sterling Stowell, executive director of the Boston Alliance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning Youth (BAGLY). “I believe that all of the Commission’s recommendations are critically important in helping to address the significant safety and health disparities facing LGBTQ youth in their families, schools and communities, and so I applaud the work of my colleagues and our state agencies in developing these priorities.”

Recommendations in the 70-page report included advising state agencies to collect data on gender identity and sexual orientation on a routine basis to track how LGBTQ



**Massachusetts Senate President
Stan Rosenberg**

youth are interacting with state agencies; developing best practices for working with LGBTQ youth; assisting LGBTQ homeless youth with obtaining photo identification cards; incorporating LGBTQ-related topics in school curricula, and much more.

Mass. Senate President Stan Rosenberg said he usually does not like to pick one specific agenda item as most important, but in this case said he strongly agreed with the first core recommendation on data collection.

“We make better laws with better information. Privacy and confidentiality must be paramount during this process to ensure we

protect all residents’ information,” said Rosenberg. “If agencies and secretariats adopted methods of data collection to take a deep dive into the issues surrounding LGBTQ youth, they could adopt policies and procedures to more effectively serve the community. This would really get to the heart of providing services to our LGBTQ homeless youth, which is an enormous problem that we must address and potentially save taxpayer dollars.”

Erica Kay-Webster, founder, CEO and president of the Foundation For International Justice, Inc. and CEO and executive director of Promise Place School, spoke to the importance of providing LGBTQ youth with IDs.

“These ID cards are necessary and essential for youth to be able to obtain benefits and employment,” said Kay-Webster. “We recently worked with one homeless young person who could not apply for food stamps because she didn’t have an ID card. The reason this young person did not have an ID card is because her own driver’s license had been confiscated by her own mother, who refused to return it to her own daughter. In this case we were able to step in and provide her with groceries to see her through until she applied for and received a new driver’s license in the mail. Whenever anyone goes for a job interview, in order to be able to get hired, they are required to provide identification to prove American citizenship or legal foreign citizenship. By having the identification cards our youth would be able to begin a job search and obtain valuable serv-

ices to see themselves through until employment.”

Other recommendations include providing more funding dedicated to services for homeless LGBTQ youth; providing training for teachers and school staff on issues and risks facing LGBTQ youth; and identifying foster families for LGBTQ youth.

“The thing that really is close to my heart since I myself am an immigrant is the recommendation given to the Office of Refugees and Immigrants,” said Coco Alinsug, senior manager of outreach and insurance at Fenway Health and a member of the Commission. “It’s about time that they identify LGBTQ affirming medical, housing, legal, and community resources. A lot of these groups are still naive to the LGBTQ community, or no policy is in place for LGBTQ community immigrants.”

Additionally, one of the Commission’s priorities is a bill currently pending before the legislature that would add gender identity to the state’s public accommodations law.

“Public accommodations protections for transgendered youth will provide recourse for transgendered youth who are bullied or harassed in a public environment,” said Rosenberg. “I would like to commend the Commission’s report by highlighting national data about such high levels of harassment (78 percent) among LGBTQ youth. All of our young people deserve protections from harassment and bullying, and public...

See Mass. Commission on Page 13

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Pride Season is on in New England: The biggest, boldest and best to come

By: Lauren Wallester/TRT Assistant Editor

BOSTON, Mass.—After a winter for the record books, Boston and New England residents have begun preparing for a spring and summer filled with outdoor activities, including the many Pride parades and festivals taking place around the state.

The season will begin with **Northampton Pride** (otherwise known as Noho Pride) May 2 from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. in Northampton, Mass. This year's theme is "We Continue to Fight for All Our Rights."

"This theme reflects that, while we have made great strides in many towns and cities and in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole, we realize that many LGBTQAI people are denied even the most basic human rights in much of the United States and in too many places around the world," said J.M. Sorrell, self-titled Spokesdyke for Noho Pride. "We can model our successes and assist and support those communities who need us."

The headlining act for this year's Noho Pride is Christine Martucci, a folk/rock singer and songwriter from Asbury Park, N.J. with a national following. Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz will kick-off the stage events with his annual Proclamation, and The Pioneer Valley Gay Men's Chorus and the Raging Grannies will also perform. Other music and political speakers are in the works.

"This is our 34th annual regional pride event. It was originally 'The Lesbian and Gay Liberation March,'" said Sorrell. "Traditionally, this was the first event nationally

to kick-off the ensuing LGBT events later in May and throughout June. ...Given the size of Northampton, it is an extraordinary turn out. The number of high school groups from around the region gets larger every year, as does the number of religious/spiritual organizations."

For more information, visit their website: www.nohopride.org.

Boston Pride will follow next with its 45th anniversary Pride Week running June 5-14. This year's theme is #WickedProud, which Boston Pride President Sylvain Bruni said commemorates the history of the organization, which began in 1970, a year after the Stonewall Riots in New York City.

"From a small march with speeches between Jacque's Cabaret and City Hall, to



NOHO Pride parade in Northampton, Mass. last year.

over 40 events including a four-hour parade illustrating our community's diversity and



richness, Boston Pride Week has grown immensely and is now the largest annual public event in New England," said Bruni. "Boston Pride continues the tradition of public demonstration in the streets of Boston, as well as to offer numerous other events intended for everyone to enjoy and to celebrate who they are, in a safe and fun environment."

This year's events will include the annual flag raising at City Hall Plaza on June 5, Pride Day at Faneuil Hall on June 6, Pride Human Rights Forum on June 8, Pride Night at Fenway Park on June 12, and the Pride Parade and Festival on June 13. Additionally, the annual AIDS Walk, a program of the AIDS Action Committee, will take place during Pride Week on June 7. Other events include comedian Fortune Feimster at The Wilbur on June 13, and the annual Back Bay

and JP Block Parties on June 14.

"Boston Pride Week's 45th anniversary is a time to celebrate the history of the organization, pay tribute to those who fought for LGBT rights, and to energize the next generation to carry on the important work," said Boston Pride Parade Chair Martha Plaza in a press release. "Boston Pride represents everyone in our community whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and our straight allies and friends."

New to Boston Pride this year is the launch of an individual giving campaign called "Friends of Boston Pride." Boston Pride will also celebrate its 45th anniversary with a brand new event, the Boston Pride Gala, to be held on the first night of Pride...

See NE Prides on Page 10

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Performers at the 2013 Paint The Town (La) Red.

PHOTO: JEN HOPE

The Network/La Red hosts annual fundraiser; other state orgs. work to end partner abuse

By: Clara Lefton/TRT Reporter

BOSTON, Mass.—Boston's The Network/La Red, a nonprofit whose mission is "survivor-led organizing to end partner abuse," will host its annual fundraiser, Paint The Town (La) Red: A Celebration of Survival, April 23. According to the organization's statistics, one out of four LGBTQ youth experience abuse from a dating partner.

"The biggest difference is that LGBTQ people going to mainstream domestic violence shelters, or accessing services from a mainstream organization, can end up facing barriers," said Kat Conrad, the grassroots fundraising coordinator. "Whether it's homophobia or if it's a gay man leaving his abusive partner, a lot of organizations are just women's shelters. You can kind of experience a barrier in that way. We recognize that abuse doesn't only happen in straight relationships, and it doesn't only happen in men abusing women. It happens in all relationships, so we kind of bring that LGBTQ competence."

According to the organization's literature, "A national study of youth in same-sex relationships found that 14.6 percent of males and 26 percent of females reported psychological abuse, and 24 percent of males and 28 percent of females reported physical abuse from a dating partner. Rates among transgender youth are estimated to be similar."

Founded in 1984, The Network/La Red began its annual fundraiser to end partner abuse in 2004 as a \$100-a-plate gala fundraiser and was initially successful, however a few years later attendance began to fall. In 2010, the event began offering discounted tickets and changed the tone from a formal sit-down dinner to a celebration with performances. Last year the night raised \$17,305, but this year they are hoping to reach between \$20,000-\$25,000 as well as increase attendance from 150 to 200 people. All of the money raised will go back to the nonprofit and its programming, whose services include a hotline, safe home, advocacy work, a community outreach and education program, and helping other organizations become more LGBTQ confident.

Aside from The Network/La Red, which is based in Somerville, Mass., the state has

many more organizations that are dedicated towards specifically assisting victims of LGBTQ domestic violence, sexual assault and police misconduct. Boston's Fenway Health offers the Violence Recovery Program (VRP), which consists of individual counseling and advocacy for LGBTQ survivors of domestic, hate and sexual violence. Due to the program's nature of being grant-funded, all of its services are free, while its records are kept confidential from the rest of Fenway's Behavioral Health Program unless otherwise specified with written patient permission.

Since VRP and Network/La Red's goals are the same, they often work together.

"A bunch of us are going this year to [Paint the Town (La) Red] from the VRP," said M.E. Quinn, a former VRP employee and current bilingual counselor and advocate for the organization. "The Network is such a leader in LGBTQ domestic violence work, that I think the VRP often takes the lead from the Network on domestic violence issues because of their expertise and their philosophy and their integrity. They're an amazing organization and we're definitely happy to support them in their fundraising event."

The GLBTQ Domestic Violence Project (GLBTQDVP) is an independent organization that has been in existence for 20 years, with locations in Boston, Cambridge and the Cape. Although their primary focus is Massachusetts, they often get referrals via hotlines in Connecticut and Rhode Island. The services the organization provides includes a three bedroom safe room apartment, an attorney who does legal representation, and a sexual assault case manager.

GLBTQDVP is also dedicated towards progressing research and currently working on a four-year federal research project titled "Identifying, Implementing and Evaluating a GLBTQ-Specific Trauma-Informed Domestic Violence Service Model."

"I've known The Network/La Red since we started," said Curt Rogers, executive director of GLBTQDVP. "We've been involved with them in many different ways over the years, and I've actually been to

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See La Red on Page 15

Fear, loathing in Florida restrooms: My firsthand experience traveling there

By: Deja Nicole Greenlaw*/TRT Columnist

TRANS NEWS



I recently took a drive down to Florida to meet up with friends and to get relief from the seemingly never-ending New England winter. On the way down, I stopped at various public restrooms as needed. When I reached the Florida Welcome Center off I-95, I decided to use the restroom there.

There is currently a bill in the Florida Legislature which, if passed in its current form, would allow for transgender people to be charged with a crime for using the “wrong bathroom.” What the bill means by “wrong bathroom” is that it would require a person to use the restroom for whatever gender you were assigned at birth. You must not use the other gender’s restroom. For instance, I was assigned male at birth, so for me to use the women’s room would mean that I would be using the “wrong bathroom.” For a transgender man, his “wrong bathroom” for him to use would be the men’s room.

The bills states that if I used the “wrong bathroom,” then I could be charged with a crime and be arrested and sentenced up to a

year in jail. On top of this, the person who “turns me in” would get a finder’s fee of \$2,000. That means there would be a \$2,000 bounty on me. It is so ridiculous that I cannot believe someone actually thought this up and presented it as a bill.

With the knowledge of this bill in the back

... if I used the “wrong bathroom,” then I could be charged with a crime, be arrested & sentenced up to a year in jail. ... the person who “turns me in” would get a finder’s fee of \$2,000.

of my mind, I knew that I would have to use a Florida public restroom many times during my stay in Florida. This was the first public restroom that I came across and I needed to go, so off I went to the women’s room. I had just sat down on the toilet seat when I heard the outside door open and a male voice saying something inaudible but it ended with “in the bathroom.” I wasn’t sure why he opened the door and what he said, so I decided to keep silent.

My first thought was that this person identified me as a transgender woman and wanted me out of the women’s room. Then I heard the door open, and he came in the women’s room and said “Is there anyone in the bathroom?” He was standing right in front of my stall and I responded with a

“Hello.” His voice sounded embarrassed as he said “I’m sorry,” and I could hear him walk away. On his way out he said, “I did ask if anyone was in here and you didn’t say anything.” Again, I wasn’t sure what he wanted and why he came into the women’s room, so again I kept silent.

I finished up, washed and dried my hands, and exited. As I opened the door the man was there waiting for me about 10 feet away. He asked if I was the last one in the bathroom because he needed to clean it. I nodded and said that I was. He then apologized again for walking in on me in the bathroom and I told him that it was okay. Then he wished me a good day. I thanked him and wished him one too. As I walked away, he then said, “Welcome to Florida” with a slight chuckle in his voice. I think he thought this was my first trip to Florida, and the first time I went to use the restroom a man walked in on me. What a way to start a vacation!

My story ended up being a funny one, but it could have been a nightmare. This man

could have taken issue with me for using the “wrong bathroom.” You never know who you are dealing with and what they think of such issues. It was awful that I had to go through this tense moment while I was using the bathroom. I shouldn’t have had to even think about a possible confrontation, but when you are a transgender person you are constantly aware of these things.

I recently found out that the bill was modified to allow transgender people with proper documentation of their gender change to use the restroom. For example, a female designation on the gender marker on my license would legally allow me to use the women’s room. This bill, however, would put transgender people at risk who have not changed their gender marker on some form of documentation. Does this mean that, if this bill passed, I would need to show my ID every time I used a public restroom? That is utterly ridiculous.

The proposed identification check could lead to various complications. How can you ask for my ID and not ask everyone else for their ID? What would the ID checkers do about identifying a child’s gender? I can envision lawsuits. This bill would be an unworkable law which could cost the state of Florida lots of money.

In case you didn’t know, transgender peo-

Read the rest of this Op-Ed at:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-3tl>

Ask a Trans Woman: Flushing away our freedom on Florida’s proposed bathroom bill

By: Lorelei Erisis*/TRT Columnist



I’d like to talk to you about bathrooms. Well, actually, I’d like to talk to you about bathrooms and locker rooms and libraries and courthouses and restaurants too, but let’s start with bathrooms.

By now, you have probably heard about Florida’s “Bathroom Bill (HB 583).” Given that I usually write these things a few weeks before publication, I can hope that by the time you read these words it’s been tossed out like the garbage it is. I can hope, but I very much doubt it. Even if this particular iteration of this malicious meme has been properly defeated, the same sort of hateful bill is being proposed in a number of other states and municipalities all over the country. But then, if you’re trans, you probably know all this already, which is why I’d like to direct this argument primarily at our (potential) allies.

This is deliberate fear-mongering. Bills like this aren’t meant to address any sort of public safety issue. They aren’t trying to correct a problem called out by the hue and cry of the crowds. They are trying to stir emotions. They are trying to get people *not* to think, to simply react from their guts.

As evidenced by the rapid passage of same-sex marriage protections all over the country, including in Florida, gay and lesbian people are becoming much more accepted. Straight, cisgender folks know gay people now and have known them long enough and well enough that it’s not even “cool” to have a gay friend anymore. It’s just another friend.

That means that the “conservatives” (in

quotes because the people I’m talking about are anything but) and the right-wingers have to find another target for their emotional manipulations, and trans people are just the perfect target to them. We’ve attained a level of visibility that is unprecedented, yet many folks have not yet met an actual flesh-and-

work. And, people eat it up, even good people.

C-SPAN generally avoids it. Do you remember the last time you sat down and watched C-SPAN? Yeah, I thought so.

This fear-impulse is an excellent (excellent horrible) way for those in power to

It’s a lot more than just bathrooms. We can be kicked off a bus, kept out of a courthouse, and denied service at a restaurant, all from a lack of explicit protections.

blood trans person, at least not knowingly. Additionally, gender is still one of those things that lots of people tend to think is settled and done. They think that if you’re a boy, you’re a boy and if you’re a girl, you’re a girl, and that’s that—except of course it isn’t, and that freaks people out. Even nice, rational, well-meaning people kind of have trouble wrapping their heads around it all.

If they think it through, or if they get the chance to actually meet and get to know a trans or gender-variant person, they can usually get past all that. But if you hit them in the gut first—if you aim for the irrational, fight-or-flight-based, thought-erasing fear part of the brain—they will act like a herd of animals instead of individual human beings. If you make people think their children and women are in danger, even if they’re not, they will stop thinking. They will simply act, and damn the consequences.

It’s a favourite tool of power-hungry politicians. It’s also popular with both fundamentalist religious sects and ratings-hungry media-moguls. It’s how Fox News works, and to be fair, though somewhat less blatantly, it’s also how CNN and pretty much all the major network news shows

control populations they want to keep in check and to control the people who fear those populations. You may privately think it’s not such a big deal for trans people to have to show ID when they use the restroom. You might think it’s an inconvenience perhaps, but not entirely unreasonable.

What happens when we get used to that? If *that* becomes the new normal? What if it becomes an easy excuse for arresting any trans person who maybe doesn’t have the right ID or badge, who just couldn’t hold their pee any longer but was afraid to use the restroom that matches their identifying symbol? Then the good, God-fearing, family-loving citizens would no longer have to worry about those scary trans people, because they wouldn’t have to see them or be confronted by any more uncomfortable ideas. Out of sight and out of mind.

“And where did they all go anyway?”

“Best not to ask.”

You can probably guess where I’m going with this, and maybe you think I’m overplaying the situation, but is it really such a stretch? Gay people have only just gained a true measure of mainstream acceptance. Brown people are being rounded up and

locked away at our borders, and black people are being killed in the streets—still. All the ground we’ve gained could be lost in a flash.

Trans people are on a razor’s edge. We still have very few actual rights and protections. Even without laws that are designed to actively persecute us, even in states where we have *some* protections like here in Massachusetts where just recently we gained workplace protections and a number of other basic civil rights protections, we can still be denied access to basic public accommodations. It’s a lot more than just bathrooms. We can be kicked off a bus, kept out of a courthouse, and denied service at a restaurant, all from a *lack* of explicit protections. Now imagine how bad things can get and how quickly they can devolve to include other minority populations if we allow laws that actively attack those among us who are most vulnerable.

That is why it is so incredibly important that we all stand together on this. We cannot, must not, allow these bathroom bills to gain traction anywhere they are presented. Even if you don’t understand trans people, even if you’d rather not have anything to do with us, I beg you to think this through. Reason it out to where laws like this can lead a society. Don’t let yourself be manipulated by fear. Choose thought and compassion instead. Slainte!

**Lorelei Erisis is an actor, activist, adventurer, and pageant queen. Send your questions about trans issues, gender and sexuality to her at: askatranswoman@gmail.com.*

NOTE: If you’d like your voice to be heard, you can sign a petition stating that you are against Bill HB 583. The petition can be found at: <http://tiny.cc/7ptuvx>.

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Groban Bears All: Talks bear fans, drag queens, gay rumors, more

It all began with the bears. “I’m like, ‘Are you a baseball team?’” says Josh Groban, recalling an early-career encounter with a man who informed the crooner about his growing number of gay bear fans.

Nearly 15 years later, members of the LGBT community—even the non-hairy ones—are still feeling struck and soothed by Groban’s elastic range. *Stages* is yet another swoon-worthy set from the singer. His first collection of songs from musicals, Groban takes on some of Broadway’s best for the album, which includes “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from *Carousel* and *The Phantom of the Opera* showstopper “All I Ask Of You,” a duet with Kelly Clarkson.

While discussing the release during a recent interview, the 34-year-old also highlighted the significance of performing with the Washington, D.C. Gay Men’s Chorus during Obama’s 2009 presidential inauguration, the validation his younger “awkward” self-felt after being named “Sexiest Newcomer” and how Ryan Gosling put the singer’s sexuality to the test.

Chris Azzopardi: I was fortunate enough to see you during the summer of 2014 in Toronto for Rufus Wainwright’s *If I Loved You: Gentlemen Prefer Broadway—An Evening of Love Duets*, where you got your gay on.

Josh Groban: (Laughs). I’ll always put my gay on for Rufus.

Q. During an interview you did regarding that performance, Rufus referred to you as a “dreamboat.” At this point in your career, are you used to that kind of attention from gay men?

A. Yeah, it’s happened from time to time. Look, when Rufus Wainwright is complimenting you, musically or otherwise, it’s a great honor. Something that was surprising to me that happened when I first got signed at 19, 20 years old: I was at some kind of shop, and I was walking around with someone—it was probably my girlfriend—and this guy comes up to me and goes, “Hey, I just want you to know, the bears love you.” I’m like, “Excuse me? What?” And I didn’t know what that meant! I’m like, “Are you a baseball team?”

Q. How did you figure out what type of bears he was referring to?

A. I think some Googling had to take place. And it was like, “Oh. Ohhhh!” (Laughs)

Q. And you’re like, “Not the bears in the forest.”

A. Yeah, and not the Chicago Bears.

Q. If you could duet on a love song with any man, who would it be and why?

A. If I could sing with any man, it would probably be Brian Stokes Mitchell. I love his voice, and I grew up listening to his voice. There’s such a warm tone to the way he sings, and he’s just such a great actor and a really great guy. We would do a killer “Pretty Women” (from *Sweeney Todd*), I think.

Q. You’re from L.A., and you went to arts schools, including Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. I imagine you’ve been immersed in the gay community for much of your life. Did you find a lot of gay people gravitating to you at a young age?

A. Like you said, I went to a wonderful arts

camp at Interlochen. I went to a great arts high school in Los Angeles—L.A. County High School for the Arts—and grew up in Los Angeles and with a wonderful arts background, and I got to meet all sorts of people. Many of my friends were gay at these places—at camp, at school.

The wonderful thing I found about the arts and the arts connection was, I had come from a situation where I had a hard time making friends at school and I was bullied, and I finally went to school where everybody had the same inspiration for the arts, everybody

had the same passion. It was the first situation where I had felt that everybody was friends with everybody, and everybody felt the most comfortable being themselves at these places. And so, for me, the arts were the first scenario where I found a connective tissue between everybody.

Q. When you look back, did that closeness to the queer community ever make you question your own sexuality?

A. No, not at all. It wasn’t in any way, shape or form about my own life or my own sexuality—it was about understanding and accepting everybody, and being friends regardless of that. I think that’s

also what the straight community needs to understand—that it’s about friendship and alliance. It’s not about questioning yourself or anything like that—it’s about the togetherness of it. I think the wonderful thing about the arts is that I grew up in a community where I felt there was acceptance and friendship regardless of our own personal lives.

Q. And co-starring with Ryan Gosling in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*—that didn’t challenge

your heterosexuality?

A. (Laughs) Listen, if I was gonna be gay, that would’ve been the moment. That was probably my greatest test, and I failed.

Q. You came out as “not gay” on Twitter a couple years ago. How do you feel about people speculating about your sexuality?

A. Honestly, if I were gay, I would have had no problem saying it from day one. It’s such a thing when people speculate. I would have

nothing to hide if that were the case. People have speculated, have wanted to speculate—whatever, fine. I’m not gay, but if I were, I don’t view it as a bad thing. If I were, I’d say, “OK, fine, speculate all you want and let’s talk about it.”

Q. It’s not like you’re in a community where that wouldn’t be accepted.

A. Exactly. I’ve grown up with gay friends; my parents have had great gay friends. I

come from such an open-minded family background. I am so lucky to have the parents that I have and to have grown up with the environment of “accept and be accepted” and “love and be

loved,” so when that kind of talk comes up, I think to myself, “All right, I’m happy to say what is and isn’t true,” but at the same time, I don’t see why that’s like, “Ohhhh.”

Like that would be an insult. I don’t get that. If that were the case, I would just say it and it would be no big deal. That’s the thing that bugs me more than anything, though—that the mention of it would be considered provocative when, really, in this day and age

it shouldn’t be.

Q. Assuming you selected the songs on *Stages* because they have relevance in your own life, which ones mean the most to you?

A. There are actually a couple of songs that really have nostalgic memories for me. “All I Ask Of You” from *Phantom* was the first song that I ever sang professionally to get a record deal, so when I found myself at Abbey Road, singing that song and with Kelly (Clarkson), it was just like, “Oh, man!” Very rarely do I ever pat myself on the back or give myself a high five—I’m always kind of self-critical and moving forward—but it was one of those moments where I was listening to that orchestra and having memories of the 17-year-old kid in the ill-fitting tuxedo that first sang that song, and I’m like, “You know what, go you. You did it.”

A song like “Bring Him Home” is a song you can’t help but hear and think about what’s going on now in the world, and how many people are hoping and praying the same things today. The wonderful thing I’ve found about these songs is there’s so much relevance and poignancy to them today, regardless of the show that they’re in, and that was a wonderful discovery. One of the things that really dictated what we chose and what we didn’t choose was if they could live independently on their own.

Q. You obviously have theater aspirations. What’s your dream Broadway role?

A. I’m a Sondheim nut. I like his stuff because it allows for really operatic singing without dancing. I’m a terrible dancer. So, for me, I would love to do something like *Sweeney Todd* or *Sunday in the Park with George*. I was introduced to *Chess* when I was 24 or 25—I did it for the Actors’ Fund on Broadway—and I’ve always thought that show got a bum rap. Just the music alone can go toe to toe with the great musicals. I think it deserves, at some point, a chance. Maybe a different kind of direction, a different kind of vision, but that would be another dream role.

Q. You’d like to star in it?

A. Absolutely. I mean, there are a bunch of roles that I think would be fun. It’s really been a timing issue. It would be a dream come true to do something on the Broadway stage. With album and touring life, and when you have a record deal, you have to satisfy commitments. It’s just a matter of taking the time to do it right.

Q. Your girlfriend, Kat Dennings, recently appeared on *RuPaul’s Drag Race*.

A. She crushed it!

Q. When’s it your turn to guest judge?

A. (Laughs) She got me into that show! I mean, RuPaul’s incredible. The influence she’s had on everybody is just amazing, and then you see the competition. The episode that Kat did—I took Shakespeare class, like I was in very heavy Shakespeare instruction when I was young and in theater school, and so watching them put on Shakespeare was one of the funniest things I’ve ever seen in my life. It was a wee bit of a train wreck, and I think Ru knew that, but it was really funny to watch. And yeah, you never know.

To read the rest of this story visit:
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NE Prides from page 4

Week, June 5.

For forthcoming announcements about entertainers, a full calendar, and general information, visit www.bostonpride.org.

Pride Portland! will continue the New England pride season line-up, taking place June 12-20 in Portland, Maine, though a full listing of their events will be announced at a launch party on May 15. According to co-chair Jill Barkley, the event is a collaborative, community led effort in Maine's largest city.

"Our 10 days of events incorporate a wide range of activities for elders, families, people who love to be outside, and people who want to dance!" said Barkley. "We strive to make our events accessible to every member of our diverse LGBTQA community by partnering with other local organizations like EqualityMaine, Maine Transnet, Out-right, and SAGE. At the core of everything we do is a desire to serve our community and have fun while doing it."

This will be the second year the organization has hosted Pride, for which Barkley said they've had more time to plan and raise funds.

"We are feeling more prepared to meet the standards we set for ourselves last year in our first year of planning and expand on those successes," said Barkley.

For more information on Pride Portland! and their full schedule of events, visit www.prideportland.org.

This year's **North Shore Pride Week** will be held June 15-21.

"North Shore Pride is a true representation of our North Shore community," said Hope

Watt-Bucci, founder and president of North Shore Pride, Inc. "We are an organization with events that are a true reflection of our mission, to provide education to our community and advocacy for LGBT persons on the North Shore. To that end we try to provide a minimum of 50 percent of our vendors at our festival who are available to provide information and outreach to those in need of services. North Shore Pride also ensures that we highlight the talents of our local entertainers, artisans and businesses during our festival and events. Finally, North Shore Pride wants to ensure that we always be reachable and in touch with our community."

The schedule of events will kick-off with a "Lunch and Learn" conference at a local North Shore college or university with the theme "How to make your North Shore city or town more inclusive for the LGBT com-



PHOTO: TRT/LORELEI ERISIS

North Shore Pride 2014 at the Festival site.

munity." Next, a movie and art exhibit will be held at the Salem Theatre, followed by a screening of "The Normal Heart" and an in-



PHOTO: STEVEN BRIDGES

A 900-foot pride flag made and donated by Bishop from Merkaba Sol at last year's Pride Portland.

terfaith worship service. The Fourth Annual North Shore Pride Parade and Festival will be held in Salem, Mass. on June 20.

"We started this organization in 2012 with a few people sitting around my dining room table," said Watt-Bucci. "We established the North Shore Pride Parade and Festival as a means to let the general public know that we are established, available and working towards a goal of true 'Unity in our North shore Community.' Having been gratefully successful in providing our event for the last three years, we are now able to branch out and work diligently on the educational component of our mission."

For the full schedule and to learn about this year's theme, which will be announced soon, visit www.northshorepride.org.

Later in the season, **PRIDE Vermont** will continue the pride tradition with their LGBT PRIDE Week running September 6-13 in Burlington. This year's theme is "SHINE," which celebrates the personal and collective triumphs of the LGBT Community.

"PRIDE Vermont is Northern New England's premier Pride festival. "Vermont's PRIDE Festival includes the Northern Decade Food & Travel Expo, making it the tastiest Pride in the country. We also include a large activity tent, called Gender Fun, for the transgender community."

PRIDE Vermont will also include the Annual High Heel Race on Church Street and the Parade and Festival featuring music and entertainment by local performers, including the aerial performance group Fierce Circus and special guests The Glamazons, a girl group made famous on "America's Got Talent."

Additionally, the second annual Gender PRIDE Speaker Event will present transgender activist, writer and musician Julia Serano on September 9. Serano's first book, "Whipping Girl," has been used in gender studies classrooms and as required reading for the cast of Amazon Prime's TV series "Transparent."

"Our PRIDE festival continues to grow and attract people from everywhere. We're truly becoming a regional PRIDE event," said Randy Violette, chair of the PRIDE Vermont Committee, in a press release. "I invite everyone from Vermont and throughout New England, New York and Quebec to celebrate with us."

For more information, visit their site at: www.PRIDEvermont.com.

Worcester Pride will take place in September as well, held September 9-12 in Worcester, Mass. This year's theme, "Love Will Keep Us Together!" was chosen based on public feedback from a variety of sub-

missions, according to Worcester Pride President John Trobaugh.

"The theme is nice because it harkens back to the year that Worcester Pride had its first celebration. This is the name of the song that was number one on the charts and it really fits where we are as a community," said Trobaugh. "With public acceptance here in Massachusetts, many thought the need for Pride would go away. Indeed, many LGBT-owned businesses have gone out of business. However, we are finding more of a need to build community. We hear people ask for more of a sense of community at every event. The fact is that people come out in a variety of ways throughout their lives. It is never a discrete event, nor is it the same for everyone."

The week will kick-off September 9 with the first ever flag raising at City Hall, followed by a Pride Dinner on September 10



PHOTO: MIKE HENDRICKSON
Gladys Rodriguez, representing Jim McGovern's Office and Mr. Worcester Pride 2014.

and the annual Ms. and Mr. Worcester Pride and Miss Gay Worcester Pageant on September 11.

"This is the second year our pageant is gender neutral," said Trobaugh. "Last year was a great success in that we had no gender requirements for any of these titles. The Miss Gay Worcester Title is a drag category, but it is up to the participants to self-declare their interest in a particular title."

The week will also include the parade and festival, Youth Pride Dance, and Water Fire - Pride Block Party. Local performers will include Joslyn Fox, Glenn Steward and host and emcee Cindy Foster.

"We believe diversity and creativity are two of the biggest gemstones of Central Mass. and we love to show that off here!" said Trobaugh. "We also have a Political Ally where we invite politicians from the region to get a table and communicate with their LGBTQ constituents. If they get a ...

See NE Prides on page 15

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Semana Santa, la Pascua y los Gays

Por: Francisco "El Jimagua" Cartagena Méndez*/Especial para TRT

LATIN VISION



La comunidad LGBTT es un sector de la sociedad que es constantemente perseguido por la iglesia. Aun habiendo millones de gays creyentes, éstos se han sentido excluidos (as) de tener un lugar donde profesar su fe, ya que muchas instituciones religiosas juzgan, condenan y discriminan contra los gays de manera extrema.

Debido a la persecución y el discurso fundamentalista, muchos gays sienten no tener la posibilidad de adorar a Dios en libertad y de manera natural. Esto supone una clara contradicción del 'amor de Jesús' en el religioso o la religiosa que es excluyente, ya que Jesús abrazó a todas las personas sin juzgarles.

Yeshua o Jesús (como le conocemos comúnmente), fue un reformista social que invitó a sus seguidores a no juzgar al prójimo ni a rechazarlo. En la actualidad, son muy conocidos sus mandatos divinos que leen 'no juzgarás' y 'amarás a tu prójimo como a ti mismo'.

En épocas muy remotas y en la actualidad, muchos líderes religiosos han utilizado el viejo testamento de la biblia para condenar a los gay (homosexuales, es el término que usan). Es importante recordar que Jesús, en el nuevo testamento realiza una reforma orientada al amor de los unos con los otros, al respeto a las diferencias y a que no se juzgue al prójimo.

En la ironía o hipocresía de los religiosos que condenan a los gays utilizando el viejo testamento como marco de referencia. Estas personas no se condenan a ellos mismos por comer crustáceos, cerdo o conejo, o por llevar a cabo muchas otras acciones que son condenas inertes en dicho viejo testamento.

Es importante que la iglesia continúe dando pasos de avanzada hacia la equidad y la inclusión de las personas gays, ya que este nuevo panorama pudiera representar un importante paso hacia la reducción del discrimin, la ignorancia y el odio por orientación sexual.

Muchos gays han sufrido teniendo que ir a sus iglesias de predilección ocultando su verdadera identidad. Un sinnúmero han sufrido al escuchar a sus pastores o sacerdotes realizar expresiones de condenas en su contra.

También es importante que la iglesia entienda que debe estar separada de los asuntos laicos de los gobiernos, ya que teniendo la protección del libre culto, inmiscuirse en Leyes que buscan otorgar derechos a los

Es hora que la iglesia comience a hacer una realidad sus pronunciamientos de amor y misericordia, pero sobre todo es el momento oportuno para que comience a respetar la orientación sexual de los gays y lo que supone el libre albedrío en su aplicación más sencilla, 'la salvación es individual'.

gays, les hace promotores del discrimen, la homofobia y sus consecuencias sociales.

Debemos como sociedad democrática, poder lograr comprender que todos y todas debemos tener los mismos derechos. Esto incluye el derecho de una persona gay a poder creen en Dios y adorarle con el corazón, sin ser condenado o condenada por otra persona creyente y heterosexual.

El respeto que merece una persona heterosexual, lo merece una persona gay a sus creencias, a sus derechos constitucionales, así como merece respeto hacia su orientación sexual de nacimiento.

Es hora que la iglesia comience a hacer una realidad sus pronunciamientos de amor y misericordia, pero sobre todo es el momento oportuno para que comience a respetar la orientación sexual de los gays y lo que supone el libre albedrío en su aplicación más sencilla, 'la salvación es individual'.

Los gays creyentes, merecen en Semana Santa o en tiempos de pascua, el respeto a sus creencias y el abrazo inclusivo y "misericordioso" de la iglesia.

Quien esté libre de pecado que tire la primera piedra. Quien diga ser creyente y decida juzgar sin mesura y sin misericordia a un gay, debe mirar la viga en su ojo, antes de mirar la paja en el ojo de su prójimo.

Para comentarios puede escribir a eljimgua@live.com o via Twitter: @eljimgua (<https://twitter.com/eljimgua>). *Activista de derechos humanos de Puerto Rico.

Activismo LGBT, ¡Reactivémonos a la lucha!

Por: Wilfred W. Labiosa*/Columnista de TRT



PHOTO: ERIC HESS

Se va logrando tanto en relación a nuestros derechos como comunidad LGBT, pero todavía no tenemos una igualdad o equidad absoluta. Aunque se logre el derecho a adopciones y al matrimonio igualitario en toda la nación norteamericana, Puerto Rico, o el mundo, la lucha por tantas otras cosas no termina. El activismo nunca termina. El mes de Orgullo-Pride está por llegar y aunque es el mes donde más se habla del tema, no debería ser así. El activismo por una igualdad y equidad absoluta es actividad de todo el año.

Como comunidad LGBT, activista o no, debemos todos seguir el trabajo de educar a otros/as sobre nuestra comunidad Latina y LGBT y abogar por igualdad. La educación, como se dice, comienza en casa. Como personas LGBT debemos de aprender de temas que nos afectan como comunidad ya que no todo es sobre matrimonios gay. ¡Gente, vamos a educarnos! Por ejemplo, hay que abogar por el derecho a una migración justa de parejas e individuos LGBT, por la aceptación e igualdad de nuestra@s herman@s transgénero/transsexuales y por erradicar la homofobia en centros de cuidado médico y salud pública. Debemos de resguardar los derechos de las personas de la tercera edad, para que puedan tener servicios y cuidados necesarios como personas LGBT. Vamos a movilizarnos en contra de los atropellos a nuestra comunidad LGBT aquí, en nuestro "patio", y en países latinos. ¡Aboga por igualdad allá y acá!

Hay tanto trabajo de hacer para llegar a una igualdad completa. Como he dicho anteriormente, no estamos buscando derechos diferentes, sino que abogamos por los mismos derechos de todos/as en la sociedad, por una igualdad en derechos. Nuestro motivo principal debería ser el de educar y celebrar nuestra diversidad, y la importancia de nuestra historia LGBT, de nuestro movimiento presente y de todo lo que nos queda por hacer para poder traer la igualdad que debe-

mos tener.

Quizás seas una persona que no te sientes cómodo@ en salir y estar en una marcha o protesta, o eres una persona que se dice no soy un/a activista, todavía puedes hacer tantas cosas desde tu propia casa. Puedes ayudar enviando cartas a los legisladores, al gobernador y demás funcionarios políticos o puedes donar dinero (o tiempo) a organizaciones que abogan por la igualdad LGBT. Compañer@ no tienes que donar dinero a organizaciones grandes ni en cantidades grandes, puedes aprender de organizaciones como The Network/La Red y/o dar un donativo pequeño a grupos comunitarios como MassEquality. Esto se considera ser un activista, una persona que se activa y actúa pro algún tema que lo/a apasiona. ¡Tod@s podemos ser activistas! No tenemos que ir tan lejos para aprender de la importancia del activismo social. Nuestros/as hermanos/as transgéneros están pasando por problemas también. A ellos/as no se le reconocen los mismos derechos que todos/as en este estado tienen. Ellos no tienen igualdad. Debemos de aprender sobre la importancia de la comunidad transgénero en la sociedad y tomar un pie firme en contra de la transfobia.

Hay tanto por hacer, tan pocos recursos y tan pocos activistas haciendo el trabajo. Vamos a tomar conciencia de la importancia del activismo y de apoyar a activistas o actividades locales o nacionales que se enfocan en la igualdad de derechos para tod@s. Recuerden de la importancia que cada uno de ustedes tiene - cada persona LGBT cuenta y es importante. Vamos a ser activistas en contra de la homofobia, transfobia, crímenes de odio, hostilidad a nuestra comunidad LGBT de la tercera edad y a todo lo negativo que está afectando nuestra comunidad Latina y LGBT.

*Escrito por Wilfred W. Labiosa, director regional de Unid@s: La Organización Nacional Latina LGBT. Editado por Grisel Martínez Ocasio.

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The Network/La Red: Acabando con el abuso de parejas en las comunidades LGBTQ, poliamorosas y sadoomasoquistas

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Stephen Petronio's Locomotor/ Non Locomotor is an evening-length, full-company work in two parts featuring an original score by electronic hip-hop pioneer Clams Casino. "There's a visceral thrill to Stephen Petronio's choreography that is unlike anything offered by other contemporary choreographers..." — The New York Times

Audience members are invited to a pre-show talk at the University Museum of Contemporary Art (lower level of FAC) at 6:30 p.m., and to stay for a post-performance talk with Stephen Petronio immediately following the performance.

SEASON SPONSORS: Baystate Health and Health New England. Event Sponsors: Applewood Retirement Community, 93.9 The River



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The Fab Faux have been spoken of as "the greatest Beatles cover band — without the wigs," by Rolling Stone senior editor David Fricke, who wrote, "the Faux invigorate the artistry of even the Beatles' most intricate studio masterpieces with top chops and Beatlemania glee." Approaching the songs with the intent of playing them live as accurately in musical reading and in spirit as possible, they will perform the Abbey Road album in its entirety, as well as other works.

Enjoy a free pre-show dessert party on the plaza, live entertainment and a cash bar. Party starts at 6:30 p.m.

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Laverne Cox, Phylicia Rashad & Raven-Symone

By: Romeo San Vicente*/Special to TRT

DEEP INSIDE HOLLYWOOD



Court attire is the new black for Laverne Cox

She was the first trans actor nominated for an Emmy for *Orange is the New Black*. And now Laverne Cox can lay claim to another bit of queer history by being the first trans actor cast in a major network TV program. *Doubt*, the upcoming CBS drama, will feature Cox as a transgender attorney opposite stars KaDee Strickland and Dreama Walker. It's important to understand how significant this is, when for years it has been routine to cast non-trans actors in trans roles, as though trans actors simply did not exist. Don't get us wrong, Eddie Redmayne is going to be fine in that upcoming film where he plays a trans woman. But there's no going back and pretending that actors like him are the only casting choice, and we have bold people like Cox to thank for that. Now take this thing to a series order, CBS.

Phylicia Rashad and Raven-Symone will

play lesbians on TV

Two women from *The Cosby Show* have new jobs as lesbian characters on two different shows. Phylicia Rashad, the former Clair Huxtable, will star as a lesbian FBI agent working in the Justice Department in the pilot for the new CBS drama *For Justice*. And to add a little more prestige to the mix, it'll be directed by acclaimed filmmaker Ava DuVernay (*Selma*). Meanwhile, Raven-Symone, *Cosby*'s later-season MVP and star of *That's So Raven*, will appear on ABC's *Black-ish*, as Anthony Anderson's lesbian sister who's not entirely comfortable talking about her sexual orientation. And you thought this was going to be a report about them playing an intergenerational couple, admit it.



Raven-Symone

PHOTO: KATH CLICK

To read the rest of this story visit:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-3u0>

Religious Freedoms from page 2

behind their religion to maintain the right to discriminate against it.

Despite common sense, a new religious freedom law has passed in Indiana. Known to be the most extreme discriminatory law of its kind, made possible by the RFRA, such a law "could empower any individual to sue the government to attempt to end enforcement of a non-discrimination law," the HRC released in a statement. "The evangelical owner of a business providing a secular service can sue claiming that their personal faith empowers them to refuse to hire Jews, divorcees, or LGBT people. A landlord could claim the right to refuse to rent an apartment to a Muslim or a transgender person. By passing a state RFRA, the state puts the power to decide what constitutes religious discrimination in the hands of the state Supreme Court. Given the fact that state Supreme Courts tend to reflect the leanings of the state as a whole, this places a gay couple in Mississippi at much greater risk than a gay couple in Rhode Island."

The battlefield is getting more bloodied by the day. To date, lawmakers have introduced more than 85 anti-LGBT bills in 28 state leg-

islatures. To interpret the bible to hurt others, not to "love thy neighbor," and judge them as if you were almighty, and to seclude and segregate them is not what Christ taught according to that same bible. It shouldn't be the belief of anyone. First I'd heard, "love the sinner, not the sin." This horrible rhetoric then evolved to become "hurt anyone whom you disagree with, according to your biased interpretation." Christ never spoke of "homosexuals" but people did and it reflected their own bias. First it was against Native Americans, then Blacks, later Muslim, Indians, Mexicans and anyone who was different somehow. Similar treatment is given to us women too. When will this stop? If the entitled majority, read right-wing, red state Republicans, would start educating themselves more about diversity and understanding other people, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, faiths, etc., they too would realize that they are on the wrong side of history. And the count keeps ticking. Now is not the time to become complacent.

*Nicole Lashomb holds an MBA from Marylhurst University & a Bachelor's from SUNY Potsdam. Reach her at: editor@therainbowtimesmass.com.

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Girl Blitz Festival with 12 bands, 2 stages to benefit *Life Abstract* feature film

Featuring Uh Huh Her with Leisha Hailey (The L-Word), NBC's Voice Semi-Finalist, Kristen Merlin, Antigone Rising, Suzanne Westenhoefer, Mimi Gonzalez

BOSTON, Mass.—Kada Films is proud to present: Girl Blitz, a Voices for Hope Benefit Concert takes place on April 18th at Mechanic Hall in Worcester, MA, features an amazing line up of nationally recognized bands and prominent Hollywood stars such as Leisha Haley from the L-Word, Kristin Merlin from NBC's The Voice, Catie Curtis, Suzanne Westenhoefer, Melissa Ferrick, Sick of Sarah, Antigone Rising, Mimi Gonzales and a dozen more performers who believe deeply in the mission of Kada Films. This innovative fundraiser is the first of its kind to raise money to make a lesbian-themed feature film, *Life Abstract*, by filmmaker Dawna Sirard.

Girl Blast features 12 Bands and 2 Stages, a VIP party, live auction and raffle. Estimated attendance is 2000+. All performers, cast and crew will be on hand for a meet-and-greet. The follow-up Girl Blitz Concert film will tour the USA in 2014 and reach tens of thousands viewers.

The Girl Blitz and Life Abstract Connection: Lack of Funding for Women's and Lesbian Films

Girl Blitz is an innovative fundraiser for the feature film, *Life Abstract*, a brilliant new narrative film by Dawna Sirard. Dawna recognized that funding for independent films, and especially for women independent filmmakers was scarce. Add that the film is a Lesbian independent feature film, and the traditional funding just got that much harder. Dawna was determined to make this important fea-



PHOTO: GIRL BLITZ

ture film and decided to raise the money with some ingenuity and a lot of help from the community. She created Girl Blitz and the outpouring of support from Hollywood celebrities, nationally recognized musicians, performers, small and large businesses and non-profit organizations has been astounding.

After completing the screenplay and seeking funding, it became apparent to Sirard that a novel approach to raising money would be required. She found that the message of her film struck a chord for many members of the LGBTQ community and women at large. "It's been amazing to see how much this project inspires and unites people. Art therapists, children protection groups, LGBTQ organizations, art communities, abuse survivors and people passionate about raising awareness have come together to support us," said Sirard.

The theme of healing from the trauma of child abuse deeply resonates with many of the project's performers and supporters.

Comedian Suzanne Westenhoefer, three-time winner of GLAMA for best comedy CD, came on board first as MC. "I'm honored to participate in such a great cause,"

See Girl Blitz on Page 15

Mass. Commission from page 3

accommodation will go a long way helping our LGBTQ youth."

While Mass. Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito support the work of the Commission, with Polito attending a ceremony swearing in the members of the Commission in mid-March, both Baker and Polito oppose expansion of the state's public accommodations protections. When *The Rainbow Times* asked why Polito opposes the expansion, the governor's communications director, Tim Buckley, provided the following statement: "The administration fully supports the Transgender Equal Rights Act that became law in 2011 because the administration believes everyone in Massachusetts should be protected against discrimination and prefers the current law regarding public accommodations."

Kay-Webster said the Public Accommodations Bill stands out to her as especially important.

"As an elder trans woman, I lived during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. My grandparents took me on a trip from California to Georgia when I was just fourteen years old, and I clearly recall the hateful and discriminatory signs posted at restaurants, restrooms, motels, and water fountains in the South," said Kay-Webster. "Basically, without the passage of the Public Accommodations Bill, Massachusetts is condoning these same hateful and discriminatory actions in our great Commonwealth. The trans youth of today should not have to



PHOTO: DAVID WEBSTER

Erica Kay Webster, founder, CEO and president of the Foundation For International Justice, Inc. and CEO and executive director of Promise Place School

live under the same conditions that were once considered normal in the South over 50 years ago. It is time for Massachusetts to catch up with the other States that have already passed such legislation. If the Public Accommodations Bill is not passed in 2015, The Foundation For International Justice is prepared to take legal action."

To read the full report and all of the Commission's recommendations, visit <http://tiny.cc/massgovyouth>.

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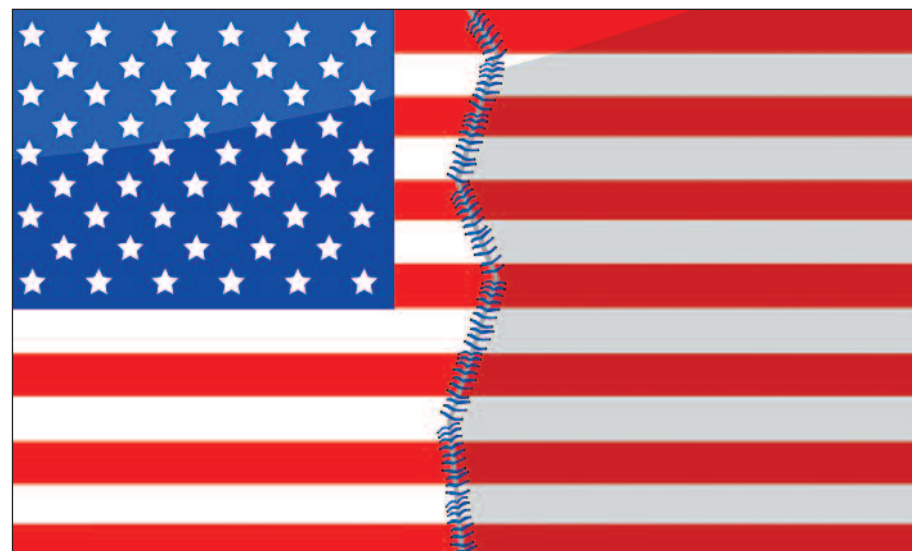
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Anti-LGBT bills introduced in 28 states: A country divided by "religious freedoms"

The wave of anti-LGBT bills filed across the country continues to swell. As of today, lawmakers have introduced more than 85 anti-LGBT bills in 28 state legislatures.

Some state legislative sessions have already drawn to a close, but other state legislatures will be in session for several more weeks or even months. So far this year 34 anti-LGBT bills in nine states have been defeated or failed to meet key legislative deadlines, but two have passed—one in Arkansas and one in Indiana.

Among the recently introduced anti-LGBT legislation is a pair of bills in Nevada that would allow individuals and businesses to use religion to challenge or opt out of laws, including laws that protect LGBT people from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. Similar legislation was also recently introduced in Montana and is still pending in Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri, Texas and elsewhere.

Bills that would allow adoption agencies

to use religion to discriminate against eligible parents and guardians have been newly introduced in Alabama and Florida. These new bills are similar to a series of bills moving through the Michigan legislature.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, HRC, the states considering "religious refusal" are:

• **Western:** Hawaii, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado

• **Midwest:** South Dakota, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan

• **South:** Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama

• **East Coast:** Maine, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida

Read the rest of this story at:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-3tQ>

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TOP 10 BEST SELLER VIDEOS

LESBIAN TOP 10

1. Happy End
2. Orange is the New Black Season 2
3. Life Partners
4. Boy Meets Girl
5. Tru Love
6. Violette
7. PRIDE
8. Heterosexual Jill
9. Stud Life
10. Reaching for the Moon

Courtesy: WolfeVideo.com

GAY TOP 10

1. Boys
2. The Circle
3. Boy Meets Girl
4. Love is Strange
5. The Way He Looks
6. Cupcakes
7. Such Good People
8. Sordid Lives: Blu-ray/DVD combo pack
9. PRIDE
10. Looking: The Complete First Season

One-on-One: Barney Frank still has all the right moves

By: Sarah Toce/The Seattle Lesbian

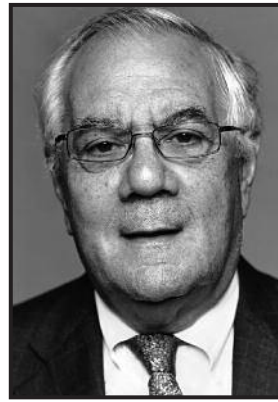
Barney Frank's effortless ability to relate to common folk on issues concerning civil rights is uncanny. The Harvard grad-turned political powerhouse has had his fair say in the causes that have dominated the past 50 years, including the AIDS funding crisis, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). In between advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., the New Jersey native vowed to fight the good fight, even if that meant fighting (at times) from the closet.

"Here's a deal I made with myself in 1972: I decided I would run for the state legislature 43 years ago. And at that time I knew if I was honest about being gay I couldn't win; and I wanted to win because I would enjoy it, but I thought I could do some good. But I made this promise: while I'm not going to be honest about myself, I'm going to fight very hard for gay rights. I decided then that

the worst thing we have are hypocrites who are closeted gay people who then vote for anti-gay legislation. So I'm very proud that it was 43 years ago that I introduced the first gay rights bill," Frank said. "And some might have said, 'Well if

[advocate] for gay rights will they think I'm gay?' And the answer was, look, that I can't deal with. I can hide myself, but I cannot hold back. And I'm very proud of having done that for all these years."

Read the rest of this story at:
<http://tiny.cc/trtbf Frank>



Barney Frank
PHOTO: FACEBOOK

Girl Blitz from Page 13

said Westenhoefer.

Bass guitarist for **Antigone Rising**, Kristen Ellis-Henderson offered her thoughts as well, "As a mother I know how important it is to protect our children. I believe this film will go a long way toward starting a conversation about how to do that."

"We are proud to be a part of this project," added **Sick of Sarah** lead-singer Abisha Uhl. "We have experience with these struggles in our own lives even; struggles with change, road to recovery, add in a little love story - definitely relatable."

"Equal in importance," stated singer **Kristen Merlin**, "is the film's LGBTQ genre. Although gay and lesbian films are becoming more accepted in mainstream media, it's still important that we do everything we can to support projects that positively represent our community."

Other supporters of this important topic

include the American Art Therapy Association and Darkness to Light, a child advocacy organization that strives to protect children from abuse.

The Ms. Foundation recently referred to the project as a "new creative platform that will entertain, engage and unite diverse communities."

Girl Blitz Concert Film

The outpouring of support from nationally recognized LGBT leaders, prominent Hollywood figures, musicians and national organizations has turned Girl Blitz into a national destination event, with plans to create a Girl Blast Concert Film by Alexis Fish, the producer of John Cameron Mitchell's acclaimed film, Short Bus. The concert film will tour at LGBT Film Festivals across the country, and our sponsors are welcome to participate in the yearlong film tour as well as the Girl Blitz event.

are sensitive to that population and may know a lot more about it and be LGBTQ or what have you, so we have a careful system when we're assessing anybody's need for treatment in any case."

Recently, ServiceNet was given a 2014 Award for Excellence in Overall Best Practices by the Mental Health Corporations of America. The organization has a staff of 1,200-1,500 with revenues of \$50 million per year. Every day the organization sees approximately 500 people just within their outpatient services.

Paint The Town (La Red) will be held from 6 to 10:30 p.m. on April 23. Tickets are available at various prices to make sure financial components do not prohibit attendees. If a person is unable to afford the cost, they can reach out to the organization to ask about volunteer opportunities in order to get free admission to the event. Tickets are available online, as well as the day of the event. To learn more, visit www.tnlr.org. For more on Fenway Health, GLBTQDVP and, Safe Passage and ServiceNet Inc., visit www.fenwayhealth.org, www.glbtqdv.org, www.safepass.org, and www.servicenet.org respectively.

La Red from Page 5

[Paint The Town (La) Red]. It's nice a fun, community-based event. We sort of grew up alongside The Network/La Red and have both done work up at the Statehouse together."

Many organizations that are not specific to people of the LGBTQ community still try to provide services. For example, Safe Passage of Western Mass. offers all of their services such as counseling, a hotline, and legal assistance and attempts to make any necessary adjustments specific to the case. Another Western Massachusetts-based provider, ServiceNet Inc., has the same philosophy.

"We're not [LGBTQ] specific, but we do attempt to try to address the specifics of those needs when they are presented to us," said Jim Frutkin, vice president of clinical services at ServiceNet Inc. "We have programs and services that address the issue from two sides of the equation, so obviously on the victim side of the equation in terms of treating people who have experienced violence or domestic violence or abuse, our outpatient clinics provide evidence-based treatment specific to that need. Then we have folks working as clinicians who also

NE Prides from page 10

table, we introduce them from the stages so that they can continue a dialogue at their tables and as they walk through the area. We are not party-specific. Last year we had representation from Democrats, Republicans and Independents. This year there are many municipal elections, which traditionally are nonpartisan. We look forward to interacting with them."

According to Trobaugh, Worcester hosts "the most family-friendly Pride in the region," with The Woo Church sponsoring a kids area with bounce houses, an art center and various games.

For more information, visit Worcester Pride's site at: www.worcesterpride.org.

Springfield Pride 2015 will be held September 17-22 in Springfield, Mass. The public will vote on the theme during the summer months via the group's Facebook page, but the line-up of events is already taking shape with a flag raising ceremony, LGBT Hall of Fame Reception, and festival included among the activities.

"The Springfield Mass Pride committee works hard to ensure that events are accessible for the young and the mature, for the politically active and the simply curious, with activities to stimulate the intellect and move the feet," said Nelson Rafael Roman, board president of the Imperial Court of Western Mass, fiscal agent for Springfield Mass Pride 2015, and Springfield Mass Pride board member. "A huge component of Springfield Pride is that we are committed to providing a majority of our events free of charge, although some events do require an

There are no other Pride festivals north of Northampton, Mass. or Portland, Maine that we are aware of," said Willie Docto, marketing committee chair at PRIDE Vermont.

entrance/cover charge. Our events are open to all members of the public and are reflective of Springfield's rich diversity."

Other events will include the Third Annual Triple Corona Pageant, held by the Imperial Court of Western Mass; the Fourth Annual "Love Unites-Springfield PRIDE" Interfaith Service; an open mic night and an LGBT film night.

The Springfield Mass PRIDE committee is made up of members from Tapestry Health, Oz/XRoom/Pure Nightclubs, the Imperial Court of Western Mass, Bearhampton, area youth, and community supporters and leaders.

For more information, visit their site: www.facebook.com/SpringfieldMassPride.

NOTE: Pride Rhode Island (June 20) was also contacted but did not respond before press time.

We should all have the right to make our own end-of-life decisions.



To get involved on this important issue, connect with us:

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