

The Rainbow Times

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

Year in Review p. 14

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LGBT YOUTH HOMELESSNESS
Local Organizations Work to Fight the Epidemic p5

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TATUM CHANNING
Star Known to Have the Big Gay Bug in His Ear p9

PHOTO: MYRIAM QUINONES



JOSSIE VALENTÍN
Wins Holyoke City Council Seat, Politics Favoring LGBTs p5

FENWAY: PRESENTS ORIGINAL LATIN@ FILM p7

BGMC: HAULS OUT THE HOLLY IN CONCERT p8

LGBT COALITION: NEW DIRECTOR NAMED p15



PHOTO: JESUS CORDERO

It's GLORIA

Estefan Saved by the Gays! p12

Gays deserve to die, Salvation Army

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

By the end of 2013, you would think that anti-gay Salvation Army would come to a greater understanding of the LGBT community, even if by a small fraction.

Instead, it has doubled down and amped up its hypocritical and bigoted position, even defending part of its doctrine that “gays need to be put to death.” Sound dramatic? It is ... and it’s true.

For an organization that “serves” the needy, one would think it should be about charity. Instead, it is an organization full of politics that attempts to eradicate anyone that does not conform to its ideals.

While the organization has made recent attempts to debunk the myth that it is not anti-gay through its public relations efforts, it has been largely unsuccessful.

Though the organization boasts that roughly 20 percent of the youth in its shelters identify as LGBT, there is additional pressure on those youth to denounce who they are, even leading to referrals to ex-gay groups. I wouldn’t call that “charitable.” Charity should not come with such a high cost, especially one that attempts to strip you of your identity.

According to a recent article on the Huff-

ington Post, a Salvation Army Media Relations Director, Andrew Craibe, participated in a radio program with journalist Serena Ryan to “discuss a recent call by LGBTQ parents for a boycott of the nonprofit for its anti-gay policies and beliefs.”

In the manual used to “train” Salvation Army “soldiers,” the *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine*, refers to the sin of homosexuality multiple times, even citing Romans 1:18-32, which reprimands homosexuals and indicates that they “deserved to die.”

When questioned about this “belief,” Craibe confirmed and defended that indeed, it was a part of their creed.

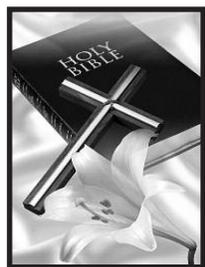
This Holiday Season, I will not be donating to the “Army of Salvation.” However, I will be putting my gay dollars to work in local community and national organizations that actually serve the needy, every one of them without discrimination and who believe we are all entitled to at least a modicum of pride, respect and dignity.

*Nicole Lashomb is the *The Rainbow Times*’ co-owner, co-founder and editor-in-chief. Contact her at *The Rainbow Times* via: editor@therainbowtimesmass.com.

This Holiday Season, I will not be donating to the “Army of Salvation.” I will put my gay dollars to work for other organizations...

Thought: Send Pope Francis a Christmas Card

By: Paul P. Jesepe* / TRT Columnist



It troubles me when I read hopeful though uninformed LGBTQ writers or activists suggesting Pope Francis is ushering in a new age of acceptance toward the community. It’s premature. Pope Francis

ships. The Pope should be praised for trying to change the attitude toward LGBTQ people, especially in comparison to the last two harshly judgmental popes. How can loving someone, and wanting to have a life and family with another be a sin? Theologically and philosophically, the idea and concept of sin must be re-examined, but that’s for another column.

Good people unintentionally say hurtful things. Pope Francis is such a person. Accepting LGBTQ people as sinners is an unintended form of spiritual abuse. He must be pressed to go further.

In June 2013, Pope Francis responded in writing to a letter (<http://tiny.cc/pp336w>) received from an association of gay and lesbian Italian Catholics. The gesture was unprecedented. It was reported he sent the group his blessings and according to a high level official, Pope Francis “really enjoyed” hearing from the group. The organization’s letter was respectful and sent in the spirit of Christian love. If you step back and look at the big picture, the extraordinary advances made in LGBTQ civil

Pope Francis is a gentle, sincere man who is loving, humble and compassionate. He does not, however, fully understand the depth and beauty of LGBTQ families and relationships.

changed the tone, not the message, at least not yet. Catholic institutional misunderstanding continues, though it is now being tempered by a different messenger. The current Pope calls those who seek to love, be loved, and join together in family “sinners,” (<http://tiny.cc/1m336w>) but he won’t judge. You are no longer an “abomination,” the once often used and more negatively sounding label used to describe God’s LGBTQ children.

Pope Francis is a gentle, sincere man who is loving, humble and compassionate. He does not, however, fully understand the depth and beauty of LGBTQ families and relation-

How do we stop anti-LGBTQ bullying?

By: Keegan O’Brien* / Special for TRT



[This story was first published by The Nation in Nov. 2013]

According to a nationwide study conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

(www.glsen.org/safespace), 90 percent of LGBTQ students report hearing derogatory language or experience some type of verbal bullying, and more than 50 percent experience some kind of physical harassment or assault. LGBTQ students are five times more likely to cut class or skip school because they feel unsafe, while 28 percent will drop out of school altogether because of bullying. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer youth are five times more likely to attempt or commit suicide than their straight peers, while trans youth are nine times more likely.

In 2011 the “It Gets Better” campaign became a national phenomenon. Thousands of people—from celebrities like Lady Gaga to ordinary high school students—produced video messages of support for LGBTQ youth struggling with bullying. The decision of so many to show their solidarity with LGBTQ youth, and the way in which the “It Gets Better” campaign helped catapult the issue of bullying and suicide into the national spotlight, is a major advance for the LGBTQ movement.

But we can’t leave the responsibility of ending anti-LGBTQ bullying and youth suicide on the shoulders of the victims. By telling LGBTQ

... the same Democratic politicians who are willing to speak at LGBTQ events, solicit LGBTQ votes, take LGBTQ donations and advocate for LGBTQ equality are the same officials complicit in cutting funding for the very programs that LGBTQ youth depend on.

youth who are experiencing violence and struggling with suicide that it’s their responsibility alone to overcome and survive these struggles, without also highlighting the ...

Read the rest of this story at: <http://wp.me/p22M41-2vE>

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Yes, John Roberts...anyone who hates gays this much is very gay themselves. I feel so sorry for them. The amount of hate and self-loathing they must feel...

—Valerie Smith, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Scott Lively Begins Court Proceedings for Crimes Against Humanity] All of the bible thumpers seem to be so much into lgbt things. I wonder at times if they are just closeted gays. And, if not, then they certainly love to judge thy neighbor and quote verses from the bible that are convenient for them. It’s always about Sodom, yet they don’t talk about how humanely imperfect they are and their choices in life. I bet if they examined their lives first and weren’t as hypocritical as they are, they would just stop this crap. Live and let live, love thy neighbor as yourself and by God, stop the judging. It sucks.

—John Roberts, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: Breaking: Illinois House Passes Marriage Equality Bill] Another victory for gay marriage as Illinois joins the other 15 states in finally removing some of the barriers to Gay and Lesbian full participation in the American Dream.

As ideas of traditional marriage slowly dissolve the notions of traditional marriage are as dated as some of the vintage images we’ve grown up with. It wasn’t long ago that the notion of gay marriage was inconceivable as portrayed in a 1972 homophobic comic book which ominously predicted a future filled with...gasp gay marriage.

—Sally Edelstein, Online

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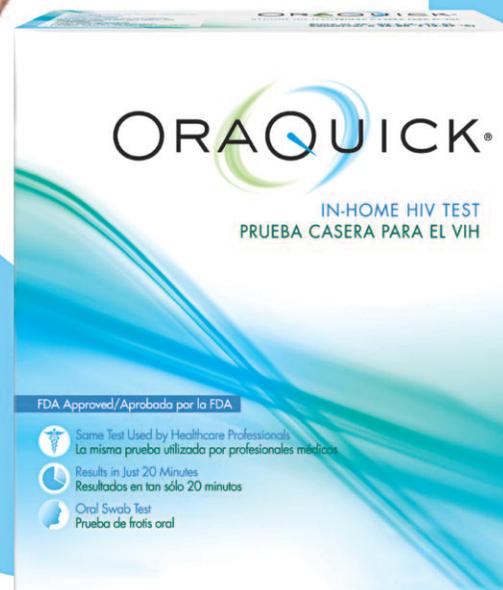
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Celebrating Goodridge: 10 years of marriage equality marked by special event in Boston

EQUALITY & HISTORY

By: Chuck Colbert/TRTReporter

BOSTON, Mass.—On the same day the governor signed legislation making same-sex marriages legal in Illinois and the Catholic bishop of Springfield, the state capital, offered prayers of exorcism in Latin during a worship service in opposition to the law, LGBT residents of Massachusetts were celebrating the decade-old *Goodridge* decision, an historic high court ruling that ushered marriage equality into the Commonwealth and nation.

The occasion was marked by a lecture given November 20 by Mary L. Bonauto, civil rights project director for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), titled “The Goodridge Decision: 10 Years Out.” The event was held at the Old South Meeting House, located in downtown Boston. Ten years ago, Bonauto argued on behalf of GLAD’s seven plaintiff couples before the state’s Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), which on November 18, 2003, issued its *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* ruling in favor of them.

“[*Goodridge*] held gay people up in this state and across this nation, and I think forever

transformed any effort to try to create equality for gay people judged against the standard of ‘Is it really equal? Is it really the same standard?’” Bonauto said.

It was a multi-media lecture, featuring a slide-show presentation and video testimonials to the positive effects of *Goodridge* and its subsequent ramifications. The video is titled “Goodridge at 10: Celebrating a Landmark Ruling and a Decade of Marriage Equality.”

“The decision and its courage caused people to rally behind its core principles of dignity, liberty and equality for all people, even in the context of marriage,” Bonauto said, addressing a gathering of about 100 or more people. “*Goodridge* is the one that broke that historic barrier. *Goodridge*, in my view, has made all the future progress that we had possible.”

In her remarks, Bonauto was referring to attempts by the Massachusetts Legislature and others, as well as state courts and other legislative bodies, to create separate but inherently unequal civil-unions or domestic-partnership provisions.

Bonauto read portions from the decision; perhaps its most often cited passages, some of which are read at same-sex wedding ceremonies:

“Marriage is a vital social institution. The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. For those who

choose to marry, and for their children, marriage provides an abundance of legal, financial and social benefits. In return it imposes weighty legal, financial and social obligations. The question before us is whether, consistent with the Massachusetts

Constitution, the Commonwealth may deny the protections, benefits and obligations conferred by civil marriage to two individuals of the same sex who wish to marry. We conclude that it may not. The Massachusetts Constitution affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals. It forbids the creation of second-class citizens. In reaching our conclusion we have given full deference to the arguments made by the Commonwealth. But it has failed to identify any constitutionally adequate reason for denying civil marriage to same-sex couples.”

The author of *Goodridge*, then Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall, continued in her opinion, “We are mindful that our decision marks a change in the history of our marriage law.”

As Marshall explained, “The marriage ban works a deep and scarring hardship on a very real segment of the community for no rational reason.” She also wrote, “The absence of any reasonable relationship between, on the one hand, an absolute disqualification of same-sex couples who wish to enter into civil marriage and, on the other, protection of public health,



Mary L. Bonauto

safety, or general welfare, suggests that the marriage restriction is rooted in persistent prejudices against persons who are (or who are believed to be) homosexual.”

In the short **video clip** (<http://tiny.cc/tt136w>) Marshall spoke on camera about a “poignant” *Goodridge* moment she had with a work colleague who told her, “I always thought I knew who I was until I read this decision.”

“I think we shouldn’t overlook what gays and lesbians and transgender people have had to face in their real lives in the past,” said Marshall.

The former chief justice also spoke in the video to the power of marriage equality in real life. At a same-sex marriage, Marshall explained, people see “what they see at every marriage: People in love, people are happy, walk down an aisle, usually. Sometimes you stamp on a glass. Other times you don’t. Somebody says: ‘Kiss the spouse. Kiss the groom. Kiss the bride.’ People kiss. Clap, clap.”

Of course, *Goodridge* infuriated opponents of LGBT equality, as Bonauto detailed in her talk. Multiple state and federal lawsuits attempted to block its implementation. Nevertheless, Massachusetts began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples May 17, 2004. Still, until 2007, state lawmakers deliberated in a dozen and-a-half special sessions, called Constitutional Conventions, proposing measures attempting to place anti-gay marriage bans before voters—all of which failed. At the same time, Governor Mitt Romney did everything in his power to derail *Goodridge* until

Read the rest of this story at: <http://wp.me/p22M41-2vK>

“The message was received. Marriage would not remain an island in Massachusetts. It was here to stay.” — Bonauto

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Organizations shine light on LGBTQ youth homelessness

By: Lauren Walleser/TRT Assistant Editor

LGBTQ YOUTH

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—More than 100 people gathered at the Cambridge Public Library last month to listen to the stories of several homeless youth who identify as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer and who are featured in a new documentary, *No Place Like Home*, about the struggles and survival of unaccompanied homeless youth living on the streets in Harvard Square.

“Young adult homelessness is both very complicated and very simple,” said Ayala Livny, program manager for Youth on Fire (YOF), a prevention program of AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts that operates as a drop-in center for homeless youth in Harvard Square. “Very simply put, young folks are homeless for pretty much three main reasons: they’re homeless because home doesn’t exist, home isn’t safe, and home isn’t supportive.”

According to Livny, between 20 and 40

percent of homeless youth on the national level identify as LGBTQ, as well as about 35 percent of the approximately 500 young people who are served by YOF each year. Once on the street, LGBTQ youth are disproportionately likely to experience violence and victimization. They have difficulty finding shelters and are often discriminated against or attacked in adult shelters, which Livny and others referred to as a “meat market, where the strong prey on the weak.” In order to find a warm place to sleep and a hot meal, some youth turn to prostitution or sleeping with older men who offer to put them up in exchange for sexual favors.



Nyla Rose (homeless youth) with David Coleman (musical arrangement) preparing to record “Invisible Butterfly,” a song written by Neil MacInnes-Barker for the documentary *No Place Like Home*.

PHOTO: NEIL MACINNES-BARKER, WIT•101 PRODUCTIONS

“We have young folks who don’t have options, and so they make decisions that aren’t necessarily in their best long term interests, because all they can do is prioritize what they need today,” said Livny.

The event, “LGBTQ Young Adult Homelessness: Stories of Risk and Resilience,” was sponsored by the Cambridge GLBT Commission, the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, and YOF as an opportunity for their members to share their experiences, challenge stereotypes and mo-

Together, they would break into buildings and sleep in elevator shafts, laundromats, and sometimes by the swamp in the Fens. Today, she is the only one of the foursome still living.

bilize the community to work towards influencing public policy that will help fund more services for homeless youth.

YOF serves youth ages 14 to 24, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and provides services in the form of food, showers, laundry facilities, lockers, socks and underwear; support in the form of case managers; and opportunities for leadership, growth and development, including their speaker’s bureau.

Read the rest of this story online at <http://wp.me/p22M41-2vN>



PHOTO: MYRIAM QUINONES

Jossie Valentin won the Holyoke Ward 4 City Councilor seat last month

Is Holyoke the new Northampton for LGBTQ politics?

Openly lesbian & Puerto Rican candidate wins seat by a landslide

By: Christine Nicco/TRT Reporter

HOLYOKE, Mass.—Is Holyoke the new Northampton for LGBTQ politics? Based on the results of municipal elections within the last 2 years, the question begs to be asked. In 2011, openly gay candidate, Alex Morse,

See Valentin on Page 11

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Lesbian playwright, performer, activist shows how to speak out against racism

By: Brook Rosini/Special to TRT

BOSTON, Mass.—Carolyn Gage is an award-winning lesbian playwright, performer and activist whose work is comprised of feminist essays, dramatic and comedic plays, books, workshops, lectures, and touring performances. The author of 12 books and more than 63 plays, Gage has dedicated her craft and life's work to encouraging people to "grow toward the light."

Gage tackles many topics, which include revealing the misogynist politics of patriarchal society, illuminating fundamental exclusionary tactics of both mainstream and marginalized social groups, and engaging people in learning about difference awareness and cultural sensitivity. Her work is designed to elevate interpersonal interactions to a higher plane through cultivating tolerance and empathy for humanity's innumerable differences, raising awareness of the essential universality of the human condition.

"All of us have internalized oppressive attitudes," Gage explained. "We have grown up in a culture that is racist and misogynist and ableist and ageist and fat phobic, and so on. Unlearning all of that is a lifelong process."

One facet of Gage's work appears in "Interrupting Racism," described on her website as

"We have grown up in a culture that is racist and misogynist and ableist and ageist and fat phobic, and so on. Unlearning all of that is a lifelong process." —Gage

"a hands-on workshop to give participants the tools to interrupt racism as it happens," in which participants learn a simple series of steps—a kind of "script"—rehearsed in role-playing situations.

"Interrupting Racism' is a shorthand title for my workshop, which is focused on teaching and rehearsing a technique for speaking up, and especially speaking up in public, whenever someone says something that is racially offensive or insensitive," Gage said.

With an emphasis on providing practical solutions for intervention when witnessing discriminatory or racist speech, "Interrupting Racism" was hosted last month by the Rainbow Lifelong Learning Institute (RLLI) of Boston in Arlington, Mass. Their mission is to offer lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender seniors and friends the opportunity to build and strengthen community through educational programs and social activities.

Gage explained that the idea to develop a workshop around the process of constructively confronting offensive speech came out of her own sense of unpreparedness when she encountered those situations herself.

"When people would say things that were offensive, I would sit there and hope someone



Carolyn Gage

that people like me would not be so caught off guard in situations like this."

Gage's workshop comes from a place of support, understanding and constructive reconditioning, where it is understood that re-wiring attitudes and perceptions to recognize, acknowledge, confront, and redirect those behaviors is difficult enough to do when the subject of scrutiny is oneself. This work becomes even more difficult when interpersonal dynamics are introduced into the mix.

"I think that instead of perceiving the confrontation as a personal attack, we could re-frame it as a form of supportive coaching," Gage said.

Marsha Gerstein, one of the founding members of RLLI and a member of the organization's Steering Committee, described the workshop as highly relevant to the nonprofit's mission.

"Learning to challenge and interrupt racism and all forms of oppression is basic to continuing to strengthen our community," Gerstein explained. Gage said she felt there are a number of reasons why it is particularly important to discuss issues of racism and how to confront it within the context of the LGBT community.

"In my experience, when people with a shared oppression or identity come together, there can be a kind of unconscious consensus that this should be the priority at the expense of other identities and experiences of oppression," Gage shared.

She cited examples from her own experience, describing moments when she felt her identity as a lesbian was expected to be her only—or at least primary—identity, prioritized above others.

"I have seen lesbians expected to check our feminism at the door of LGBT coalition organizations, and I have also seen how insensitivity to racial oppression can be 'business as usual' in predominantly white LGBT organizations," said Gage.

else would have the courage to confront [it]," said Gage. "Or, I would go home and think about all the clever things I could have and should have said. It occurred to me, because I work professionally in theatre, that perhaps there could be a script—a technique—that could be learned and practiced ahead of time, so

However, Gage recognized the special challenges that present themselves within the LGBT community, and that expanding consciousness takes time, energy and discipline.

"To be fair, authentic inclusivity takes time and it takes resources," Gage admitted. "I think of the saying, 'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' It can be a discipline to remind ourselves that it is more important to go far, and that this is going to cost us the speed and streamlining of those 'go fast' strategies which appear so seductively efficient, but which will cost us dearly down the line."

Gage commended the LGBT community on an already-heightened awareness, because community members themselves experience oppression and prejudice. However, she stressed the fact that there are other elements to racism and other forms of offensive speech so deeply entrenched in society that they become invisible.

"In my experience, most folks in LGBT organizations have enough political savvy to identify and avoid blatant expressions of racism, but we may not be so conscious of the deeply embedded, institutionalized structures that perpetuate inequality, or how these structures are affecting our assumptions and attitudes," Gage said.

When asked what she hopes for regarding the future of her work leading this workshop, Gage responded: "I teach this workshop because I believe that the more people confront unacceptable behavior, the more that behavior will be extinguished. I also teach the workshop in the hope that we will become less terrified of confronting and being confronted."

Gerstein provided her own perspective on the efficacy of the workshop and what it taught her.

"I learned a lot there, perhaps most importantly that it is important to interrupt the behavior I find abhorrent and let people know they cannot make oppressive statements without discomfort, but I am not responsible for changing their mind, or to present a completely cogent analysis of their views or words," Gerstein said.

Gage offered additional advice on how to approach this work.

"The biggest tip I can give is this: stay safe and stay focused in the confrontation," said Gage. "An effective confrontation does not need to become a power struggle."

To learn more about Carolyn Gage and her work, go to: www.carolyngage.weebly.com. For more information about the Rainbow Lifelong Learning Institute Boston, visit www.rainbowliboston.org.

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All in the family for LGBTQ Latin@s: New documentary premieres at Fenway Health

By: Chuck Colbert/TRT Reporter

BOSTON, Mass.—Faith and family—*la familia*—play critical roles in the lives and identities of many Latin@s. Sometimes, for LGBT people, the two come into tension, even sharp conflict, raising any number of questions, when a Latino man or woman comes out as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Before God, We are all Family tells in poignant and highly personal terms the stories of five religious Latino families, who dealing with negative messages from Catholic and Evangelical Protestant churches, find reconciliation in love and acceptance by parents, siblings, and extended *familia* members. Shot in the United States and Puerto Rico, *Before God* moves between English and Spanish language speakers, featuring immigrant and native-born Latin@s, who share the challenges coming out presents not only for them, but also their parents and siblings who are forced out of the closet along with them.

A screening last month at Fenway Health brought together *Before God's* producer, Alex Gómez; Lisbeth Meléndez Rivera, manager, *A La Familia* project at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation; Luz Marilis López, Ph.D., clinical associate professor at Boston University; and Oscar López, brother of Luz. The film features siblings Luz and Oscar, natives of Puerto Rico, and their story.

In the documentary, Luz spoke of growing up and attending Catholic schools where she said she received “religious messages against gays and lesbians.”

“Religion can be a source of faith and free-



PHOTO: CHUCK COLBERT
Siblings Luz Marilis López and Oscar López speaking at a “Before God, We are all Family” film screening and panel discussion, held at Fenway Health.

dom,” Luz said. “It can also be a source of oppression.”

Luz told of her first experience with a woman in the United States, which she explained on camera left her “very confused.”

“I started questioning myself,” said Luz. “Then I started praying a lot and not knowing what God wanted of me.”

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Fenway Health*, *Dignity USA* and the local Boston chapter, *The Rainbow Times*, and *New England Warriors*—all sponsored the event. Fenway Health’s Ben Perkins, associate director of community engagement, served as host and master of ceremony for the screening and panel discussion that followed afterwards.

“I think religion affected my [family member’s] reaction to my news,” Luz said. “They are very faithful, me too. They were struggling so much about God’s presence in my life.”

Before telling her parents, Luz lived with a partner, who is Jewish, for six years.

“Cultural barriers” prevented Luz from being fully open, she said, explaining, “a culture still of homophobia, so I am careful” in self-disclosures.

During the panel discussion, Luz told a gathering of about 100 people that initially she did not want to participate in the documentary.

“No way, José,” she quipped. “I am a very proud Latino Puerto Rican and talk about it comfortably, but on this topic [her sexual orientation], no way.”

After Meléndez Rivera’s pleasant persist-

ence, Luz finally agreed. For her, redemption and reconciliation came from the words of encouragement spoken by her brother Oscar to her for the first time in the documentary.

“His love and acceptance has been amazing,” Luz told the Fenway gathering.

Members of the audience at the screening voiced praise for the filmmakers and gratitude for its production, which was more than a year or so in the works.

“Often times the negative and dogmatic position of religion places family in a real bind—accept and love my child and ‘betray’ God

To read the rest of this story visit:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-2vW>



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AMERICAN IDIOT

Tuesday, February 4, 7:30 p.m., FAC Concert Hall

The New York Times calls American Idiot “thrilling and emotionally charged, as moving as anything on Broadway!” Based on Green Day’s groundbreaking rock opera of the same name, this daring new musical tells the story of three lifelong friends forced to choose between their dreams and the safety of suburbia.

(While Green Day certainly has fans of all ages, this musical contains adult content, strong language, and simulated use and ultimate rejection of drugs.)

SEASON SPONSORS: Baystate Health and Health New England/Event Sponsors: Finck & Perras Insurance, Coca-Cola, Hampshire Hospitality Group, Valley Advocate, WRSI 93.9FM



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Thursday, February 13, 7:30 p.m., Bowker Auditorium

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Boston Gay Men’s Chorus

Boston Gay Men’s Chorus presents “Haul Out the Holly” holiday performances this month

By: Lauren Walleser/TRT Assistant Editor

BOSTON, Mass.—The Boston Gay Men’s Chorus (BGMC)—whose mission is to create musical experiences to inspire change, build community and celebrate difference—will present their annual holiday show, “Haul Out the Holly,” throughout the month of December at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall.

“The Chorus’ role is to share the stories of our lives,” said BGMC Executive Director Craig Coogan. “Music builds bridges, enhances communication, breaks down stereotypes and humanizes the ‘other’ in powerful ways. Hearing a song about inclusion sung by 175 men can often help change hearts and minds. Music is the soundtrack to our lives and is how many of us express emotion. By communicating in the language of music, we can reach people who might not otherwise be open to the message of love, acceptance and inclusion.”

Music Director Rueben M. Reynolds III described their holiday show, which mixes traditional favorites with new classics.

“One of my favorite lines in the whole concert is from the opening number, *‘Joyful and Triumphant’*: We are singing for our family!” said Reynolds. “I like to think of our holiday concert as a group of family and friends who get together to celebrate. We have music from all traditions. We have song and dance. We [have] reverent music and

boisterous music! There is truly something for everyone!”

Reynolds also shared his thoughts on why The BGMC is an important part of the New England LGBT community and what impact the group has made.

“In the early years, as people were just beginning to come out, it was almost a novelty to see a chorus willing to stand up on stage and call themselves the Boston GAY Men’s Chorus,” Reynolds said. “With the advent of the AIDS crisis, we became caregivers to those brothers who had no one else and we did countless concerts aiding money for research. In the last years, we have been leaders in the same-sex marriage movement and now are working with the Family Equality Council producing concerts for families of same-sex partners. Twenty five years ago when I started on this voyage I would have never believed how far we would be able to go in such a short time!”

Nick Panagiotou, a BGMC member, said he has been with the Chorus for about two years. Besides connecting him with people of all ages and background and feeling “a strong sense of family and camaraderie,” he said the Chorus has allowed him to make a difference.

“I honestly have never been much of an activist, living very comfortably as an ...

See BGMC on page 15

Please join us for “Blue Christmas” A Service of Light, Hope and Peace



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This service is being held in partnership with TAPESTRYhealth.org

Let's put a gay bug in Channing Tatum's ear

By: Romeo San Vicente*/Special to TRT

DEEP INSIDE HOLLYWOOD



Casting call: Tom Hardy & Channing Tatum. Maybe.

At this point we won't believe anyone is playing Elton John in *Rock-etman*, the biopic of the rock 'n' roll legend's life, until the day the film opens and we see that actor wearing some oversized glasses and/or those gigantic "Pinball Wizard" platform shoes. But just in case you're more trusting, they say it's going to be Tom Hardy. We can get with this. Hardy is hot, he's idiosyncratic, he's played gay before and he's one of the more dynamic young actors working today. Now let's wait and see if it all falls apart. And while we wait, somebody go put a homosexual bug in Channing Tatum's ear, please, and get him to say yes to Paul Feig (director of *The Heat* and *Bridesmaids*), who wants the *Magic Mike* star to play gay in his new romantic comedy. John Milhiser (one of the new batch of *SNL* regulars) is already set to play an Average Joe gay guy whose life gets turned upside down when he starts dating his dream man. Feig threw Tatum's name around and it started rumors that the actor was already cast as the dreamy one, and that turned out to be wishful thinking. But if the director of *The Heat* and *Bridesmaids* can't wish out loud for Channing Tatum to become gay, then none of us can.



PHOTO: HELGA ESTEB/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Channing Tatum

It's not like Tatum didn't already get S&M crazy with Danny McBride in his cameo appearance in *This Is The End*, and whatever Feig has in store for the actor eventually cast will be much less provocative. So come on, Channing Tatum, we're all counting on you to make out with a guy on the big screen.

** Romeo San Vicente personally volunteers to teach Tatum how to convincingly kiss a man. He can be reached care of this publication or at: DeepInsideHollywood@qsyndicate.com.*



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Are you ready for the holidays? For transgender people, it may not be the same

By: Deja Nicole Greenlaw*/TRT Columnist

TRANS NEWS



Happy Holidays! Yes, it's that time of year again. It's time for gift buying and giving, shopping, decorating, baking cookies, and doing general preparations for events, especially those events which include family. If you are involved in these kinds of family festivities, I am happy for you and I hope that you don't run out of time, money and energy running yourself ragged trying to get every little thing done.

I wish you the best for the holiday seasons, but sadly, not all of us are involved in this merriment and mayhem, especially in events where family is involved. Some of us are left outside the family, not by our own choice, but because of the choices of family members to exclude us. Sometimes, when you are a little different, like being an LGBT person, you may be left off the party/presents list. You may be left out of family events even though you were included in years past. All the wonderful, happy times with your mother and father, your brothers and sisters, your spouse and your children and your extended

family were once something that you had without fail every year. Now, they may just be a distant memory. Because you are different, you may now be "out of the family." It doesn't seem fair, but it happens. Why do people exclude you? Why do people think the way they do? Here's my opinion on why the transgender exclusion may exist.

Again, we know that this is not always so, but society teaches that this is the way to gender. Most people buy this without thinking about it or questioning it.

Society sets up social mores and, as transgender people, we run up against the gender constructs. Society currently says that there is male and there is female and never the twain shall meet. We know that this is not always so. We know that there are many variations besides just 100 percent male or 100 percent female. All of us are really a blend of both male and female, the difference being that gender ratios vary from person to person. Still, society dictates that we are either one or the other, and the dictation begins at birth

when our gender is decided by our genitals. Whatever your genitals are is what is used to determine your gender. Again, we know that this is not always so, but society teaches that this is the way to gender. Most people buy this without thinking about it or questioning it. The reality of the existence of transpeople not only questions it, but also says that it's not

not ever happen. For now, all you can do is wait and hope.

So, this might be a "wait" year for you and you may not get an invite to a family event. What shall you do? You are on the outside, looking in. Yes, these may be lonely times, these holiday family times, but you may have other holiday events to attend, with friends or coworkers. Don't forget that they are your family too!

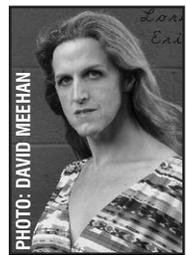
Keep yourself busy on the family event days. You may be alone that day, but that day is yours and you may do anything you wish with it. Seize that day! Maybe you can finally read that book that you wanted to read, watch that movie that you wanted to watch, listen to some favorite songs that you haven't heard in a while, and prepare yourself a nice meal. Do something that makes you happy. A wise friend once told me that she always surrounds herself with things that make her happy so that when the bad times come she has her happy things around her to get through that bad phase. I think that is a great idea.

Yes, you will get through the holidays and maybe someday, minds will change and you just may get back on the list to that family event.

*Deja Nicole Greenlaw is a local transwoman who has three grown children and works at 3M. She can be contacted at dejavudeja@sbcglobal.net

Ask a Transwoman: Doing Trans 101, the basics of trans Q's, over and over and over again

By: Lorelei Erisis*/TRT Columnist



This month, by way of illustrating a common occurrence many trans people have to deal with on an all too regular basis, I thought I'd share with you my answers to a series of questions I got from a friend I knew as a teenager who recently stumbled across me online. The questions manage to represent an almost perfect sampling of the mix of curiosity and almost randomly offensive statements that many trans people have to deal with all the time, from even the most well-meaning people.

Q. I remember meeting in Northampton a transsexual named Lori, but I remember facts better than faces, so I am not sure it was you. Lori told me that a man does not need to have an operation to be a transsexual, he/she only needs to feel that he/she is a woman trapped in a man's body.

A: Nope. I'm not that Lori, though you knew me extremely well! And yes, what Lori said about being a transsexual is roughly accurate. One needs no operations or treatment to be a transsexual, though people who are often seek such surgeries and treatments. "Transgender" is a somewhat

broader definition that encompasses, often, transsexual people as well as others whose gender identity is variant in some way. As for who I am, well, I'll let you take another

Q. Wasn't your girlfriend named Lori, you maricón? Did you steal her name? If sexual attraction and gender identity are separate things, are there lesbians who were

queer, which is kind of the sexuality version of punk rock!

Q. I thought you were just a transvestite.

A: Well, so did I, sort of. I mean, the truth of the matter is that I've known my whole life that I was a woman, or rather more specifically, that I was being gendered incorrectly. It took me a long time to first find the language to understand that, and then to accept that it wasn't just a "part-time thing" I was doing, and then further to actually do something about it.

Q. Is it difficult to find shoes your size? Remember when Doc Martens were the mode?

A: Yes, it is quite difficult to find shoes in my size. Drives me crazy!

Of course I remember Docs! They never really went out of style in my punk rock world, though. Great shoes! In fact, I still have my 20-eye Dr. Marten boots from when I was 16 and even wear them occasionally. They've lasted through a lot!

It's funny the things that remain constant. New gender. Same boots.

It's worth noting, however, that the transsexual woman referred to at the beginning was not actually named "Lori." It just wasn't worth correcting, much like the correct spelling of both "transsexual" and "lesbian." We pick and choose our battles, and it can be enormously difficult not to get distracted by all the little mistakes and misguided assumptions that people make about us. It's important to be patient, though, even if you're not a highly visible trans columnist! Remember that most folks have at least decent intentions and are often merely curious. Focus on what's important. Now, imagine repeating this exchange 20,000 more times! Slainte!

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

The way I usually phrase it is that I was pretending to be a straight man for years. I've always been a woman, it just took me a long time to do something about it.

guess.

Q. Robert? But I thought you were straight and dressed like a girl as a hobby.

A: Hey, hey! Almost. Robert, usually known as Mac, now Lorelei. And, I thought I was too! Then I had a lot of adventures and eventually accepted I was a woman. Really, truly, not just messing around. So I started on HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) about seven years ago. However, it is worth noting that gender identity and sexual preference are separate and not necessarily related. After I transitioned, my sexuality also went kind of crazy and I currently date, well, whoever I'm attracted to regardless of gender. I consider myself queer.

once straight men?

A: I do remember Lori. We dated briefly. She was pretty cool. Haven't seen her in years. Didn't take my name from her though. Lorelei is the name my hippie parents were going to give me had they known I was a girl.

As for "...lesbians who were once straight men?" Well, sort of. The way I usually phrase it is that I was pretending to be a straight man for years. I've always been a woman, it just took me a long time to do something about it. So, when I transitioned, I was still attracted to women and in fact in a long-term relationship with one, which had the surreal effect of making me seem to go from straight to gay (lesbian), without ever actually changing my attractions at all. Of course, then I began to find myself attracted to men too.

Going through HRT is essentially putting your body through puberty for a second time, just in the other direction. So, I went from being theoretically bi-sexual (I never really was very attracted to men, just really open-minded) to all teenage-girl boy-crazy! However, I still like women too, and other trans people, and some folks who don't identify as male or female. So, I identify as

The Rainbow Times has brought you quality & original reporting in 2013 again!

Check out some of the stories that TRT reporters covered in 2013 on Page 14 of this issue. Let's work together in 2014 too!

¡Celebremos las festividades!

Por: Wilfred W. Labiosa*/Columnista de TRT

LATIN VISION



PHOTO: ERIC HESS

Otro año ya está por terminar y el 2013 trajo tantas cosas buenas para nuestra comunidad Latina y LGBTQ y también cosas penosas y tristes que hay que recordar. Todavía hay tantos temas y caminos por recorrer aunque durante esta época de fiestas vamos a tomar momentos para celebrar y compartir con nuestros seres querid@s. Se que en nuestras vidas estamos tod@s corriendo, tratando de hacer varias cosas y se nos hace difícil sentarnos, descansar, pensar, y compartir con alguien momentos de tranquilidad y de calidad. ¡Démonos regalos que no sean materiales sino que sean de amor, felicidad, paz y prosperidad – un abrazo, un beso, cocinar y cenar junt@s, ir a caminar junt@s, o hacer absolutamente nada excepto estar junt@s! Escribo estas palabras pensando en amistades, en nuestr@s espos@s, en nuestr@s familiares, en nuestr@s vecin@s, etcétera. Siempre hay alguien con quien compartir contigo.

Espero que tod@s podamos ofrecer el regalo de amor, felicidad y paz a nuestr@s seres queridos, compañeros de trabajo y vecin@s pero también al prójimo que no conocemos o al que nos desea odio y desigualdad. En este mundo necesitamos más amor, felicidad y paz, ya que nos hace falta. Debemos de comenzar con nosotros mism@s ya que debemos tenerle compasión

al prójimo y al que nos desea mal ya que la persona que nunca nos acepta tiene un destino incierto. He repetido esto anteriormente pero la canción El Gran Varón (canción por Willie Colón) lo dice perfectamente: “Ay que tenerle compasión, basta ya de moral negra y el que esté libre de pecado que tire la primera piedra... El que nunca perdona tiene el destino cierto de vivir amargos recuerdos en su propio infierno.”

Recordemos durante este mes a es@s de nuestras comunidades Latinas y LGBT que necesitan de nuestra ayuda. Hay un alto índice de menores sin hogares, al igual que much@s viviendo con el VIH/SIDA sol@s sin nadie a su alrededor y tantas personas Latinas y/o LGBT sin algo de comer. ¡Haga un acto de caridad durante esta época de fiestas. Puede ser el mejor regalo para usted. Celebremos y compartamos con es@s que no tienen y enseñémosle que todavía existe caridad, comprensión y amor en nuestra sociedad. Sé que existe ya que cuando hay un momento devastador allí estamos presente pero vamos a tener iniciativa y reaccionar a estos problemas que existen todos los días a nuestro alrededor—no sólo en momentos devastadores y no sólo durante esta época de Navidad, Kwanza y Hanukah. Como la Madre Teresa dijo: “No es la cantidad que uno da pero el amor que uno pone en darlo.”

Creo que cada año uno busca un final perfecto para comenzar el nuevo año mejor. Pero recuerden que la vida no es perfecta y que siempre debemos buscar el lado positivo de las cosas que nos suceden en cada

Lea el resto de esta historia en:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-2w6>

Pregúntale a Lambda Legal - Asilo y orientación sexual

Por: Thomas Ude, Jr./Abogado de Lambda Legal



Q: He estado asistiendo a la escuela en los Estados Unidos por un par de años, y durante ese tiempo, salí del closet. Se acerca la graduación y tengo miedo de volver a mi país, porque los gays y las lesbianas son perseguidos allí.

¿Cuáles son mis opciones?

R: En primer lugar, felicitaciones por salir del closet y por estar a punto de terminar tus estudios. No es fácil completar una carrera cuando uno está, a la vez, saliendo del closet—un hecho que complica ambos esfuerzos.

La Línea de Ayuda de Lambda Legal seguido recibe llamadas de personas que temen regresar a su país de origen debido a su orientación sexual. Si eres lesbiana, gay o bisexual, y tu país de origen tiene una historia de violencia y opresión hacia las personas LGB, tus preocupaciones son muy graves. Afortunadamente, hay posibles opciones legales para ti si necesitas permanecer en los Estados Unidos.

Puedes solicitar asilo si no puedes regresar

a tu país de origen debido a una historia de persecución o un temor bien fundado de persecución por motivos de raza, religión, nacionalidad, de pertenecer a un determinado grupo social, u opinión política. Algunas circunstancias te pueden descalificar de poder conseguir asilo, por ejemplo si has sido condenado/a de un crimen grave mientras vivías en los Estados Unidos, entre otras circunstancias. El proceso de asilo se rige según la Ley de Inmigración y Nacionalidad, y si deseas obtener más información acerca de cómo solicitar asilo, puedes llamar a nuestra Línea de Ayuda o revisar la página web acerca del asilo del Departamento de Justicia al <http://tiny.cc/721g7w>.

Si no calificas para el asilo, pero todavía temes regresar a tu país de origen, puede haber otras formas de permanecer en los Estados Unidos. La Convención de las Naciones Unidas contra la Tortura (CAT, por sus siglas en inglés) es un acuerdo internacional que tiene como objetivo la prevención de tortura de personas, incluidas las personas LGB, en todo el mundo.

Lambda Legal presentó recientemente un escrito ‘amigo de la corte’ con la Junta de Apelaciones de Inmigración, que le pide...

Lea el resto de esta historia en:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-2w8>



PHOTO: YARENIS OLIVERAS

Myriam Quiñones, the woman behind the Councilor, and Jossie Valentin got married in 2008.

Valentín from page 5

received national attention as the nation’s youngest and “out” politician who went on to secure the city’s highest elected office as mayor. He was re-elected again this year. Similarly, openly lesbian candidate Jossie Valentin won the Ward 4 City Councilor seat by a landslide. The Puerto Rican native will be sworn in this January 14.

In this exclusive interview with Councilor Elect Valentin, *The Rainbow Times* (TRT) examines her victory and the direction of Holyoke as this new era of Holyoke government continues to ensue in favor of the LGBTQ and Latino community.

TRT: You won by a landslide. Were you ever really concerned that you wouldn’t win?

JV: When I pulled nomination papers in May, I hit the ground running. I started campaigning immediately; knocking on doors, dropping off flyers, [and] making personal connections with folks. I started experiencing the positive feedback immediately. It was a great experience. For a while, I was the only candidate running. Then, during the summer, I went on vacation to visit my family in Puerto Rico and attend my 20-year high school reunion, and when I came back, I found out that three other folks (including a former Ward 4 City Councilor) had pulled nomination papers while I was away. I guess this is what happens when you go on vacation in the middle of running a campaign! [Laughs] All of a sudden, things changed very quickly—I had to move into high gear immediately with my campaign with a preliminary election scheduled for September. One person ended up not submitting their nomination papers with signatures, but it still left three of us on the ballot for the September 17th preliminary election. When I won that election with 65% of the votes, I had a pretty good feeling about winning the general election on November 5th—which I won with 74% of the votes. The feedback I received from voters was overwhelmingly positive, and so many of them were so excited about me running as a bilingual candidate. Holyoke is 49% Latino, and Ward 4 is 70% Latino. When voters would open their doors and I would speak to them in Spanish, it took them by surprise; a positive surprise indeed.

Q: When you received funding from the Victory Fund (a non-profit whose purpose is to increase the number of LGBT leaders in politics), did you tell yourself “this is it, I am winning” or did it just make you more

confident?

A: When I received the endorsement from the Victory Fund, I was honored. Since the beginning, I made the decision to run my campaign as an out lesbian. I have been out for the past 20 years—that was not going to change for a political campaign. [Smiles] I assumed that it was a possibility that my sexual orientation would be a topic of conversation on the campaign trail, especially from the conservative side of Holyoke, but it never became an issue—At least, not that I am aware of. I also received an endorsement from Pioneer Valley AFL-CIO, and was honored to be recognized by such a large group of unions. As a union member myself (MTA), I understand and appreciate the value of unions. I was informed about these two endorsements in a 1-week period. That was a great week!

Q: After winning, have your main priorities for the residents of Ward 4 changed, as opposed to what they were prior to winning (public safety and trash issues)?

A: When I was campaigning, I had many folks tell me: “I wish I lived in Ward 4 so that I could vote for you. You need to run At-Large so that I can vote for you!” I was honored to receive these compliments, and I would remind folks that my votes as a City Councilor will count as much as those who are At-Large Councilors. I realized very early on during my campaign that although I was running for Ward councilor, the expectations from Holyokers would be that I would represent all of them, not only the residents within Ward 4. Although my priorities for Ward 4 will definitely include the areas of public safety and trash, there are many more issues that I heard about from residents as I was campaigning. I committed to listening and addressing their concerns, and that is exactly what I will do.

Q: You won fair and square as an out lesbian, do you think that a new era has hit Holyoke with now more than one “out” public official? Do you think you could have done the same 10 years ago?

A: [Pauses] It is clear to me that the election of Mayor Alex Morse in 2011, and again this year, as an out gay man sent a strong message in terms of how Holyokers are looking at candidates. The fact that I am a Puerto Rican out lesbian and was just elected to serve as a City Councilor is a huge message

Read the rest of this interview at:
<http://wp.me/p22M41-2vZ>

HAPPY HOLIDAYS 2013

& Happy New Year 2014 from TRT!

Gloria Estefan lives for loving you: Claims she was saved by the gays

By: Chris Azzopardi/Special to TRT

You'd be lucky to see Gloria Estefan busting out the conga these days, but that doesn't mean she's not keeping on her toes. A spot on *Glee* last year, a new album, an upcoming Broadway musical, restaurants, hotels—the singer's busier than ever, she says.

We caught up with Estefan to chat about plans for her upcoming autobiographical stage show, being "saved" by gay fans and punking people with Gloria drag queens.

Chris Azzopardi: What's life like now for you compared to what it was in the '80s?

Gloria Estefan: Supposedly I'm leading a quieter life, but I'm busier than I've ever been! (Laughs) In the '80s, I was on the same cycle: write, go into the studio, record, then go on tour. All I could do was sleep, exercise and sing in the shows. I could do absolutely nothing else. Now, we just do so many other things. Back then we didn't have

two hotels and seven restaurants – all that came later—so in essence, we're probably busier now than we've ever been. Plus: We're working on that Broadway show. It's very exciting.

Q. The Broadway musical is inspired by your own life. How did the idea first come to you?

A. We've had many offers through the years to do something like this, so we've been working on an idea for a Broadway-type show for over 10 years. You can't do it on your entire life. We've been able to synthesize what part of our story would make a great Broadway show. It's really on the fast track, and we hope to be done with the book by January. It's being written by Alex Dinolaris, who just did *The Bodyguard* in London. He wrote that and he really gets it. I really loved his approach. We're incorporating the songs (of mine) with a meaning into the storyline, and of course I'll do some rewrites, some interesting little turns and some new music as well. I love that, because the creative process for me is my favorite part of everything. Also, we're very excited about finding a young Gloria and Emilio (Estefan, her husband). Whoever plays



Gloria Estefan
PHOTO: JESUS CORDERO

me already has their work cut out for her!

Q. There's been talk of Jennifer Lopez playing you. How likely is that?

A. I don't know where people get all these

(Laughs) But yeah, it's an iconic role and I would love to find somebody new—a breakout. I honestly think there's a reality show in the search for them, so we may even do that. It'd be a fun thing to share. After seeing *Smash*—I used to love that show and I don't know why it got canceled—it'd be cool to do something like that.

Q. People used to say you were too American for the Latins and too Latin for the Americans. What did it feel like living between those two worlds? Did you feel like an outsider?

A. Because I've lived in this bubble, sometimes you do. Early on, when I was a very little girl, I still remember trying to look for an apartment in Miami—you're talking 1960—and there were signs that said "No children, no pets, no Cubans," and my mom would cry. I would say, "Mommy, what's happening?" And I could see it. She tried to keep it away from me, but I saw discrimination back then.

I've led a kind of sheltered experience, and there's always gonna be bigotry and racism—that's just the way human beings are. People feel better about themselves if they put somebody else down. They're always gonna find a group to accomplish that.

Q. Last season, you guest starred as Santana's mom on *Glee*. I loved that you were the mother of a lesbian daughter.

A. Me too! I have no qualms about any of that. My son's already married, but if my daughter were to be gay, to me, it makes no difference. My daughter is the most wonderful human being in the entire world, and all I want her to be is happy and I will love whomever she loves.

Q. You can't do an interview with Gloria Estefan for gay press without bringing up the video for "Everlasting Love," which starred just drag queens.

A. (Laughs) Lemme tell you, baby, that was my favorite video – because they saved me! I was so, so pregnant, and there was no way I could even put my face in there. It was my idea, actually. I go, "Who does me better than my gays?" I mean, I have seen a few of them through the years at different places, and at shows, where they would do different phases of me, and I thought, "Oh god, this would be so cool." Then I took a couple of them on the road with me. And they would fool people! People would think it was me! (Laughs)

Q. At what moment in your career did you know a lot of gay people loved you?

A. We were looking to do a remix of a song called "Dr. Beat" that we had put on our seventh album, which was our fourth Sony album. Someone told us there was a guy in Puerto Rico that was DJing at a gay club there and that he was doing amazing things with our Spanish hits, because we hadn't had any English hits yet. So the gay clubs were very much onto our music even before the English stuff came out. We knew they were always cutting-edge and Pablo Flores did many remixes for us over the years, from "Conga" to "Rhythm is Gonna Get You" to, more recently, "Hotel Nacional" and "Wepa." He's been huge in our lives.

Q. Early last year you made a pit stop at a gay club in Miami to thank your gay fans and introduce your new single at the time, "Hotel Nacional." What's it like being in a room full of gay Gloria fans?

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r u m o r s ,
quite honestly.
I don't think J. Lo would wanna do eight shows a week on Broadway. I don't think that's high on her list of priorities!

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New director to take over LGBT Coalition of Western Mass.

NORTHAMPTON, Mass.—The LGBT Coalition of Western Massachusetts—an organization committed to improving and preserving the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified people of all races and ethnicities—will soon be under new management as Executive Director Suzanne Seymour steps down after leading the nonprofit since 2009, when she acquired it from fore founders Grisel M. Ocasio and Nicole Lashomb.

“The four years I was at the helm of this organization was a gift to me in so many ways,” said Seymour. “It’s time for new, exciting pathways, and it’s important to listen to your own inner voice when it’s time to move in new directions. I’ve listened and it’s been a healthy decision.”

The Coalition serves the LGBT communities of Western Mass. through offering services using innovative advocacy, community outreach programs, referral services, and a suicide prevention hotline. Their goal is to build stronger communities and families by bridging the gaps that co-exist between members of the LGBT community and mainstream society.

Suzanne said there were many accomplishments during her tenure as director, but if she had to choose one as her proudest, spoke of being part of National GSA Day in Springfield for the last two years.

“Seeing the impact it has made on the kids’ lives we touched by offering that day for recognition of the brave and courageous kids—and adults—that have stepped up to be allies, friends and leaders has been an enormously humbling opportunity for me,” Sey-



Ashley Mark (left) and Suzanne Seymour at the LGBT Coalition of Western Massachusetts GSA Day

mour said. “That was, really, my biggest goal with the Coalition: to give back in such a way so that other young people didn’t have to suffer the way I did regarding my own coming out experience. The teens and administrators I met during GSA Day in Springfield were not the only ones inspired and changed by this experience!”

Seymour said that going forward, she would assist the new director during her interim period in a guiding role as an advisor and hopes to participate in future events. Ashley Mark, director of communications and a member of the board of directors, has been appointed Interim Director of the Coalition.

“Primarily, Suz has acted as a resource for people looking for support, advice, and a voice to advocate for them,” said Mark. “Her programs and events, ranging from GSA Day

Read the rest of this story at: <http://wp.me/p22M41-2vR>

BGMC from page 8

openly gay male in the liberal city of Boston,” said Panagiotou. “Being a part of the Chorus keeps me aware of what is going on outside of this small city and gives me an opportunity to make a difference while doing what I love on stage.”

Izzy Berdan, another BGMC member, said he joined 14 years ago.

“I had moved up to Boston from Texas, and a dark place in my life filled with self hatred, and it was a step for me to become part of a larger community of gay men for change,” Berdan said. “Admittedly, the first couple years it was actually about the lime-light and showcasing my talent—I was 21—but as I grew older and was able to look at the bigger picture, the reason I stayed with the Chorus was for all the lives they have changed using our music and outreach.”

The BGMC has been involved in many community projects and partnerships over the years. Through their outreach program, they perform in local communities, at schools, houses of worship, and community centers, raising funds for their beneficiaries, including GSAs, diversity clubs, and other programs that help LGBTQ people. According to Coogan, they have raised more than \$110,000 to date. They

have also donated tickets to their shows to gay and lesbian student organizations and people living with HIV. This year, they are partnering with Family Equality Council on their first-ever Kid Size show of “Haul Out the Holly.”

“The BGMC does what few other organizations can: we’re a premiere artistic organization with excellence in our performance product while being an extraordinary agent for social change,” said Coogan. “Our impact is that we can’t affect social change without our music, and we can’t create our music without making social change.”

For more information on The BGMC, including a full listing of show dates, visit www.bgmc.org. To learn more about the outreach program, view a video created by the Chorus at www.tinyurl.com/bgmcst.

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Broadway Impacts the NY Marathon

By: Dan Woog*/Special to TRT

Q SPORTS



There are eight million stories in the Naked City. There were also 50,000 runners in this month’s Naked City—er, New York City—Marathon. Each of them had a story too – about why he or she trained for months, then pushed through pain to run for hours on asphalt streets.

Sixteen of those stories involved Broadway Impact. That’s the grassroots organization mobilizing New York’s theater community in support of marriage equality. Broadway shows and marathon running may seem an unlikely match. But the theater world is very gay-friendly, and marathon-running appeals to many Broadway types who can run on their own time, in groups with friends, and help a cause they believe in.

Members of Broadway Impact planned to run last year. But Hurricane Sandy canceled the 2012 New York Marathon. Rising to the

challenge—“another opening, another show,” you might say—the group raised more than \$66,000 this year.

One of those runners was Jimmy Ludwig. An actor in the original cast of *Spamalot*, and currently in *2.0*, he is friendly with some of the founders of Broadway Impact.

“People think the theater community is always ‘look at me,’” he says. “But that’s not true. A lot of what we do is, ‘How can I help?’ We work very hard – eight shows a week – but we also reach out to friends and relatives whenever we can.”

Ludwig calls it “mind-numbing that a marriage system so patently unfair exists in much of the country.” Recently, an old high school friend called. She was headed to New York, where her lesbian daughter would be married. They wanted Ludwig to be their witness.

“I turned into their Jewish grandmother,”

Ludwig laughs. “I bought flowers for them, and took pictures. It was an amazing day. Everyone wept.”

Then, however, the newlyweds returned to New Mexico. “They had to pretend what happened wasn’t valid. It didn’t exist there. That

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Sean Martin

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