

The Rainbow Times

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

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PHOTO: NINO MUNOZ

Southie's St. Patrick's Day Parade, inclusion or aversion?

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

OPINIONS

For the first time in the history of South Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade, its organizers, the Allied War Veterans Council (AWVC), approved participation of OUTVETS, a military group honoring LGBT veterans in a 5-4 vote.

Traditionally, the AWVC has had a long history of excluding all LGBT groups and organizations from openly participating. Although OUTVETS' "approval" is a step in the right direction, the AWVC's discriminatory practices are long from being over and inclusive. Like many other LGBT business and organizations, *The Rainbow Times* applied to participate in this year's South Boston's Parade. Despite multiple attempts to contact the organization regarding the status of our application, our efforts have been in vain and the AWVC has been silent, as they often are on this issue.

Although the single victory of OUTVETS is a feat, the AWVC has a long way to go before their parade is decisively inclusive and affirming of the LGBT community. Accepting *one* group that represents LGBT veterans does not indicate inclusivity. Until all LGBT organizations and community members are welcomed to openly participate in Southie's parade by the AWVC, there is not actual inclusion. Anciently-dated policies, permitting the group to openly discriminate against the LGBT community, are unacceptable and heinous.

Currently, the AWVC seems to be motivated by a "token-like" relationship between one LGBT military group and parade organizers who apparently have set out to "prove" its evolution in the face of adversity. Allowing *one* LGBT group to march is a far cry from inclusivity. What about the rest of us?

As reported in the Boston Globe, "the parade became a battleground for the gay

The Rainbow Times applied to participate in this year's South Boston's Parade in vain.

rights movement in 1992, when parade organizers rejected an application to march from the Irish-American Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Group of Boston. The fight landed in the U.S. Supreme Court, which handed down a unanimous ruling that said the march was a privately organized event protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of speech. Organizers had the right to include—or reject—any group they wanted."

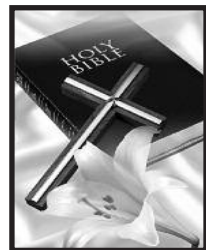
However, the AWVC is not the only group gaining local and national headlines. According to an exclusive story found on page 3 of this publication, "the local Veterans for Peace Chapter 9, Smedley D. Butler Brigade (VFP) filed a First Amendment lawsuit in federal court against the City of Boston." The organization claims that the "city has refused to act in a timely way on VFP's application for a permit to hold its annual St. Patrick's Peace Parade beginning at noon in Boston on March 15. The delay prevents VFP from being able to effectively organize for its parade and impedes its message."

Per the AWVC, inclusivity should not be used as a political tool to argue progress, especially when that faux progress is not inclusive. Although the stamp of approval for OUTVETS is unprecedented, AWVC's homophobic ban on the broader LGBT community is historically etched in stone. This battle will not be over until no one is left behind.

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

Hearts and minds are changing, even those most opposed

By: Paul P. Jesepe*/TRT Columnist



Over the years, I've written about changing laws advancing LGBTQ civil and human rights while observing that such changes don't immediately translate into the softening of hearts with acceptance or

minds being nurtured with understanding. There are several extraordinary examples, however, that can be cited where a change of hearts and minds are slowly, incrementally occurring in the most unlikely places because of prayer and reflection.

Pastor Stan Mitchell (<http://tiny.cc/qs8cux>) of GracePointe in Tennessee (www.gracepointe.net) is one example. He is one of a growing number of conservatives accepting the Creator's LGBTQ children, and he's allowed himself to move beyond comfort zones that have long marginalized LGBTQ people. Pastor Stan gave an hour long sermon (<http://tiny.cc/2x8cux>) recently about Epiphany—experiencing the presence of

"... love never fails, you are mine and I am yours, and inclusion means that we can live together in agreement and disagreement."

God in a new way. It is not changing God, but being the recipient of grace, seeing things that were always there, though overlooked.

In the first fifty minutes, he builds a foundation for the final ten minutes which is about the full acceptance of LGBTQ people. If you find it a bit too heavy, start with minute 42 and stay with it.

It's an extraordinarily poignant, emotional sermon for this man of faith. You see him wrestle with social change and personal challenges to how he once understood biblical teachings. Pastor Stan trembles as he

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

Letters to the Editor: Trans, PMS

Dear Editor,

[Re: Federal Judge Instructs Alabama's Mobile County Probate Judge to Issue Marriage Licenses to Same-Sex Couples]

As a member of the local clergy, it has been my honor to support the same-sex couples in the Mobile area. Today, I was present as we prayed for peace and guidance.

I was present in the courtroom of Judge Granade. All those with the glbtqs group were very respectful, as were all the law enforcement who were present this whole week. Once Judge Granades's ruling came down, there was jubilation all around. We all gathered at the license windows, which had been closed to all, and waited for Judge Davis to open them to the gay couples gathered there. It was history-making! Truly remarkable.

—Rev. Dr. Cindi Bautista, Online

Dear Editor,

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

I just requested the Army correct me DD214, and other identifying document to reflect my current name and gender. They acknowledged receipt and said it could take a year.

Do I also need legal assistance? Shouldn't Army, Navy, etc establish procedures to deal with the volume of such requests, rather than just assume business as usual attitude?

—Kendra Olson, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: 9 out of 10 Transgender Employees Discriminated Against in the Workplace]

I live in a state that supposedly has employment protections for transgender people. I began my transition while in college and lost my job almost immediately after graduation in 2011. The stress from searching in vain for employment for several years has wrecked my health. I may never be able to work again. I have yet to find a single LGBT organization that cares enough to help me.

—Chutney Gray, Online

Dear Editor,

[Re: 9 out of 10 Transgender Employees Discriminated Against in the Workplace]

Dee and Chutney, sorry to hear about your challenges and hardships looking for work. I have been working with San Francisco Trans Employment Program (TEEI) since 2007. We work with trans friendly employers and provide job search support, hiring events, and more.

Our long distance services are limited due to funding although, we are happy to review resumes and see where we can help. Website should be linked above or you can search Trans Employment Program (TEEI). Good luck!

—C. Farley, Online

Op-Ed: Springfield LGBT Center—Leadership and service; a call to action

By: George Ramirez/ Special to TRT

For those of us who live in the Pioneer Valley, the mainstream discussion surrounding all things "gay," seems to be centralized in Northampton. To its credit, Northampton, MA has paved the way for many local LGBTQ organizations to develop and thrive. Self-identification through sexual orientation has been easier with progressive cities like Northampton in the Valley, but for those of us who live outside of those city limits, finding commonality and affordable safe spaces has been a challenge. Due to that cultural and economic dichotomy, residents in cities like Springfield face harsher environmental factors surrounding their LGBT status.

The LGBT Center of Springfield is a proposed 501(c)3 organization that plans to bridge the divide between all things related to Pride in our region. Our mission and goal is to provide a physical space for community members to create

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A short list of potential advocates for marriage equality at high court

By: Lisa Keen*/Keen News Service

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Renowned Supreme Court advocate Ted Olson remembers the first time he had a chance to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court: He didn't take it.

It was a First Amendment case about billboards in San Diego. Olson had been practicing law for 15 years, he had represented his clients from the start, and they wanted him to argue before the highest court in the land. But Olson and others working on the case agreed their side would benefit by sending up an experienced Supreme Court advocate who was also well known for his expertise in First Amendment issues.

He also remembers several times when the decision over who would argue a case before the Supreme Court did *not* go smoothly—when various attorneys working on one side of a case couldn't agree who would present the oral argument. In one case, he remembers, the dispute went so late the Supreme Court clerk threatened to take the argument off the calendar.

When the Sixth Circuit marriage equality cases were before the federal appeals panel last August, one attorney from each of the four plaintiff groups argued before the court. But the Supreme Court has instructed the attorneys to send only two attorneys total to the lectern in April. That means the 36 attorneys currently working on the four cases in four states must decide which two.



And it doesn't *have* to be one of them. They could choose to designate an advocate from outside the four legal teams to represent their clients at the nation's highest court. A number of studies in recent years have shown a dramatic increase in the percentage of Supreme Court arguments delivered by lawyers specializing in Supreme Court cases.

There are many factors the Sixth Circuit marriage attorneys *must* consider, and some they *might* consider. For instance, they may grapple over whether to choose openly gay attorneys as one or both of their advocates.

Ruth Harlow, who was legal director for Lambda Legal when the *Lawrence v. Texas* case was up before the U.S. Supreme Court, said it was a consideration for Lambda in 2003, when it chose openly gay attorney Paul Smith to present its oral argument.

Smith had "many years as a Supreme Court advocate," she noted, as well as many years "standing up before the Court as a known gay man in the inner circle of the Supreme Court bar."

"Today," she said, "advocacy on behalf of LGBT clients is much more mainstream." Attorneys all over the country—straight and gay—have filed lawsuits on behalf of same-sex couples, including nationally prominent attorneys such as Ted Olson and David Boies.

Harlow says she's hoping the Sixth Circuit marriage attorneys include at least one attorney from the LGBT litigation groups that have been involved in the issue for years.

Of the nine major LGBT-related cases argued at the Supreme Court since 1985, openly gay attorneys have argued five: Mary Dunlap argued for Gay Games organizers in

1987 in *SFAA v. U.S. Olympics Committee*; John Ward argued for Boston Irish gays in *Hurley v. Irish American GLIB* in 1995; Evan Wolfson argued for Boy Scout leader James Dale in *Boy Scouts v. Dale* in 2000; Paul Smith argued against sodomy laws in *Lawrence* in 2003; and Roberta Kaplan argued against the Defense of Marriage Act in *U.S. v. Windsor* in 2013.

The other four cases were argued by three straight attorneys: Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe argued both *NGTF v. Oklahoma* in 1985 and *Bowers v. Hardwick* in 1986; Jean Dubofsky argued the Colorado Amendment 2 case, *Romer v. Evans*, in 1996; and Ted Olson argued the California Proposition 8 case, *Perry v. Hollingsworth*, in 2013.

Nobody working on the Sixth Circuit cases has offered up a name or names of those many potential options, but here's a short list of possible contenders (in alphabetical order):

Mary Bonauto: She's gay, highly respected by attorneys straight and gay, and is the best known of the 36 attorneys working on the four marriage cases from the Sixth Circuit appeal. For her two decades of litigation to secure marriage equality, she's been profiled in the *New York Times* magazine, awarded a MacArthur Foundation grant, and compared to civil rights giant and former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. She is also a much-respected leader in the LGBT community nationwide,

See Marriage Equality on Page 15

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Veterans for Peace sue City of Boston over St. Patrick's Peace Parade permit

By: Lauren Walliser/TRTAssistant Editor

BOSTON, Mass.—Last month, the local Veterans for Peace Chapter 9, Smedley D. Butler Brigade (VFP) filed a First Amendment lawsuit against the City of Boston for refusal to act in a timely manner on VFP's application for a permit to hold its annual St. Patrick's Peace Parade, which typically follows the South Boston St. Patrick's Day Parade and is scheduled this year for March 15.

"Going to court was our last resort," said Pat Scanlon, coordinator for VFP.

Scanlon said VFP submitted their application to the City of Boston in March 2014 for the 2015 Peace Parade. According to him, The Allied War Veteran's Council (AWVC), who host the South Boston St. Patrick's Day Parade, filed their application in October, and the Boys and Girls Club filed for a permit for their road race in November.

"Our permit application was submitted seven months before the AWVC and eight months before the Boys and Girls Club," Scanlon shared. "For eleven months we have not received any response from the city regarding our application. We have attempted to communicate with the Mayor's office and the Commissioner of Transportation on several occasions, and we have not received the courtesy of even one phone call, let alone a response to our application."

For the past five years, VFP has submitted their application to the city requesting a noon start time for the Peace Parade. Each year, according to Scanlon, the city tells VFP that if their parade was to start at that

time, it would interfere with other activities on that day. Therefore, the Peace Parade has been ordered to walk one mile behind the AWVC parade.

"The action of the city results in our parade being marginalized and our messages of peace and inclusion diminished, instead of hundreds of thousands seeing our messages of peace and inclusion," Scanlon said. "By the time our parade comes by, most of the revelers have left, leaving behind a few thousand party leftovers who do get to see our messages, though it is questionable just how well many of them can see by that time. By putting our parade behind the other parade ... the city has given preference to and in fact has chosen one message over another. In situations such as this, constitutionally the city should remain neutral, but that has not happened."

Scanlon said this is why the lawsuit was filed, in order to uphold VFP's rights under the First and 14th Amendments, with the hope that the City of Boston will issue their permit to start the parade at 12 p.m., ahead of the other parade, which is set to begin at 1 p.m.

"Holding a parade is an important way for people to express their views and let other people know about those views," said Sarah Wunsch, deputy legal director of the ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts. "Because a permit requirement is considered a 'prior restraint on speech,' the First Amendment requires that the government officials in charge of issuing permits have to be apply-



PHOTO: PAT WESTWATER-JONG

Veterans for Peace marching at the St. Patrick's Peace Parade last year.

ing narrowly defined standards that ensure fair and equal treatment, and the permit application should be acted on promptly. Without that, it is too easy for the government officials to favor some speakers over others, and that violates the First Amendment. It was important to file a lawsuit because the

City of Boston had not responded to VFP's most recent application for almost a year and was disregarding the requirements of the First Amendment. We could not get the City or its lawyers to talk about this. We had

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

I'm Linda West, manager of the Birthplace, and a big believer in Baystate Franklin.



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Unity Pride forms: Promotes inclusivity, unites through social justice

By: Lauren Walliser/TRT Assistant Editor

BOSTON, Mass.—Pride season will be here before we know it, and this year, a new organization called Unity Pride has joined the Boston scene. The Unity Pride committee formed in 2014 with the goal of addressing issues of diversity and inclusion across the Commonwealth.

“Given recent events in the media that have sensationalized tragic deaths and called attention to racism, homophobia, misogyny and a myriad of other systemic problems in our society, the committee was conceptualized as a means to tackle these problems head-on and build a community that can coalesce around our commonalities, but also celebrate our differences,” said Yovannys ImpaKt Kenney, Unity Pride co-chair. “As we progress through the 21st century, we are increasingly aware of the significant benefits of building communities based on understanding and acceptance.”

While Massachusetts has been at the forefront of LGBTQ rights, non-discrimination legislation and other human rights issues, Unity Pride Committee Chair Henry Paquin said there is still a need for organizations like Unity Pride to encourage further progress.

“Unity Pride is pushing the envelope and taking progressivism another step forward by building a unified community that sees beyond sexual orientation, gender identity, race, nationality, religious affiliation, or any other socio-cultural marker,” said Paquin. “The need stems from the fractures our so-



ciety and our communities have experienced due to systemic injustices such as racism, transphobia, homophobia, elitism, misogyny, and the many other ‘isms’ that have come to characterize our interactions with one another.”

Paquin commented on how Unity Pride differs from Boston Pride, the organization that runs Boston’s largest Pride celebrations each year in June.

“Boston Pride and other pride organizations across the Commonwealth have done a phenomenal job of building communities and engaging those communities,” Paquin

said. “Unity Pride differentiates itself in that we strive to be an organization that brings all of those communities together under one umbrella, not just the LGBTQ community, but any other community dedicated to celebrating our differences.”

When asked for a comment on the formation of Unity Pride, Boston Pride shared the following statement.

“Boston Pride is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year,” said Boston Pride President Sylvain Bruni. “During that time, Boston Pride has been working with everyone in the community to ensure that all members of the LGBTQ community feel welcome, feel safe, and that they are included

in the Boston community at large. And, we plan on doing it for another 45 years and beyond.”

Unity Pride plans to have an official launch party later this year to introduce their organization to the community and raise money for local LGBTQ organizations.

“Unity Pride will show its devotion to diversity and inclusion by donating proceeds from all events to a worthy nonprofit in Massachusetts,” said Paquin. “With nearly 34,000 nonprofits headquartered in Massachusetts, Unity Pride looks forward to building awareness of and providing resources to

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Cisgender men and their fears of dating and partnering with trans women

By: Deja Nicole Greenlaw*/TRT Columnist

TRANS NEWS



You may or may not know it, but there is a good percentage of men who prefer trans women as their romantic partners. There are many trans dating sites. There is an ample selection of porn centered on trans women on the Internet.

I joined a trans dating site in 2008 and I still get a fair amount of hits and flirts from men. Most of the hits and flirts, however, never turn into a date. I'm assuming that these men have some reservations about going out in public with a trans woman. Maybe some are married, and maybe some are just plain scared to ask me for a date. Still, they are drawn to me.

I've had a couple dozen men ask me for a date, but only about a dozen have shown up. I suspect that the men who stood me up were scared to actually meet me. One man did meet me, but he wouldn't get out of his car. First, he called and told me that he was in the parking lot and that he was too scared to come into the coffee shop in a local mall where our date was to be. We chatted on the phone and I tried to get him to come inside.

He wouldn't budge. Then, he asked me if I would drive around to the other side of the mall which was much less busy and meet me there. I was a little leery, but I agreed.

I met him, both of us in our cars, on the other side of the mall. He drove up to me with his passenger side near me and we

they didn't live nearby. One even came from Long Island.

I did date one man for a summer. We got close. He let me sleep at his apartment and I met two of his friends, but that was it. He told me that he could never introduce me to his parents. I asked him why he was re-

I then understood his point about being reserved about where we went on our dates and why he was hesitant to introduce me to the people in his life.

began to chat. He was very nervous, but he did let me know that he was very happy to see me. I asked if he would get out of his car. He wouldn't, so we continued our chat in each of our cars with his passenger seat between us. After about ten minutes or so, he said that he had to go. I asked him where he had to be. He wouldn't tell me. He just put his car in drive and told me that he would call. It was very strange. I'm assuming that he was delighted but scared.

I did have about a dozen dates where the man did meet me at the coffee shop. These men were not afraid of being seen in public with me, I'm assuming most likely because

served about me meeting the people in his life, and he explained it to me. He asked if I remembered how I felt when I first went out in public wearing women's clothes. Was I scared? I admitted that I was. Then he asked if at that same time I was scared that I would run into someone who knew me as a man but not as a woman. Again, I admitted that I was.

He then said that's how he felt when he went out in public with me. If someone who he knew was not okay with him dating a trans woman, that would strain his relationship with that person and the word would spread among common friends. He had al-

ready run up against a strain when someone found out that he was dating me and the word did spread. At that time, I was on MySpace and I noticed that I was getting a lot of hits on my page with people checking out my pictures. The hits were from his friends. He was getting questions asking why he would date a trans woman and asking if he was gay. Even his ex asked if he was really dating that "shim." Yes, people can be non-accepting and mean. I then understood his point about being reserved about where we went on our dates and why he was hesitant to introduce me to the people in his life.

There are some who date us and partner with us openly, but those numbers are relatively small. I'm happy that these men do not let anything stand in the way with their date/partner. Congratulations to them. To the men who are still reserved, I understand their fears. Being rejected by friends and family is not a good situation. I know that personally from my own experience when I transitioned to female. I'm hoping that in time, a cisgender man dating or partnering with a trans woman will become accepted by society.

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

Ask a Trans Woman: Answering basic questions about transitioning, hormones, PMS, etc.

By: Lorelei Erisis*/TRT Columnist



Hi Steve! Your email was pretty similar to a lot of other queries I receive, and it covered a number of topics that people often ask about. Therefore, I thought it would be nice to return to form a bit and answer you with an old fashioned

Q&A column. I've broken up your questions a bit, so let's see if I can answer them without turning this into a book. I do seem to have a penchant for verbosity.

Q: As far as your journey, is there a specific event that you consider the "beginning" of your transition—like, say, when a psychiatrist determined that, yes, you do have gender dysphoria (or whatever they're calling it now), or when you took your first dose of estrogen?

A: Well, this is tricky. Technically, we are all always transitioning all the time. Birth is the start and death the end, roughly, depending on rates of decomposition and/or religious beliefs. Seriously though, there was no solid beginning, more like many beginnings. There was when I decided I really was trans and needed to transition. There was when I began HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy). There was when I began living part-time and then full-time as a woman. There was when I came out to my family and friends. You get the gist.

In point of fact, though I went to individual and group therapy because I felt I was making a big choice and I wanted to talk it through and give myself a support structure, I resisted being given a diagnosis of "gender dysphoria." I felt essentially that I wasn't "crazy." I knew what was wrong and the

steps to fix it, and I didn't want the legal, social or economic baggage that comes with being diagnosed with a mental illness. I actually began HRT with a doctor (who was also a trans woman) who was willing to start me on what's called an "informed consent" model. Basically, I signed some papers say-

It depends on what type of transition you mean. Not all trans people choose to or can safely transition physically and/or surgically.

ing, yes, I knew what I was doing, knew the risks and was of sound mind and body.

Q: And is it estrogen that's given to start the transition?

A: It depends on what type of transition you mean. Not all trans people choose to or can safely transition physically and/or surgically. I chose to transition physically myself through HRT, but haven't had any surgeries other than laser hair removal on my face. This is at least in part due to the expense of surgeries including Gender Reassignment Surgery (there are a number of other names in use for this, but forgive me if I skip by them in an attempt to stay on point and under my word count).

As for HRT, yes, for trans women it usually includes some form of synthetic estrogen, in many cases, Estradiol. Also, a testosterone blocker is often introduced. I take Spironolactone, though there are others that are fairly common. Some folks also take a form of progesterone. There is a great deal of debate on the usefulness of this. I don't take it myself.

Q: How long does it take before you ... how do I ask this tactfully ... before you

start to notice the effects the medicine is supposed to achieve, like the softening of your skin, breast development?

A: I'll likely be on some form of HRT for the rest of my life. Technically though, the major effects are similar to going through puberty a second time, with roughly the

regimen.

The way I do it is close enough to what passes for current common practice though. I've been on HRT for about eight years, so my hormone levels are pretty stabilized. I started on Estradiol and Spironolactone pills daily. Now, I give myself a weekly injection of Estradiol and take a slightly smaller dose of Spiro daily.

Trans women who take progesterone do so because there is some belief that it causes the body to more closely mimic a cisgender woman's natural cycle, among other purported effects. I would also note, just briefly, that the usually preferred term is "cisgender women." "Genetic women" is offensive to some and not especially accurate for reasons I will have to leave for another column.

Q: Does that cause what's labeled PMS? Is it like going through a second puberty to go through the transition?

A: Kinda? I definitely get a little irritable once a week before I take my Estradiol shot. I get really aggro and emotional if I forget for a day or two, or if there's some trouble with running out of my prescription, which has happened, but it clears up pretty quickly once I'm back on track. And yes, it is like a second puberty, right down to the occasional teenage girl meltdown. It's oh so charming, especially when you think, "Hey, I'm an adult in control of my emotions." Ha! And then you cry at commercials.

Hope these answers help. Thanks for your questions and for being a loyal reader! 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.*

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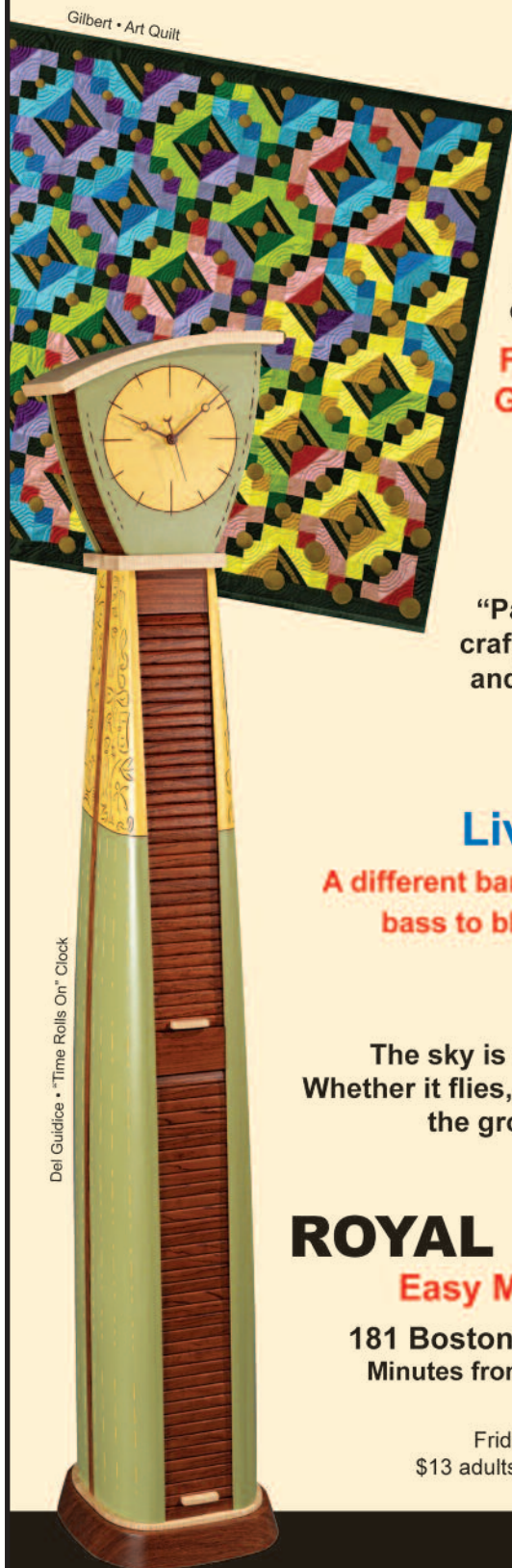
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Co-sponsored by Newton Department of Senior Services

About the LGBT Bereavement Program:

The LGBT Bereavement Groups are funded by the Mass Department of Public Health and facilitated by The LGBT Aging Project, a Program of Fenway Health. All groups are free and run for 8 weeks. All groups require pre-registration. For more information on the LGBT Bereavement Program contact Bob Linscott at 857.313.6578 or blinscott@fenwayhealth.org.



Promise Place School's 1st annual fundraiser in Boston; set to open school in September 2015

By: Lauren Walleiser/TRT Assistant Editor

BOSTON, Mass.—After a successful Cape Cod fundraiser, The Promise Place School—a residential school aiming to provide a permanent, safe and loving home environment in Cape Cod for homeless LGBTQI youth in Massachusetts—is now planning a second fundraiser in Boston.

The Cape Cod fundraiser (tiny.cc/510iux), held in December 2014, raised over \$100K. The new fundraiser, the first annual Boston gala, will be held April 17, 2015 at the Marriott Copley Place.

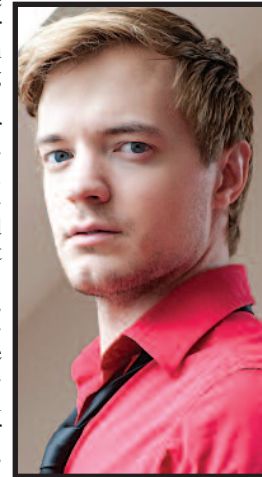
Erica Kay-Webster, founder, CEO and president of The Foundation for International Justice and executive director of Promise Place School, said the school is still set to open in September this year. Chris Morgan-Janes, director of education for the school, currently heads the educational and residential team, who is in the process of finalizing the school's curriculum, job descriptions, policies, procedures, and housing components. The teaching staff will be hired in June and according to Kay-Webster, many volunteers have stepped up and are in place to assist with the school when it opens.

"Currently in Massachusetts and nationally, we have an epidemic of homeless youth who

have been thrown onto the streets simply because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender," said Kay-Webster. "This is a silent epidemic in our country. LGBT youth com-

prise an astounding 40 percent of America's estimated 2.8 million homeless youth population. Family rejection and physical abuse are the most frequently reported reasons that LGBT youth experience homelessness. For transgender youth, the situation is even worse. One in five transgender youth experience homelessness, and when they approach many shelters they are turned away due to discrimination."

According to Kay-Webster, research has shown that homeless youth who have been rejected by their families are 8.4 percent more likely to commit suicide, and approximately 40 percent of LGBT homeless youth will die before they turn 26 due to suicide, overdose, street violence, and murder. Fifty-eight percent of LGBT homeless youth report being victims of sexual assault, and they are more likely to be exploited through human trafficking, forced into drugs and prostitution.



The Peregrine Theatre Ensemble will perform at the Promise Place School Boston Gala April 17, headlined by Adam Berry, actor, singer, and paranormal investigator as seen in the Syfy series "Ghost Hunters."

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

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Tema: Discrimen entre los gays

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



Todas las personas merecen respeto a su dignidad humana. Las mujeres, las personas negras, los emigrantes, las personas homosexuales, así como personas con discapacidades han sido marcadas por prejuicios y leyes que han perpetuado desigualdades en su contra.

Quien discrimina a otras personas lo hace desde una visión distorsionada de la esencia de cada hombre o cada mujer. Además siente estar a una mayor altura que ciertos grupos o personas, por lo que juzga a otros con miradas desagradables, comentarios ofensivos, y la no aceptación de una persona por su color de piel, forma de ser u orientación sexual.

La Comunidad LGBTTT ha sido marcada por acciones discriminatorias religiosas así como por la homofobia, los comentarios despectivos, las desigualdades sociales y laborales, y agresiones físicas y psicológicas. También es cierto que existen gays que discriminan a otros gays.

Sin embargo, es importante señalar que el discrimen no pertenece a alguna comunidad en específico, ya que en todas las sociedades y personas con diferentes orientaciones sexuales (incluyendo a los heterosexuales), existe discrimen dentro de cada comunidad. Por ejemplo, hay heterosexuales que discriminan a otros heterosexuales por diversas razones.

Hay ciertas acciones discriminatorias que son propias de la Comunidad Gay que debemos trabajar y mejorar. Por ejemplo, hay gays varones que pueden hacer comentarios despectivos sobre una mujer lesbiana, por su apariencia o por su "masculinidad", como también gays que discriminan a otros gays por ser "amanerados", catalogándoles de débiles.

Además existe el discrimen por edad, así como contra las mujeres travestis, transexuales y transgéneros, las personas con sobre peso y sobre los roles sexuales. Otros conceptos como el racismo y el feminismo poseen características asociadas al discrimen y tampoco son ajenas a la comunidad LGBTTT.

Es necesario hablar sobre este tema desde la crítica constructiva. Recordemos que la persona que sufre discrimen queda marcada psicológicamente, así como socialmente puede tener efectos negativos en su propia persona. Por esta razón, se debe combatir el discrimen contra l@s gays, pero de igual manera es necesario que se estudie los factores desencadenantes en torno al discrimen dentro de nuestra propia comunidad.

En el pasado surgieron hombres y mujeres que decidieron luchar contra el discrimen hacia ciertas comunidades y razas étnicas, logrando obtener mayores derechos y protecciones. Los gays luchamos desde décadas por combatir el discrimen en nuestra contra de igual manera, pero debemos reconocer la importancia de fomentar lo que pedimos con nuestro ejemplo.

Por ejemplo, Harvey Milk luchó en Estados Unidos por los derechos de los homosexuales en la política estadounidense. En

Ser feminista muchas veces se confunde con el argumento de que 'las mujeres odian a los hombres', lo cual es totalmente incorrecto. El ser feminista refiere a la acción de abogar a favor de los derechos y las iguales oportunidades hacia las mujeres.

Puerto Rico, Ana Roque De Duprey, en Estados Unidos Emma Goldman, en España, Clara Campoamor, en México Eva Perón, lucharon hace más de 80 años en el movimiento sufragista femenino, para que las mujeres tuvieran derecho al voto.

Ser feminista muchas veces se confunde con el argumento de que 'las mujeres odian a los hombres', lo cual es totalmente incorrecto. El ser feminista refiere a la acción de abogar a favor de los derechos y las iguales oportunidades hacia las mujeres. Hay mujeres que por ser feministas, lamentablemente sufren discrimen por personas que ignoran el valor de su labor social a favor de la Equidad.

Si logramos comprender que no debemos decidir sobre la vida de los demás, estaremos comenzando a erradicar el discrimen dentro de nuestra comunidad gay. Podemos ser mejores y fomentar el respeto hacia las personas homosexuales comenzando por respetarnos entre nosotros mismos.

La libertad individual se correlaciona a la libertad colectiva, esto significa que el respeto que exiges para ti, debes otorgarlo a las demás personas. Es reconocer que no debemos hacer lo que no nos gustaría que nos hicieran a nosotros. Ciertamente, no hay razón lógica para discriminar o sentirnos discriminados o discriminados. Para comentarios puede escribir a eljimagua@live.com, en Twitter: [@eljimagua](https://twitter.com/eljimagua) (<http://tiny.cc/mox-tux>).

*Activista de derechos humanos de P.R.

Respuestas a preguntas difíciles

Por: Wilfred W. Labiosa*/Columnista de TRT

LATIN VISION



PHOTO: ERIC HESS

Este invierno se ve que nunca termina y la nieve no para de caer. Han tenido tiempo de permanecer dentro de sus casas y pasarlas solos o acompañados. Es tiempo de compartir y reflexionar. ¡Yo la he pasado en el calor de Puerto Rico pensando en todos ustedes! Es hora ya de compartir con felicidad y amor con nuestros seres queridos. He podido compartir con amistades y familiares y aprender más de ellos al mismo tiempo que he podido aprender más de mi persona y reflexionar de temas recientes en mi vida.

Recibí varias preguntas las que contestaré vía esta columna. Primero, he reflexionado sobre como estoy después del divorcio. Los divorcios no son fáciles. He aprendido que la mayoría de las veces va ver una de las dos personas que lo inicia y que esta persona no será vista bien por nadie ya que lo/a culparán por lo ocurrido, aunque sea por una razón válida. En mi caso, yo inicié el divorcio por que no estaba feliz y me sentía vacío. No quería llegar a los 50 o 60 años con ese sentimiento. Quiero muchísimo a mi ex-pareja; siempre le voy a desear lo mejor a él y su familia ya que formaron parte integral de mi vida por muchos años. Yo no quería seguir entrando a mi casa sintiéndome sólo con mis penas e inquietudes y no poder compartir con personas a mi lado como me sentía—él estaba allí conmigo pero verdaderamente no estaba allí ya que él estaba pasando por sus propias inquietudes que no lo dejaban vivir como antes (no quiero divulgar más detalles). Así que la respuesta es que ahora, después de unos meses, estoy estable y me siento bien con mi decisión. Cambié de residencia y de ambiente y me vino muy bien.

Perdí amistades que pensé que me iban a apoyar, pero en vez, decidieron ser amigos de él y no míos. Algunas veces me siento solo, pero no tanto recientemente pues también me siento alegre, estable y mirando hacia un futuro lleno de posibilidades y esperanzas de uno mejor. Tengo un círculo de amistades increíbles y estoy saliendo a sitios gay que hacía mucho tiempo que no salía—he conocido a diferentes personas que me

han recordado como vivir feliz, alegre, lleno de amor, y en verdad vivir con V mayúscula. Participo como co-anfitrión de un espacio radial en Puerto Rico (Saliendo del Closet por Univisión Radio AM) y me va muy bien ya que puedo hablar con otros de mis experiencias. He tenido mis aventuras que me han enseñado nuevamente sobre como socializar—¡algunas buenas y otras malas! Siempre tengo a mi perrita que me recibe con besos y me trae sonrisas y alegría. ¡Estoy aprendiendo a vivir de nuevo como la persona que era antes y que soy!

Segundo, ahora sobre lo que pienso de la perspectiva de género. Para los que no saben, en Puerto Rico (como en muchos otros lugares en Latino América) hay la polémica de añadir a los currículos escolares perspectiva de género igualitario, queriendo decir, incluir a mujeres ilustres y mujeres en general como igual a hombres en las clases y enseñanza escolar. Usted se dirá, ya esto está pasando en nuestras escuelas, esto son noticias viejas. La respuesta a estos comentarios es que *no* está pasando. Es un tópico caliente ahora mismo. (Si quiere leer más al respecto lea la columna de Francisco Jimagua publicada en este periódico el mes pasado – http://tiny.cc/jimagua_escuelas). Yo pienso que el tópico no debe traer tanta discordancia ni argumentos ya que siempre debemos de incluir de igual manera a las mujeres como a los hombres, a blancos como a negros, a católicos como a los protestantes en nuestras clases e historia. Los fundamentalistas religiosos argumentan que esto es parte de la agenda gay y que queremos imponer nuestras vidas LGBT en las escuelas, este pensamiento no es correcto—¡es un error! Esta discordancia es una sin base ya que nuestra llamada "agenda LGBT" no tiene que ver nada con este argumento sobre equidad de género en la educación. Una cosa no tiene que ver con la otra. A los fundamentalistas les digo: No sigan hablando de más si no saben de lo que están hablando y por favor no pongan el nombre o usen el nombre de Dios ni de Jesús en vano; ¡esto es un mandamiento que no respetan ustedes!

Tercero, ¿por qué me retiré del activismo? Me retiré porque me cansé, pero al mudarme

Lea el resto de esta columna en:

<http://wp.me/p22M41-3qn>

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Dreams come true

PHOTO: TAMMY TWOTONE

Thank you Mr. Nimoy: A tribute to you!

By: Tammy TwoTone*/Special to TRT

"I live life as Clark Kent, but I'd rather be Rita Hayward"

Those are the words that caught Leonard Nimoy's attention. I did not think that I had a shot, and I really didn't want to send the usual resume. So, I boiled everything down to those words. And, I thought nothing more of it.

You can imagine my surprise when I was chosen by Mr. Nimoy to be one of the subjects of his book 'Secret Selves.' I didn't sleep for a week. All I kept thinking was that I was going to be spending the day with *Mr. Spock*.

I had spent a good part of my youth idolizing and looking-up to the character that Mr. Nimoy had made so famous: Mr. Spock, the science officer of the Starship Enterprise. That was the only image that I could connect to, the Alien, a stranger in a strange land. I knew we were of the same blood. We shared the same experiences, felt the same isolation. We both hid our emotions and lived our lives reflecting what everyone expected of us.

I showed-up wearing a *Las Vegas Showgirl* outfit.

Before he took a single picture, we talked. He wanted to know about me. He wanted me to explain my words. He was wonderfully patient and gentle, for which I am forever grateful. We covered a lot in the short time we had, but the one thing he kept coming back to, the one question he repeatedly asked me was "How do you do it?"

I was living a life that I had become used to for so long, that it never occurred to me to ask myself that question. I was doing what I had to to support my family, working a nine-to-five job with special needs children, as a male, while at the same time pursuing a stand-up comedy career as a female. I didn't have a good answer for him. He knew it, and he challenged me on it. And, I'm glad he did.

Thank you, Mr. Nimoy!

It wasn't long after that I transitioned. I wasn't happy with the life that I was living, but it was the only life I knew. It had become routine, and it was safe ... it was all I knew.

It's taken some time, and there have been stumbles along the way, but I'm getting there. So, when I heard the news of your passing, all the thoughts of that experience came flooding back. It was one of the most surreal moments in my life. It was a moment I never expected and it set the course for my future. Never again will comedy, gender, and geekiness combine to create a moment like that.

You saved my soul that day, Mr. Nimoy. You made my heart whole. And, you gave me a sense of confidence that I had never known before.

And, thank You, Mr. Nimoy, because I believe that I am the only trans woman I know of who can say that *Mr. Spock* helped me to transition.

**Questionable decision making and uncomfortable choices have led this trans woman to a career as a stand-up comic, writer, and producer who hosts her own show 'Tammys TWIST' on Broadway, in NYC.*

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6. Heterosexual Jill
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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. To Be Takei
6. The Way He Looks
7. Such Good People
8. Sordid Lives: Blu-ray/DVD combo pack
9. PRIDE
10. Looking: The Complete First Season



PHOTO: NINO MUÑOZ

Ricky Martin, whose new album, *A Quien Quiera Escuchar* is out now (a world tour runs throughout the year; for dates, visit: www.rickymartinmusic.com/events/)

Ricky Martin: Beyond the Bon-Bon

Singer talks love life, shirtless selfies & how he'd react to having gay sons

By: Chris Azzopardi*/Special to TRT

A single tweet changed Ricky Martin's life, and then it changed the world.

When the internationally famed Puerto Rican heartthrob came out in 2010, declaring himself on Twitter "a fortunate homosexual man" who's "very blessed to be who I am," Martin, 43, stepped out of the closet and into himself. Reflecting the free life he's currently basking in are the raw sounds and personal soliloquies on the singer's 10th studio album, *A Quien Quiera Escuchar* (*To Whomever Wants to Listen*).

In conversation, Martin is notably laid-back, sincere and personal as he opens up about how his six-year-long relationship with Carlos Gonzalez Abella inspired his latest music ("I love being in love"), what he's really trying to convey with all his shirtless selfies and the "powerful" coming out stories the LGBT community shares with him. And whether he's ruminating on his two sons or anticipating shaking his bon-bon with more male dancers onstage, his smile radiates even on the phone. This is a new, happier Ricky Martin, and yes, we're listening.

Q. On behalf of the gay community, thank you for all you do. The world is a better place because of your shirtless selfies.

A. (Laughs) Oh, man—thank you very much. I laugh so much at the reaction of the people; it's so funny. It really is amazing.

Q. I get a kick out of it too. Are you more comfortable without clothes? Or do you

feel it's just your responsibility as a celebrated sex symbol?

A. I just want to let people know how normal my life is, and I try to do it with a simple picture—that's what Instagram is about. So the other day I was laying in the sun and I was like, "Hey everyone, I'm here. I'm in a good place." You know, I'm a little bit obsessed with social media, to be honest. That's the first thing I do in the morning. I check out my Twitter, my HeyHey account, Facebook and Instagram, and I read what people have to say and what they need from me as an artist. It's fun, man.

Q. You've always been a sex symbol, but how does it feel being a sex symbol for a community of gay men who know you're playing on their team? Is it different when there's that mutual attraction?

A. Listen, for me, it's about liberty and it's about being you—me, in this case—and living life with transparency and just being. It's so amazing to know that you have nothing to hide, man. What you see is what you get. And this is me. And I don't wear a mask to go onstage, and the support that I've received from my community since I came out has been amazing. It's one of those things that (makes) you say, "Oh my god, why didn't I do this before?" But then again, Chris, you know how it goes—everybody accepts who they are at their own time. When I sent that tweet a few years ago just letting people

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

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Photos by: Alex Mancini/TRT

FENWAY HEALTH

Study shows increase in HIV for Black gay men; organizations work to combat infection and stigma

By: Clara Lefton/TRTReporter

In February, The American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) released a new study entitled "HIV and the Black Community: Do #Black(GAY)lives Matter?" The report's release was set to coincide with the 15th anniversary of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, held last month. The study was put together in an attempt to make an impact on a variety of people, from allies to members of the African American community to policymakers.

The report focuses on how the increase in HIV infection rates has been escalating in Black gay men since 1987. In particular, it states that, "if one followed a group of Black gay men from age 20 to 40, one in four would be HIV-positive by age 25, rising to 59 percent of the same group contracting HIV by age 40."

When *The Rainbow Times* asked Greg Milliet, amfAR's vice president and director of public policy, if any particular infection statistic stood out in his mind from the 12-page brief, he said that the historical neglect about the situation was the most shocking part.

"A lot of that can be explained by one word, and it's the history of homophobia, that our nation has had. When we talk about HIV, the only way to get federal funding for HIV at the very beginning of the epidemic was to democratize it: to say that everybody's at risk for HIV, even though we know that's not true. Everyone isn't at risk for HIV. Everyone has never been at risk for HIV," explained Milliet. "[This] meant that resources also went to many other populations that were at lower risk or no risk for HIV, whereas funding for prevention and care for gay men never got to the point



Lisa Clinton, program supervisor for HIV/AIDS Prevention & Screening at Baystate Health in western Mass.

where it represented to the degree to which they represented that epidemic."

Boston's AIDS Action Committee hosts an annual public event to honor National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. This year's was held February 25 in partnership with the Men's

Health League, part of the Cambridge Health Department, and gave attendees an opportunity to learn from speakers and in an open forum.

"In Massachusetts, the Black community represents 6 percent of the population, but 30 percent of those living with HIV. And, we are seeing an increase particularly in Black gay and bisexual men who have seen a 48 percent increase in the last five or so years in HIV rate," said Carl Sciortino, executive director of the AIDS Action Committee. "It's a chance to have a dialogue about the importance of being tested, of knowing your status, so really it all comes back to stigma. People aren't willing to talk about their sexuality, about their sexual practices, about safer sex, about getting tested, which is true in many communities."

A variety of different health-based organizations within New England offer services to help combat these statistics. For instance, AIDS Project Rhode Island offers free of charge, quick and anonymous HIV testing twice a week and by appointment. They also provide case management services in a variety of African dialects to better assist African refugees living

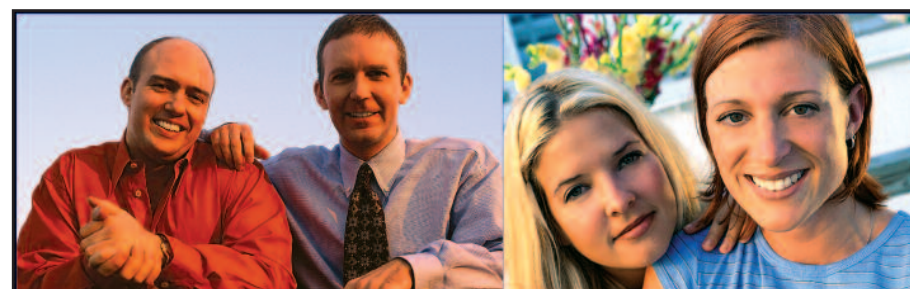
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Marriage Equality from page 3

long-time civil rights director for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, and has as much or more experience than any other attorney in the country in litigating the marriage equality issue specifically. Bonauto does not have any experience arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court, but it was her leadership in the groundbreaking Massachusetts marriage case that got the ball rolling toward marriage equality nationally. Bonauto is co-counsel on the team of private attorneys in the Michigan case, *DeBoer v. Snyder*.

Jeffrey Fisher: Jeffrey Fisher is a Stanford law professor and an attorney that the Reuters report (<http://tiny.cc/zpqxsux>) identified as having the third most experience arguing before the Supreme Court among all 17,000 oral advocates and petitioners. He's argued 21 cases (winning nine) between 2004 and 2012. A clerk for former Justice John Paul Stevens, he's co-director of Stanford's Supreme Court Litigation Clinic and teaches a course called the "Law of Democracy and Supreme Court Decision Making"—the very sort of topic relied on by the Sixth Circuit to say that state bans on same-sex marriage are permissible. Fisher's Supreme Court experience has focused primarily on rights of arrested persons facing criminal charges, but he was counsel of record in the successful marriage equality case, *Bishop v. Smith*, from Oklahoma. (The Supreme Court last October denied the appeal of Oklahoma and six other states seeking to defend their bans.) He's now co-counsel on the Kentucky case, *Bourke v. Beshear*.

Douglas Hallward-Driemeier: A partner in the prominent conservative-leaning national law firm Ropes & Gray, in Washington, D.C., Hallward-Driemeier is working on the Tennessee case, *Tanco v. Haslam*. He heads his firm's Supreme Court practice and, prior to joining the firm, handled Supreme Court litigation for the U.S. Department of Justice. He also served as Assistant to Republican Solicitor General Paul Clement during the administration of President George W. Bush. An article in the *Journal of Law for Emory University School of Law* said Hallward-Driemeier ranked 26th among the most frequent Supreme Court advocates between 2000 and 2012, having argued 13 cases. (Clement was No. 1, having argued 62 cases at that point. Clement added to that number in 2013 by arguing for the preservation of the Defense of Marriage Act.) Former Lambda legal director Abby Rubenfeld says he's "a great attorney and very experienced with the Supreme Court, not to mention committed to our issue."

Ted Olson: Ted's got cred with the Supreme Court like very few others. During some Republican administrations, he's reportedly been on short lists as a Supreme Court nominee. As Solicitor General, he's been the so-called "Tenth Justice." He's argued more than 60 cases before the Supreme Court, representing both conservative and liberal positions, and argued the fifth highest number of cases in the past decade (winning 13 of 19), according to Reuters. Notorious swing vote Justice Anthony Kennedy attended his wedding. Olson led and won federal appeals court cases against state marriage bans in two circuits. He argued the Ninth Circuit case, regarding Proposition 8, before the Supreme Court in 2013 and won,

But the Supreme Court has instructed the attorneys to send only two attorneys ...

albeit on a procedural issue. Aside from his credentials at the Supreme Court, he's become a prominent advocate for marriage equality in the media, at some cost to his reputation among conservatives. He's worked closely with LGBT legal groups on the previous marriage cases—in California and Virginia.

Paul M. Smith: Openly gay attorney Paul Smith successfully argued the landmark 2003 case, *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down laws prohibiting sexual activity between same-sex partners. He served as clerk to former Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell during the 1980-81 session (years prior to the court's *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision upholding sodomy laws) and has argued 15 times before the high court. Currently, he is a partner at the Jenner & Block law firm in Washington, D.C., and chief of the firm's Supreme Court Practice. He also serves on Lambda Legal's National Leadership Council and was formerly co-chair of its Board of Directors. Primarily citing his argument in *Lawrence*, the American Bar Association's Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities recognized him with its prestigious "Thurgood Marshall Award" in 2010, the same year the National Law Journal named him as one of four of the "Decade's Most Influential Lawyers" in civil rights litigation.

These are some good guesses; there are plenty more who could fit the bill. There are openly gay Supreme Court "repeat litigators" Pamela Karlan and Kathleen Sullivan, both with enough experience and reputation to have been considered on Supreme Court nominee short lists. According to Reuters, Karlan has won two of her five cases before the Supreme Court; Sullivan has won four of six.

Evan Wolfson, who litigated the first gay marriage trial (in Hawaii) and has led a national grassroots effort to establish a political and cultural atmosphere to bolster the legal prospects, is another possibility. He argued in the Supreme Court on behalf of Boy Scout leader James Dale.

And Roberta Kaplan, who is also openly gay, successfully argued the *U.S. v. Windsor* case that overturned the key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act.

"Ultimately," noted Olson, "the client gets to decide. And if a conflict does develop between what a client wants and what's best for a whole class of people, it will be up to their personal lawyers on the case to help them make the best decision."

"In a situation with disparate clients in disparate states, with clients feeling loyalty to their lawyers, it's not going to be simple," said Olson. "The lawyers are going to have to exercise some substantial degree of maturity and selflessness. But I think they're a sophisticated bunch ... I hope they'll be able to put themselves aside and say this could be the final victory for gays and lesbians."

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America's 1st privately-owned LGBTQ Center opens in CA

A clothing retailer in West Hollywood made news this week when the owner announced he was closing one of his three shops and converting it into America's first privately owned LGBTQ Center.

The LA Jock Sport retail shop at 7990 Santa Monica Blvd. is now "Home," a help center serving the community and its allies by offering free support—including legal, mental health and vocational services—to those in need.

What makes "Home" unique is that it will not seek any public donations. All monetary funds will come from shop owner Nir Zilberman.

"I created 'Home' as a space where strong minded individuals can meet and work with other strong minded individuals to make the

Read the rest of this story at:
<http://tiny.cc/a4mvux>

LGBT Center from page 2

social groups. These groups will be facilitated and chartered by the community members that create them, fortifying a sense of unity with like-minded individuals. The Center will also provide or facilitate social services and counseling for individuals and families in crisis, related to issues surrounding sexual identity. We propose that the Center staff will educate and train local organizations, municipalities, and schools on issues related to identity and sexual orientation. The Center will function as a community based hub, providing special events that foster positive relationships.

We are looking for local leaders to assist

THE RAINBOW TIMES IS STILL WAITING TO HEAR FROM THE AWVC ABOUT OUR APPLICATION ???

Unity Pride from page 5

worthy organizations whose missions serve marginalized communities in an effort to fully realize equity for all."

According to Mike Givens, Unity Pride committee member, there are numerous issues in the LGBTQ community that require "immediate attention."

"There are crippling racial and socioeconomic disparities that many in the LGBTQ community must contend with," said Givens. "LGBTQ communities of color and female-identified LGBTQ people experience drastic disparities when it comes to healthcare, pay inequalities, discrimination and access to resources that will make them whole."

Givens expressed that other concerns continue to be overlooked.

"Members of the transgender community do not have discrimination protections in public settings and it is legal to deny someone service based solely on their actual or perceived gender identity," said Givens. "We need more funding for HIV/AIDS services and programs. We need to retire archaic and ineffective sex education curricula that re-

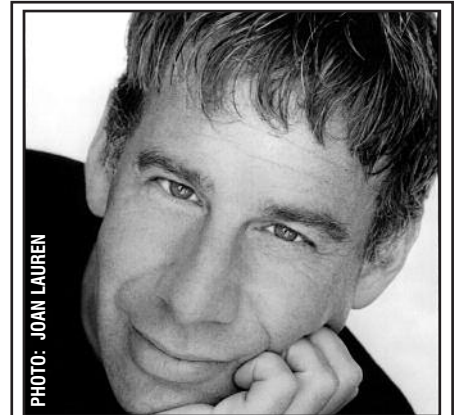


PHOTO: JOAN LAUREN

BOSTON, Mass.—The Boston Gay Men's Chorus proudly presents *Wicked Awesome*, a production celebrating the music of Stephen Schwartz, the award-winning lyricist and composer of Broadway blockbusters *Godspell*, *Pippin*, and *Wicked*. Schwartz will take the stage with BGMC for the concerts, which take place at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall on March 21 & 22. FMI visit: <http://tiny.cc/gynvux>

with the implementation of these goals. Right now we have many individuals that stand ready in an advisory capacity, but in order for this Center to work, we need a dedicated and passionate Board of Directors at the helm. If you ready to reignite a cultural renaissance in the city of Springfield and Pioneer Valley, please contact George Ramirez via email at geonitya@gmail.com. Please include your past experience with LGBTQ organizations, and if you have prior start-up expertise for non-profit organizations. Participation on the Board of Directors must consist of a healthy number of Springfield residents, but like the LGBT Center itself, this opportunity to voluntarily serve your community is for everyone.

fuse to teach adequate birth control methods, variations in gender identity and sexual orientation, and appropriate use of contraceptives. We need policies that ban conversion therapy for minors in Massachusetts. These issues are just scratching the surface!"

Unity Pride will have a strong social justice component and will hold educational workshops and offer volunteer opportunities to deploy their resources and address these issues, according to Paquin.

"Our sincere hope is that people come together and experience each other on a level that challenges us to look outside of our own lived experience," said Paquin. "We host events such as networking nights, social gatherings, and educational workshops, and our core mission is to promote inclusivity, a shared intentionality to understand and empathize with each other while also acknowledging differences and the beauty inherent in diversity."

Kenney noted that the only requirement to join Unity Pride is "an open mind."

For more information, visit Unity Pride at www.unityprideboston.org, or email info@unitypride.org to get involved.

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