Fury over reported federal plan targeting transgender people

By DAVID CRARY and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—LGBT leaders across the U.S. reacted with fury Monday to a report that the Trump administration is considering adoption of a new definition of gender that would effectively deny federal recognition and civil rights protections to transgender Americans.

“I feel very threatened, but I am absolutely resolute,” Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Rights, said at a news conference convened by more than a dozen activist leaders. “We will stand up and be reslient, and we will be here long after this administration is in the trash heap.”

The activists, who spoke amid posters reading “(hash)Won’tBeErased”, planned a protest march to the White House later in the day.

World Series Chorus Off!

Boston Gay Men’s Chorus challenges Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles
Submitted by BGMC

The Boston Gay Men’s Chorus (BGMC) issued a World Series challenge to the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles. If the Boston Red Sox defeat the Los Angeles Dodgers in the fall classic, the LA Chorus will perform Neil Diamond’s “Sweet Caroline,” a tradition at Fenway Park. If the Dodgers are victorious, BGMC will perform Randy Newman’s “I Love LA” and make it available online. The winner will also make a donation to GALA Choruses, the North American association serving the LGBTQ choral movement, for its work supporting emerging LGBTQ choruses.

“This is a friendly wager, but we’re taking it seriously,” said BGMC Executive Director Craig Coogan. “The Red Sox are not only seeking their fourth championship in the last 15 years, they are also striving to keep the world safe from Dodgers’ shortstop Manny Machado.”

“We were delighted to accept this challenge from the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus,” said Jonathan Weedman, executive director of the Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles. “This will be a great World Series Chorus Off!”

Be Brave

By Janson Wu

We’re approaching a pivotal election Nov. 6—one that will determine whether we continue down a path of fear and hatred, or turn back to building a country that is more fair, inclusive, and mindful of science, truth, and morality.

It’s been a politically chaotic and scary two years, especially for marginalized people, including the LGBTQ community.

In the midst of the chaos and fear, I’ve been thinking a lot about bravery. And I keep coming back to one quote.

It’s from a prominent journalist and later government official from the first half of the 20th century, Elmer Davis. Davis was committed to seeking and telling the truth. He took principled positions against Japanese internment, government censorship, and McCarthyism.

Davis said: “This nation will remain the land of the free, only so long as it is the home of the brave.”

Now, I would revise that slightly: This nation can only truly become the land of the free if we really commit to being the home of the brave.

Thankfully, right now, people who exemplify bravery are all around us. They’ve been working to build a more brave America.

I actually feel bad for him. What I saw was a minstrel show today. Him in front of all these white people—mostly white people — embarrassing himself and embarrassing Americans, but mostly African-Americans, because every one of them is sitting either at home or with their phones, watching this, cringing.

— Don Lemon on Kanye West’s recent Oval Office visit.

Laverne Cox rallies the troops

Submitted by Freedom For All Massachusetts

Emmy-nominated actress and transgender advocate Laverne Cox joined parents, transgender youth, Massachusetts educational associations, and special guests on Wednesday in support of Yes on 3, the coalition working to
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District 33-N

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RSVP by Thursday November 8th, contact jakegent@yahoo.com

CONTACT INFORMATION
Lions Global Membership Team Joe Gentleman (617-512-3803) jakegent@yahoo.com
Lions District Governor Frank Bertolino (978-270-0365) Fpb4kw@gmail.com
Prison doctor settles with state over LGBTQ discrimination

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—A psychiatrist at a California prison is receiving $275,000 to settle her lawsuit alleging that she was twice locked in a room with a dangerous inmate in retaliation for reporting mistreatment of gay and transgender inmates. The Sacramento Bee reported Wednesday that Lori Jepsen accepted the settlement in May in return for agreeing to resign from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The lawsuit says she repeatedly reported discrimination of gay and transgender inmates at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville. Jepsen, who is a lesbian, alleged that a corrections officer then harassed her and suggested inmates attack her.

It says an officer locked her in a unit with a prisoner serving multiple life sentences for rape.

Corrections spokesman Vicky Waters says the department doesn’t comment on lawsuits.

Smithsonian museum to receive Matthew Shepard collection

CASPER, Wyo. (AP)—A collection of Matthew Shepard’s papers and personal objects will be donated to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

A news release from the Smithsonian says the museum will accept the donation from Shepard’s parents, Judy and Dennis Shepard, in Washington on Oct. 25.

KTWO-AM in Casper reports that the family is donating personal papers highlighting Matthew’s school life from elementary school through college as well as theater scripts, photographs, correspondence and notebooks. There are also items such as a child-sized Superman cape, sandals and purple ribbon award.

The 21-year-old Shepard died after being savagely beaten and left tied to a rail fence in October 1998 in Laramie. His murder sparked national outrage and turned his death into a symbol of violence against gay people.


Oregon bakery appeals fine for turning away lesbian couple

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—The owners of a shuttered Oregon bakery fined for refusing to make a wedding cake for a lesbian couple are appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Oregonian/Oregonlive reports that lawyers for Melissa and Aaron Klein, former owners of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, filed the petition Monday.

They’re asking the high court to overturn a state order to pay $135,000 in emotional damages to the couple they turned away.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries imposed the fine in 2015 after finding the Kleins had violated a state anti-discrimination law. An Oregon appeals court upheld the order, and the state Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

The U.S. high court ruled in favor of a Colorado baker in a similar case, but that decision didn’t address whether a business can invoke religious objections to refuse service to lesbian and gay people.


Trans
Continued from page 1

The Department of Health and Human Services acknowledged months ago that it was working to rewrite a federal rule that bars discrimination in health care based on “gender identity.” It cited a Texas-based federal judge’s opinion that the original rule went too far in concluding that discrimination based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination, which is forbidden by civil rights laws.

On Sunday, the New York Times reported that the agency was circulating a memo proposing that gender be defined as an immutable biological condition determined by a person’s sex organs at birth. The election-year proposal would define sex as either male or female, and any dispute about one’s sex would have to be clarified through genetic testing, according to the Times’ account of the memo.

The department was terse in its response, saying it did not comment on “alleged leaked documents.” It did release a statement from Roger Severino, the head of its Office for Civil Rights, saying his agency was reviewing the issue while abiding by the 2016 ruling from the Texas-based federal judge, Reed O’Connor.

LGBT activists, who pledged legal challenges if the reported memo leads to official policy, said several other courts had issued rulings contrary to O’Connor’s.

Cox
Continued from page 1

uphold the state’s transgender nondiscrimination law at the ballot on November 6.

Appearing along with Laverne Cox at the community center of the Boston Alliance of LGBTQ+ Youth were HRC President Chad Griffin, Massachusetts’ first openly transgender, Congressional candidate Alexandra Chandler, ACLU staff attorney Chase Strangio, Massachusetts Teachers Association, Boston Teachers Union, AFT-MA, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Framingham Teachers Association, Revere Teachers Association, Transgender youth and their families.

Voting yes on 3 is critical to showing transgender young people that they are welcome to be who they are in Massachusetts, without fearing discrimination. With the most recent attack on transgender people by the Trump administration, this event aims to send a message to transgender youth that they are deserving of basic protections from discrimination, that Massachusetts has their backs, and that they can thrive and succeed in all aspects of their lives.

You can watch Laverne’s remarks at the Bay Windows Facebook page, @BayWindows.


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Young Catholics urge Vatican to issue inclusive LGBT message

By NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Catholic bishops are entering their final week of debate over hot-button issues facing young Catholics, including how the church should welcome gays and respond to the clerical sex abuse scandal that has discredited many in the church hierarchy.

The monthlong synod of bishops ends next Saturday with the adoption by the 260-plus cardinals, bishops and priests of a final document and approval of a separate, shorter letter to the world’s Catholic youth.

Some of the youth delegates to the meeting have insisted that the final document express an inclusive message to make LGBT Catholics feel welcome in a church that has often shunned them.

The Vatican took a step in that direction by making a reference to “LGBT” for the first time in its preparatory document heading into the meeting.

But some bishops have balked at the notion, including Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput, who insisted in his speech that “there is no such thing as an ‘LGBTQ Catholic’ or a ‘transgender Catholic’ or a ‘heterosexual Catholic,’ as if our sexual appetites defined who we are.”

But other bishops have expressed a willingness to use the language, though it remains to be seen if the final document or the letter will. Each paragraph will be voted on by one or more and must obtain a two-thirds majority.

“The youth are talking about it freely and in the language they use, and they are encouraging us ‘Call us, address us this because this is who we are,’” Papua New Guinea Cardinal John Ribat told a press conference Saturday.

One of those young people, Yadira Vieyra, who works with migrant families in Chicago, said gays often feel attacked and shunned by the church.

“We know that’s not true, any Catholic knows that’s not true,” she said. But she added bishops need to come to

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Continued from page 3

Albany County bans gay conversion therapy

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Albany County has joined New York’s capital city in banning therapy that attempts to change the sexual orientation or gender identity of minors.

The Times Union of Albany reports the county legislature voted 37-1 in July to ban gay conversion therapy and impose fines on anyone who conducts the practice on someone under the age of 18.

The city of Albany banned conversion therapy on people of all ages two months earlier.

Advocates are pushing for legislators to ban it across the state.

The District of Columbia and nine states have banned the practice, which opponents liken to child abuse.

Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order last year barring insurance coverage for conversion therapy for minors, and he also prohibited state mental health facilities from offering it.

Brave

Continued from page 1

just world for us and for future generations through acts of courage large and small.

At GLAD’s recent Spirit of Justice Award dinner, I had the incredible fortune to celebrate some of these brave people: Sarah Huckman, a transgender New Hampshire teen and an inspiring young leader; GLAD founders Richard Burns and John Ward; and Jose Antonio Vargas, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who has publicly chronicled his experiences coming out as both gay and undocumented. Their inspiring stories electrified the crowded ballroom at the dinner on Oct. 12.

I had the joy of watching Sarah advocate for herself and her community at the New Hampshire State House earlier this year, when she was active in the successful effort to pass a statewide trans non-discrimination bill. She testified before a legislative committee of Republicans, Libertarians, and Democrats, told her story to legislators and reporters, and listened to hours of hateful arguments from our opponents.

But once did I see her flinch. Sarah is not just one of the bravest youth I know. She is one of the bravest people I know.

Back in 1978, the bravery of Richard and John might have appeared to some as lunacy. They fought against a wave of anti-gay hysteria sparked by right-wing celebrity Anita Bryant’s crusade to overturn gay rights ordinances around the country, and a massive sting operation by the Boston Police Department that targeted gay men for arrest and humiliation.

Richard and John set about realizing their vision of creating a more just world for LGBTQ people. Brazenly
When Sarah Jones' solo show "Sell/Buy/Date" opened at the Geffen Playhouse last spring, it sold out in a matter of minutes. It’s fortunate that the Los Angeles LGBT Center is mounting this encore presentation so that others can experience this mesmerizing work. Jones is a phenomenon, with many touting her as a successor to Lily Tomlin. Comparisons between the two miss a vital point—while Lily is the face of her work, the words are those of partner Jane Wagner. Sarah Jones writes and performs her own material. But like Tomlin’s solo pieces, “Buy/Sell/Date” could be seen repeatedly and leave you gleanling something new each time. The show takes place in the future during a seminar on sex workers. We meet men, women, children, elders, and Miss Jones inhabitants them all beautifully. The audience is not only entertained, but also moved to think. In many ways, Sarah Jones makes one hopeful for the future. Special plaudits must go out to director Carolyn Cantor. The construct of the show, the seamless transitions, the fully-integrated technical aspects, the precise light and sound cues—those things don’t appear out of thin air. Alas, too often a director gets short shrift because one imagines it all begins and ends with the performer. Towards that end, kudos to set designer Dane Laffrey, lighting designer Matt Richter, and Bray Poor on sound. The show runs through November 3rd, and you can get tickets at LALGBTCenter.org.

Opening night was hosted by Lily Tomlin and Laverne Cox. Rashida Jones (no relation) was also listed as a host but, to the best of my knowledge, she showed up, took some pictures, and presumably had better places to go. The construct of the show, the effortless transitions, the fully-integrated technical aspects, the precise light and sound cues—those things don’t appear out of thin air. Alas, too often a director gets short shrift because one imagines it all begins and ends with the performer. Towards that end, kudos to set designer Dane Laffrey, lighting designer Matt Richter, and Bray Poor on sound. The show runs through November 3rd, and you can get tickets at LALGBTCenter.org.

Opening night was hosted by Lily Tomlin and Laverne Cox. Rashida Jones (no relation) was also listed as a host but, to the best of my knowledge, she showed up, took some photos, and presumably had better places to be. Afterwards, my play mama, Jennifer Lewis, went backstage to congratulate Sarah. I was walking into the lobby with Debra Messing when, right in front of me, I saw her...Brigitte Nielsen. Believe it or not, I would (and did) knock people over to get to Nielsen. Most remember Gitte from her marriage to Sylvester Stallone, her various other romantic entanglements, and her tabloid headlines. But if you were in the UK when she did "Celebrity Big Brother", you saw another side of Gitte—a human side and a real person capable of great love and compassion. She’s smarter than you think, wickedly funny, brutally honest, and a nurturer.

When I came upon her (you can’t miss her—she’s like 9 feet tall), she was chatting with a group of women, led by comedian Whitney Cummings. The topic? Fertility, IVF, and older women giving birth. Cummings was asking Brigitte everything about her landmark pregnancy at 54. Whit may be only 36, but she’s obviously thinking about having children—and, more importantly, when. She even said, "You know, they should tell girls when they’re young that they should freeze their eggs so that they have them...just in case." What a brilliant idea—and it came from Whitney Cummings! Nielsen spoke with them endlessly and even offered to stay in touch and be of service. It was surely anticlimactic when I engaged her in conversation about her time on “CBB”, dished about Jackie Stallone, spoke Italian with her husband, and perhaps drooled a bit over her model son, Douglas Aaron Meyer (picture a male version of Gitte). Photos will follow on BillyMasters.com.

Back in 1989, "The Woman in Black" opened in London. Almost 30 years later, the play is still thrilling and chilling West End audiences (despite the tepid film version starring Daniel Radcliffe). I saw it at the beginning of the run and consider it one of my most memorable theatrical experiences. Last week, I attended the opening night at the Pasadena Playhouse, where it will play through November 11th—perfect for the Halloween season. The riveting tale has not lost an ounce of its potency, while perhaps my knowledge of the idea—and it came from Whitney Cummings! Cummings was asking Brigitte Nielsen about her time on “CBB”, dished about Jackie Stallone, spoke Italian with her husband, and perhaps drooled a bit over her model son, Douglas Aaron Meyer (picture a male version of Gitte). Photos will follow on BillyMasters.com.

The big theatre event in Los Angeles is "Dear Evan Hansen", which opened at the Ahmanson Theatre and runs through November 25th. While I wasn’t able to see this touring company, I was fortunate enough to be invited to the show when it opened on Broadway. I am certain this production will be a transformative experience which will linger with you long after the curtain falls. Should you be in the area, good luck getting a ticket—at CTGLa.org.

We hear that things are heating up between Rosie O’Donnell and girlfriend Elizabeth Rooney. As you may recall, Rosie and Rooney have been dating for just over a year. Tongues have been wagging ever since Elizabeth added the letter R and an emoji of a diamond ring to her Instagram bio (it has since disappeared). But something else struck me. When Rosie spoke about this relationship with Howard "see MASTERS, page 11"
Murderous autocrats are no more a recent development than America making strategic alliances that compromise our principles. The world is a dangerous place. What is new in the Trump era is the spectacle of our own president openly admiring despots.

In December 2015, Trump defended his friend Vladimir Putin against charges of murdering critics and journalists: “He’s running his country and at least he’s a leader, unlike what we have in this country.” In February 2017, he said, “There are a lot of killers. You think our country’s so innocent?” In June 2018 he said of North Korea’s Kim Jong-un, “He speaks and his people sit up at attention. I want my people to do the same.”

On October 2, Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi disappeared after entering the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. He was reportedly murdered and dismembered on orders from the Saudi royal court. Trump, who has personal business with Riyadh and was himself criticized by Khashoggi, was slow to respond.

The Saudis, in one of their multiple-choice explanations, said Khashoggi got into a fistfight. (In other news, Marion Crane attacked Norman Bates’s knife in the shower in a motel off the old highway.) The crown prince has been put in charge of the investigation. Murderers investigating themselves is a nifty solution, if you’re a murderer. All the while, Trump acts as yet another despot’s useful idiot.

What is one vexing journalist more or less, whose thoughtful public criticism enraged his prince and whose gruesome end was apparently captured in an audio recording by the Turkish government? It is up to us what we make of it, and how much value we place on life and liberty. Our nation of ideas has become a transactional platform, its organs hollowed out like Iraqi teen Hamoudi Mutairi, recently disemboweled by a laughing brute for gender nonconformity, bleeding out and calling for his mother.

That murdered child recalls Matthew Shepard, beaten, tied to a fence, and left to die twenty years ago on a Wyoming prairie. What kind of people permit this? We fashion ourselves champions of freedom, yet we steal children from their families and make them sign away their rights. Brown and queer children don’t appear to count.

On October 11, our 45th president ignored the deadly Hurricane Michael (nature’s mockery of Florida Gov. Rick Scott for banning the term “climate change”), and the growing crisis over the name of winning the Cold War. Trump, unleader of our inner demons, is a consequence of our evasion of responsibility, our refusal to see one another.

I think of Khashoggi’s fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, waiting for hours outside the consulate in Istanbul for her lover who never returned. We need to look upon these awful events to be mindful that evil walks among us. In other circumstances, the death squad’s bone saw could be meant for us. If we sleep rather than face the present threat, our turn may yet come.

Richard J. Rosendall is a writer and activist who can be reached at rrosendall@me.com.

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Trans People Under Threat

By Fenway Health

Fenway Health this week warned of the threat to public health if the Trump administration’s plans to narrowly define gender to exclude the approximately 1.4 million people in the country who are transgender are implemented. The plans were first made public October 21 by the New York Times in a report based on a U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) memo that was leaked to the newspaper.

The Times reported that HHS is proposing a legal definition of sex under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits sex discrimination. A number of recent federal court rulings have found that some forms of anti-transgender discrimination constitute sex discrimination under Title IX or under the sex discrimination provision of the Civil Rights Act. These rulings were used as the legal basis for nondiscrimination rules affecting access to healthcare, and other services, that have been put in place over the last decade by HHS.

“If the changes to federal legal recognition of transgender people and protection from discrimination are made, there is no question that the health of transgender people will suffer,” said Fenway Health Interim CEO Darlene Stromstad. “Politics should not supersede the findings of medical science, which has shown for decades that gender and sex are not always identical.”

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services oversees hospitals, community health care centers, and other health-related programs that receive federal funding. Since 2010, the federal agency has been strengthening prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of gender identity. The most significant of these include a nondiscrimination rule, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, prohibiting gender identity discrimination in health care facilities and programs receiving federal funding. The measure, which was implemented in 2016 and which the Trump administration moved to dismantle in 2017, also explicitly protects people who are non-binary or intersex.

“Research shows that transgender people often face discriminatory treatment in public settings and such treatment correlates with higher rates of depression and anxiety. It’s incredibly important to understand that the types of settings in which transgender people are discriminated may include health care facilities. Without awareness, education and protection of their rights, they may be subjected to discriminating treatment, blamed for their health conditions, or denied service altogether,” Stromstad added. “Many transgender people have a deep reluctance to seek care due to prior mistreatment within the healthcare system and the fear of anticipated mistreatment and stigma. Knowing this, it’s unanswerable to think that we would choose to rescind nondiscrimination protections for transgender people in health care settings.”

Every significant medical association, including the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association, endorses a standard of care for transgender people that includes mental health counseling, hormone therapy, and surgeries that affect primary and secondary sex characteristics.

Roommates get Personal

Roommates,

By Jules Becker

Can people sharing a residence become friends a la "The Golden Girls"? Should the owner be aware of a tenant as potentially lethal as the Jennifer Jason Leigh character in the film "Single White Female"? Is the relationship only contractual, or might it become something truly personal?

Are their limits to such an arrangement?

These are questions that audience members are likely to ponder as they watch the Lyric Stage Company of Boston area premiere of the two-character Jen Silverman play simply entitled "The Roommate.

Under company producing artistic director Spiro Veloudos’ careful guidance, Paula Plum as Iowa homeowner Sharon and Adrienne Kastinsky as tenant Robyn solidly begin what becomes an evolving relationship. Unfortunately problems ensue when Silverman’s writing seems to begin eviction proceedings against credibility.

"The Roommate" begins promisingly enough as Robyn moves into Sharon’s Iowa City home. Vividly designed by Jenna McFarland Lord, it features a rear sun porch where Sharon invites Robyn to keep her boxes until the move-in is completed.

Appropriately rustic, the big old house—with visible greenery and a picket fence—looks to be the kind of warm and quiet location that Bronx native Robyn wants. For her part, Sharon speaks of hailing from Illinois, though her town or city is not mentioned.

Initially, the scenario seems both absorbing and promising as Sharon and Robyn begin to get to know each other. Apparently very different—with the former a book club member and homemaker and the latter a pot smoking vegan slam poet and past working woman with various jobs in her back story, they nevertheless have some important things in common. Both are divorcees and parents—Sharon with a fashion designer son in upscale Park Slope, Brooklyn and Robyn with a daughter.

Silverman’s somewhat insightful dialogue finds Robyn advising Sharon not to worry about generational differences, saying, “our kids just have to survive long enough to become us.” Sharon identifies her son as straight with a lesbian girlfriend, while Robyn speaks of having loved her ex-husband as well as women.

see THEATER, page 11
Pope accuser strikes back, blames gay priesthood for abuse

By NICOLE WINFIELD

VATICAN CITY (AP)—The Vatican ambassador who accused Pope Francis of rehabilitating a disgraced ex-American cardinal is doubling down on his claims, asserting that the “scapegoat of homosexuality” in the priesthood is responsible for sex abuse and that the Vatican is being hypocritical in refusing to acknowledge it.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò issued a third installment Friday in the war of words over the cover-up of ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. He was responding to a Vatican cardinal who had rebuked him and accused him of mounting a “blatant homosexual” political hit job against Francis with his claims.

Viganò has accused Francis of effectively rehabilitating McCarrick, 88, from restrictions imposed during Pope Benedict XVI’s papacy because of allegations he pressured seminarians to sleep with him. He has called for Francis to resign over the McCarrick scandal, which has sparked a crisis of confidence in the U.S. and Vatican hierarchy.

Francis has responded to the McCarrick allegations by removing him as a cardinal, over an allegation he molested a minor, and by ordering a Vatican investigation into its archives to determine how McCarrick rose through the ranks despite allegations he also molested adults.

Pre-empting the outcome, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, who heads the Vatican’s bishops’ office, penned a letter Oct. 4 saying he had gone through his archives and found no evidence of any formal canonical sanctions signed by any pope.

In his new missive, Viganò accurately noted that Ouellet actually confirmed the core of his allegations that McCarrick was placed under some form of restriction—not necessarily formal sanctions—because of alleged sexual misconduct.

Refuting Ouellet’s claim that the Vatican only heard rumors about McCarrick, Viganò listed all the letters that had reached the Vatican starting in 2000, when a priest from a New Jersey seminary first wrote relaying concerns from seminarians invited to McCarrick’s beach house and into his bed.

Viganò said he was shocked that Ouellet omitted any reference in his letter to McCarrick’s victims, or to what he said was the “principal cause of so many sexual abuses: homosexuality.”

“It’s hypocritical to refuse to admit that this scourge is due to a grave crisis in the spiritual life of clergy, and to not take measures to remedy it,” he wrote.

While the McCarrick scandal has exposed how seminarians can be vulnerable to sexual abuses by their gay superiors, studies have shown that homosexuals in general are no more likely to abuse than heterosexuals.

Viganò, who was Vatican ambassador to the U.S. from 2011-2016, was allied with the conservative culture warriors among U.S. bishops, particularly in articulating the Catholic Church’s opposition to gay marriage.

Viganò’s latest letter appeared Friday on the blog of Marco Tosatti, the conservative Italian journalist who helped Viganò write and edit his original 11-page accusation, and then arranged for its publication in right-wing media Aug. 26.

Religious leaders reflect city’s LGBTQ-friendly values

By MEGAN OSBORNE

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. (AP)—The Jewel City has made its mark as one of West Virginia’s most LGBTQ-friendly places, boasting the best university for LGBTQ individuals in the state as well as scoring the highest in the state on a recent Human Rights Campaign study.

A recent project by Fairness WV, an LGBTQ civil rights advocacy organization, highlights yet another facet to Huntington’s status as a place that is welcoming to its LGBTQ residents.

A project, titled “Faith is Fairness,” showcases 55 clergy members of a diverse selection of religions and political opinions across the state who are openly accepting of LGBTQ people. Fairness WV interviewed people who identify as both conservative and liberal, including conservative youth pastor and legislator Delegate Josh Higginbotham, a Republican representing Putnam County. Every rabbi in the state was interviewed, including those who have retired, as well as the temple president from New Indianapolis Hindu Krishna temple; a Muslim woman who is also the temple president from New Vrindaban; a Mormon woman who is also the temple president from New Vrindaban; and a Jewish woman who is also the temple president from New Vrindaban; and a Catholic priest.

Fairness WV Communications Outreach Specialist Billy Wolfe said the clergy members were very easy to find, and they could have easily found many more to interview, despite stereotypes that depict West Virginia and religion in general as anti-LGBTQ.

“I think that in the work that we do, whether it’s at the state level or whether it’s at the municipal level working with nondiscrimination, the side will put certain faith leaders front and center to speak against nondiscrimination,” Wolfe said. “It can be easy to get bogged down in this debate of sort of obscure passages in the Bible that some argue it’s condemning same sex marriage.”

The five clergy members who represent Huntington in the project are retired Presbyterian minister Bonnie Boyce, first Former Baptist Church minister Donte Jackson, retired Presbyterian minister Jan Williams, Highlawn Presbyterian Church’s Rick Wilson, Rabbi Jean Eglington of B’nai Sholom Congregation and Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church Associate Pastor Alan Williams.

“While the voice out there is so loud that says you have to conform to certain things in order to be a Christian,” Williams said. “Because of that, people who generally seek God, desire God and to know God feel excluded from the club of Christianity.”

Johnson Memorial is one of three United Methodist churches in West Virginia that is part of the Reconciling Ministries Network, an organization that works toward LGBTQ equality in United Methodist Churches. Williams said Johnson Memorial began taking steps to be openly inclusive around 2008 by opening the conversation in small groups and then in 2014 moving to a full congregational vote to join the Reconciling Ministries Network.

An overwhelming majority of the congregation, which has an average age of around 60 years old, voted to openly announce that no matter what a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity is, they are welcome in Johnson Memorial United Methodist, according to Williams.

The inclusivity of Huntington’s faith community does not end with these five faith leaders interviewed for Fairness WV’s project - many churches across the city participate in Mayor Steve Williams’ Open to All campaign.

One of those churches is St. John’s Episcopal Church, where the Rev. Lisa Graves performs same-sex marriage. She does this under the guidance and guidelines of the state’s bishop. Graves said the Episcopal Church has historically worked and advocated on behalf of marginalized groups, making a formal declaration in the 1970s that all people are created and loved the way they are created by God, and affirming that they ordain LGBTQ clergy in the early 2000s.

“One of the reasons we’re able to be so welcoming now is because we went through that debate 10 to 15 years before other churches,” Graves said. “What it boils down to for us is if you claim God is love, and that Jesus is the character of God which is love, then you have to say God loves all people. We make promises in our baptismal vows that we will respect and uphold the dignity of all persons, and if you make that kind of promise to God, you have to take that pretty seriously.”

Graves said openly inclusive churches are particularly important for college towns like Huntington because for young people who have been
hurt by the church, going to a new one can be intimidating, especially if it is ambiguous as to where the church stands on issues surrounding one's identity.

Alan Williams said Johnson Memorial does a lot of counseling involving those who have been hurt by the church.

“They come here looking to see if it’s OK to share their identity with us,” he said.

Both Graves and Alan Williams said that, though the official stance of each church is to be open and welcoming to LGBTQ people, congregations are full of many people with diverse opinions and they can only speak for their personal views. Wolfe said this sentiment was common in every interview that was conducted. Alan Williams said occasionally there will be a congregation that is not ready to make the leap toward inclusivity even though the clergy is, and that they just have to keep teaching through scripture.

“Most of Christ’s ministry was with people who everyone else kind of shunned, so we can use that as an example all the time,” Alan Williams said. “Just keep preaching about that. We don’t have to say that it’s a sin or not a sin to be gay, we don’t even have to discuss that. We can just say that Christ taught us to treat all the people the same. Ultimately I think that when people get to know people who are different than them, then they see they are people too.”

LGBTQ acceptance is a divisive issue in the religious community, even going so far as to cause a congregational chasm, such as the one that occurred in 2016 with Huntington’s First Presbyterian Church. The Herald-Dispatch reported at the time that a number of the members of the First Presbyterian Church in the Tri-State broke away from the church in a disagreement about the Presbyterian Church in America moving in a more liberal direction on issues including homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

“We felt the most peaceful resolution was to leave,” Patrick Hall said. “We felt like we didn’t leave the denomination. We feel like the denomination left us.”

At the time, Hall was an associate pastor at the newly founded Christ Presbyterian Church, which congregates at B’Nai Sholom Congregation on Sunday mornings when the synagogue would be otherwise unused.

The Rev. Skip Seibel, pastor at the First Presbyterian Church, said his church entertains a diversity of thought on issues including same-sex marriage.

Mayor Steve Williams said when he started his Open to All campaign, he had a “fascinating” number of faith leaders and their churches coming forward with willingness to be active participants.

“The fact is that’s a leading indicator of where the hearts of the people of Huntington are,” Steve Williams said. “We are a city of churches, we have a lovely mosaic of faith in our community and I think that’s what makes our city as strong as it is.”

Wolfe said the state’s population centers, like Huntington, naturally had a higher concentration of LGBTQ-affirming churches, but the project as a whole reflects well on the entire state.

“It takes that negative stereotype of West Virginia and shows that it’s not the case,” Wolfe said. “There are many people of faith who believe in inclusion because of their faith, not in spite of their faith.”

Graves said the state, despite stereotypes, is a naturally welcoming place for people of all walks of life.

“There is that Appalachian sense of welcome and hospitality,” Graves said. “Someone may theoretically not realize they’re inclusive, but truly I do think West Virginians have a heart for the stranger. There's always a sense of needing to be hospitable. I think this is a very kind state even though it’s certainly a state with diverse opinions.”


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they named the organization "Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders," at a time when having those words in your name invited hostility and derision, especially in the legal community.

And I was thrilled to present the Spirit of Justice Award to Jose, who decided seven years ago that he could no longer live a lie, and wrote a moving, deeply personal essay about his life as an undocumented immigrant in America, at great risk to his career and his U.S. residency.

For me, I'll admit, it's every time I'm in a cab, and a driver asks me what I do for work, and I have to decide in the moment whether to come out as the head of an LGBTQ rights organization.

"The LGBTQ kids coming up behind me to have an even better experience. No more kids being rejected by their families. No battles over restrooms, or what sports team to play on. The idea that I could impact somebody else's life for the better gives me the strength and courage to speak up."

"That's the beauty of activism. Generation after generation, we struggle so that others don't have to struggle as much. I was born the year that GLAD was founded. Thanks to GLAD's early, groundbreaking legal work, paved the way for a next generation of LGBTQ activists - myself included - to come of age and come out in the 1990s. My generation then built upon this foundation to make it easier for Sarah's generation to live freely and be treated fairly, and whose shoulders will lift the next generation even higher."

As Jose has said, "All I know, is we are stronger when we're together."

Indeed, there is safety in numbers. The more of us who get involved in our electoral process, by donating and volunteering for causes and candidates dedicated to fairness and justice, by talking to our neighbors and loved ones about the people and issues we care about, and, above all, by voting and getting everyone around us to vote, the better life will be for us and for those who come after us. And the closer we will get to truly making this country the land of the free."

"There is so much at stake, with this next election and beyond. And we will only succeed in meeting the challenge of this moment, if we're all just a little bit braver than usual."

Janson Wu is the executive director of GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD).
Masters
Continued from page 5

Stern, she said, “It’s the first time I’ve dated someone younger than me. It’s a very trippy thing.” What’s trippy is I can’t find record of Rosie ever dating anyone OLDER than her. Rosie was born in 1962. Her most recent wife, the late Michelle Rounds, was born in 1971. Kelli Carpenter was born in 1967. There are other paramours I won’t name who are even younger. Before someone says, “There you go, focusing on the age gap again”—Rosie brought it up first. By the by, she also told Howard she’d never get married again. We’ll see about that.

Someone making news is Aaron Hernandez, who died a year ago. The quarterback of his high school football team, Dennis SanSoucie, confirms that the two began a sexual relationship in middle school which continued through high school. “Me and him were very much into trying to hide what we were doing. We didn’t want people to know,” he says of his relationship with the former tight end. Aaron’s brother Jonathan says that Hernandez “had a feminine way about him,” which enraged their father. “I remember [Aaron] wanted to be a cheerleader. My cousins were cheerleaders and amazing. And I remember coming home and like my dad put an end to that really quick.” We’ll give SanSoucie the last word: “I really truly feel in my heart I got the thumbs-up from him.” TMI.

When “Project Runway” returns to its original home of Bravo, it will look completely different. No Tim, no Heidi, no one watching. The addition of Karlie Kloss as judge and Christian Siriano as the mentor is said to revitalize the show. I say, “YAWN.” While there will be two new judges, at least they are bringing back Nina Garcia.

The television landscape is littered with reboots. The latest to hit the screen, “Charmed”, was completely unremarkable. In fact, the only thing that stood out was that “Blue” focused on Sipowicz’s son, a next-generation “Designing Women”, and inexplicably, no Tim, no Heidi, no one watching.

Theater
Continued from page 7

Surprisingly, Silverman sets up a plot development by having seemingly reserved Sharon go through one of Robyn’s boxes where she finds evidence of shady dealings. The excuse she gives Robyn for doing so is that she needed a hat—a flimsy excuse for her discovery.

Later Sharon seems eager to try her hand at the kind of conning that Robyn professes she will give up going forward. Silverman affects character credibility by having Sharon tell Robyn that she pocketed an ophthalmologist’s watch during a date and admit to considering pot dealing for a fully realized play with consistent characterization. At least Silverman does properly hint at Sharon and Robyn’s mutual attraction. “The Roommate” would find its true lease on life by doing much more to explore their relationship.

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Whoopi Goldberg
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**WEEK 1:**

**MON. OCT. 22, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

**TUES. OCT. 23, 12 – 8P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown 9a.m. - 8p.m.)

Holy Name Parish Hall (Roxbury)

Dot House Health (Dorchester)

Tobin Community Center (Mission Hill)

**WED. OCT. 24, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

**THUR. OCT. 25, 12 – 8P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

All Saints’ Church (Dorchester)

Honan-Allston Library (Allston)

Margarita Muniz Academy (Formerly Louis Agassiz Elementary School) (Jamaica Plain)

**FRI. OCT. 26, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

**WEEK 2:**

**MON. OCT. 29, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

**TUES. OCT. 30, 12 – 8P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown 9a.m. - 8p.m.)

Harvard-Kent School (Charlestown)

Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (South End)

Wang YMCA of Chinatown (Chinatown)

**WED. OCT. 31, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

**THUR. NOV. 1, 12 – 8P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown 9a.m. - 8p.m.)

The Salvation Army Ray & Joan Kroc Community Ctr. (Dorchester)

ABCD Thelma D. Burns Building (Roxbury)

The Blue Hills Collaborative ( Hyde Park)

**FRI. NOV. 2, 9A.M. – 5P.M.**
Boston City Hall (Downtown)

In order to vote early or on Election Day, you must register to vote by October 17.

If you miss the early voting period, you can still vote on Election Day, Tuesday, November 6.

Learn more at boston.gov/early-voting
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