Observing Tucson And
The Greater Arizona Community

OBSERVER

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Tucson Observer Archives

Six Arrested At White House DADT Protest

Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean

LGBT Activist Lt. Dan Choi

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WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - As Lt. Dan Choi and about 100 LGBT activists staged a "don't ask, don't tell" protest Sunday afternoon (May 2) across the street from the White House, six plain-clothed civilians chained themselves to the White House gates.

Choi, who has twice been arrested after handcuffing himself to the White House gates and has now been court ordered not to enter a certain perimeter around the White House, was joined by a handful of other speakers, including former Vermont governor and Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean, Servicemembers United executive director Alex Nicholson, and Servicemembers Legal Defense Network executive director Aubrey Sarvis.

The protest came on the heels of a letter leaked late Friday afternoon in which Department of Defense secretary Robert Gates urged House Armed Services Committee chairman Ike Skelton "in the strongest possible terms" to delay legislative action on repeal until the Pentagon completes its assessment of how to implement repeal.

"Most journalists had turned off their computers and were safely into happy hour when the White House issued a statement," Sarvis told the protesters Sunday.

Though the White House statement said President Barack Obama's commitment to repeal was "unequivocal," Sarvis called the statement "nothing if not equivocal."

"There is a stark and not very flattering contrast here between President Obama, who follows his military, and President Truman, whose military followed him," said Sarvis.

Gov. Dean thanked the crowd for standing up for what's right and praised Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan for showing leadership on the issue.

"Carl Levin is a hero because he has the votes to tack on to the Defense authorization bill," said Dean, "the end of the 'don't ask, don't tell.' That is the right thing to do for America and I want to thank senator Levin for his courage."

According to multiple lobbyists working on repeal, Levin is actually about one to three votes away from securing the votes to attach a repeal measure. But some advocates worried that Friday's letter from secretary Gates may have stymied momentum on the vote drive.

Asked if Levin should push ahead on repeal despite the letter from Gates, Dean said he should as long as he has the votes.

"Sen. Levin's amendment, in fact, does what the secretary asked for in the secretary's testimony," Dean said. "There is a schedule for implementation … I think there's about a year for implementation, so the implementation is gradual, which is what the secretary asked for."

Servicemembers United's Nicholson told the crowd he had run into White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel over the weekend and asked him whether there was still a chance that repeal could happen this year.

"He said he thought we had a 30 to 40 percent shot of repealing 'don't ask, don't tell' left this year," Nicholson said. "You know why it's not 60 to 80 percent? Because they don't support us right now," he added, pointing at the White House as the crowd cheered.

The demonstration was organized by the groups GetEqual, Queer Rising, and Talk about Equality. As the rally continued, Anne Tischer, Nora Camp, Alan Bounville, Natasha Dillon, Iana Dibona, and Mark Reed quietly handcuffed themselves to the White House gates. Once the throng of protesters noticed, they directed their chants at the White House.

The crowd grew to about 150 as people shouted, "We will not … disappear. We'll remember … in November" and waved signs reading, "Obama, Keep Your Promises," and "Mr. Obama, What's The Hold Up?"

One of the speakers at the rally, Robin Chaurasiya, said she had skipped classes when she was still a college student so that she could intern 20 hours a week at the office of then-Senator Barack Obama.

"Why?" Chaurasiya said. "Because you were, in my mind, the face of 'change' for America."

At a brown bag lunch for the interns of the senator, she asked Obama to share his best advice for success. "Always fight for what you believe in, never compromise your values, and you'll be successful," Obama told them.

"Well, Mr. President," she continued, "it is May second, 2010, exactly one and a half years after your election, during which you promised to repeal 'don't ask, don't tell.' Look at us - we are all here, fighting for our beliefs, unwilling to compromise our values. But President Obama, only you can make us successful."

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It's More Than You Think.....

UPDATE

Treasures For TIHAN May 22

TUCSON (Observer Update) - "Treasures for TIHAN," the signature fundraising benefit for the programs and services of TIHAN, celebrates its 13th anniversary with a spectacular event!

Join event co-chairs Tom Murray and Deb Van Sant for a sparkling evening of cocktails, great music, fantastic food, and wonderful auction items.

Advance tickets for the event are $40 each or two for $70, and can be purchased online from our payment options page. Tickets purchased on the day of the event will be $50. The value of food and services received in return for each ticket purchase is $30.

$5 RAFFLE: Win $1,000 CASH! Raffle tickets only $5 each (or 5 tickets for $20, or 15 tickets for $50). Purchase your raffle tickets from our payment options page at tihan.org.

(You do not need to be present at the auction to win the raffle.)

TIHAN, Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network, is a volunteer-based, nonprofit organization focused on mobilizing the resources of faith communities to respond compassionately to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and to promote awareness and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. For more information, contact TIHAN at (520) 299-6647 or scott@tihan.org.

10th Annual Evening With Music And Friends May 7

TUCSON (Observer Update) - The 10th Anniversary Evening with Music and Friends supports grants to LGBT projects and programs.

Each year brings an opportunity to have fine food, wine, music, and a feel-good experience all in support of deserving projects that benefit the LGBT community. The 2010 Evening with Music and Friends is a benefit for the annual grant-making project of the LGBT-Straight Alliance Fund.

Friday, May 7, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, tickets are $75.00.

Tony Paniagua of KUAT will preside over a program featuring music by the jazz ensemble Uber Jam, vocals by Greg Stickroth, and guitar and vocals by Curt Beall. Your ticket also includes elegant hors d'oeuvres, fine wine and participation in a celebration of the Alliance Fund's 10 years of promoting philanthropy for worthy LGBT initiatives.

The Alliance Fund has contributed over $400,000.00 to Southern Arizona's diversity community. The May 7 Evening with Music and Friends will present an opportunity to kick off another successful decade.

Pay by check and mail to the Alliance Fund office: (checks payable to the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona (CFSA) and indicate "Alliance Fund Event" on memo line) Alliance Fund, c/o Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, 2250 East Broadway Blvd Tucson, AZ 85719-6014. Or fax credit card information to: (520) 770-1500. Or call the CFSA Reservation Line: (520) 545-0313.

TLGBTCC Breakfast Meeting May 20

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Tom Farmer, Senior Business Librarian at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library, will be presenting at the May Breakfast of the Tucson Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Chamber of Commerce, Hotel Tucson City Center, 475 N. Granada, 7:30 am

Description: Need to develop a list of key contacts for your business? Looking for product evaluations from Consumer Reports and other sources? Want to save money by fixing your own car? Interested in downloadable audio and e-books? Even if you are too busy to leave your home or office, you can find these types of free resources and more by checking out the Pima County Public Library web site. Learn how your Pima County Public Library card gives you online access to powerful databases that can save you time and money.

$20 members/ $25 guests, $5 discount for members and guests who RSVP by Monday, May 17. 615-6436 or info@TucsonGLBTChamber.org.

National Leaders Bring Same-Gender Marriage Conversation To Tucson

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Two nationally known leaders will bring the same-gender marriage discussion to Tucson in hopes to find common ground.

Maggie Gallagher, founder of National Organization for Marriage, and the Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy, president of Interfaith Alliance, will meet in Tucson to discuss their views on same-gender marriage and religious freedom.

Television reporter Lupita Murillo of KVOA channel 4, Tucson, will moderate the conversation. The public forum will take place Tuesday, May 11 from 7 to 9 pm at The ASDB Berger Performing Arts Center, 1200 West Speedway Blvd.

The forum is expected to draw supporters from both sides of the issue for a discussion that will bring two leaders with different points of view together to explore the issue and see if it is possible to find common ground.

"The national conversation about same-gender marriage is most often played out in sound bites and protest signs. We hope to have a deeper discussion in Tucson," said local organizer Paul Barby. "This is an important conversation to have because what is really at stake when we talk about same-gender marriage is religious freedom and the nature of democracy."

The Washington Post has described Gallagher's National Organization for Marriage, as "the preeminent organization dedicated to preventing the legalization of same-sex marriage." Gallagher and her organization played a key role in getting Prop 8 on the ballot in California. She also helped orchestrate the rollback of gay marriage via referendum in Maine, and block gay marriage bills in the New York and New Jersey State Senates.

As president of Interfaith Alliance, the Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, promotes the idea that marriage is a civil issue, not a religious issue in the United States and that discussions about same-gender marriage should begin from the perspective of religious liberty. Gaddy serves as a pastor at Northminster Baptist Church in Monroe, Louisiana, in addition to leading Interfaith

Alliance, a national grassroots organization of more than 150,000 individuals and 75 different religious traditions.

The event is free and open to the public on a first come, first seated basis.

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Supreme Court Skeptical On Keeping Anti-Gay Petitioner IDs Private

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - Supreme Court justices appeared skeptical about keeping secret the names of people who signed a petition to repeal Washington state's gay rights law, suggesting citizens cannot always hide behind anonymity if they want to be heard.

Opponents of gay rights want the court to keep the names private to avoid intimidation by the other side. But several justices questioned whether allowing petitioners to stay anonymous might imperil other vital open records like voter registration and lists of donors to political candidates. "The fact is that running a democracy takes a certain amount of civic courage," Justice Antonin Scalia said. "And the First Amendment does not protect you from criticism or even nasty phone calls when you exercise your political rights to legislate, or to take part in the legislative process."

The case, which will be decided by the court before the end of the summer, could draw a new line between voters' desire for openness in government and the right to political speech unfettered by fear of intimidation.

Opponents of the law that expanded the rights of gay couples mounted a petition drive that succeeded in getting a referendum on the "everything-but-marriage" law on last year's ballot. But voters narrowly backed the law that grants registered domestic partners the same legal rights as married couples.

While the campaign was under way, gay rights supporters sought access to the petitions under Washington's open records law. Protect Marriage Washington, the group that organized opposition to the law, objected, saying its members would be harassed if their names were made public.

"No person should suffer harassment for participating in our political system, and the First Amendment protects citizens from intimidation resulting from compelled disclosure of their identity and beliefs and their private associations," lawyer James Bopp Jr. said.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco refused to keep the names secret, but the Supreme Court stepped in and blocked release of the names before the vote. The justices later intervened in another case in which gay rights opponents complained about potential harassment. The court's conservative majority prevented broadcast of the trial on California's ban on same-sex marriage.

Bopp said people who signed the petition faced the prospect of harassment. Scalia called that "touchy-feely, oh-so sensitive."

"You know, you can't run a democracy this way, with everybody being afraid of having his political positions known," Scalia said.

"I'm sorry, Justice Scalia, but the campaign manager of this initiative had his family sleep in his living room because of the threats," Bopp replied.

Scalia said threats should be moved against vigorously. "But just because there can be criminal activity doesn't mean that you have to eliminate a procedure that is otherwise perfectly reasonable."

Washington Attorney General Robert M. McKenna denied there was evidence of violence or threats against petition signers.

If there was proof of violence, the petition signers could ask for a preliminary injunction, McKenna said. "Such situations should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to evaluate the reasonable probability of threats, harassments, and reprisals," he said.

Making the petition names public also helps the state fight fraud, McKenna said. And "it's also about finding plain old mistakes which the state, the secretary of state, or auditor has missed."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted that while Project Marriage Washington says it wants to keep the petition names anonymous, organizers of petitions often make the names public themselves by selling the names to other organizations and using them for fundraising.

"So that would be the end of a person's privacy," she said.

Chief Justice John Roberts compared signing a petition to voting, saying a person's vote might be chilled if it was revealed which candidate they voted for. McKenna argued that chill would be no more significant than it is for having campaign contributions or voter registration disclosed.

Justice John Paul Stevens, listening to his final arguments before retiring later this summer, said there might be a public interest in seeing the names on a referendum petition to "identify people who have a particular point of view on a public issue."

"And if you have the other point of view, don't you have an interest in finding out who you would like to convince to change their minds?" Stevens said.

But Justice Samuel Alito questioned McKenna on whether his office was willing to give out the home address of its lawyers so people could show up and have "uncomfortable conversations" with them about issues in which they disagree.

"We could not release it because they can come to the office and have uncomfortable conversations with them, which I can personally attest happens with some regularity," McKenna said to laughter in the courtroom.

The Associated Press is among 22 news organizations and media trade associations that filed a brief in the case supporting public disclosure of the documents.

The case is Doe v. Reed, 09-559.

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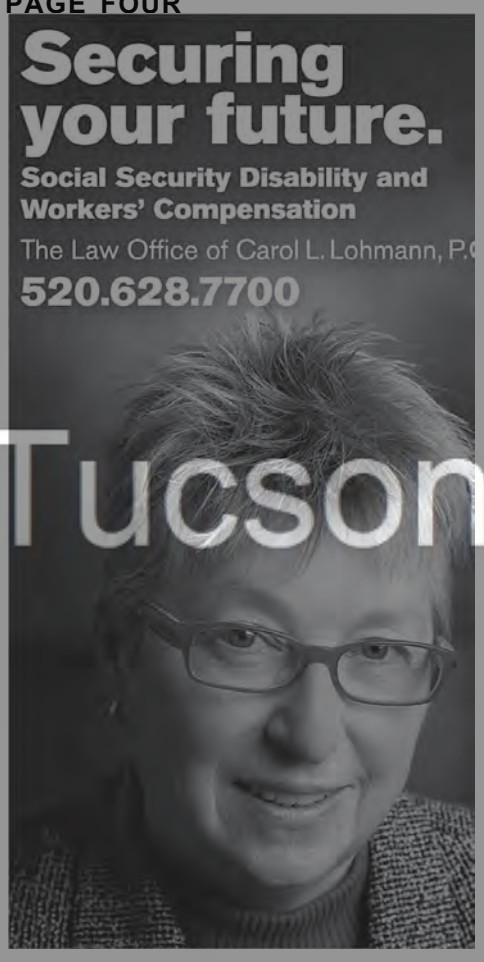


COMMENTARY. . .

by John Corvino

The Message Of Marriage

If I've asked it once I've asked it a hundred times: how does marriage equality hurt heterosexuals?

Recently I posed the question yet again to Maggie Gallagher, outgoing president of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM), as she visited my ethics class at Wayne State University via audio conference.

I "get" that Gallagher wants children to have mothers and fathers, and ideally, their own biological mothers and fathers. What I've never quite gotten is why extending marriage to gays and lesbians undermines that goal. One can be married without having children, one can have children without being married; and (most important) same-sex marriage is not about gay couples' snatching children away from their loving heterosexual parents. No sane person thinks otherwise.

Maggie Gallagher is a sane person. (Wrong, but sane.) For the record, she is not worried that marriage equality would give gays license to kidnap children. Nor does she oppose adoption by gay individuals or couples, although she thinks heterosexual married couples should be preferred. So what's the problem?

At the risk of oversimplifying, one could describe her concern–which she graciously explained to my class–as The Message Argument. The idea is this. The core reason society promotes marriage is to bind mothers and fathers together for the long-term welfare of their offspring. In doing so we send a message: "Children need their mothers and fathers."

But on Gallagher's view, extending marriage to gays and lesbians makes it virtually impossible to sustain that message. The central premise of the marriage-equality movement is that Jack and Bob's marriage is just as valid, qua marriage, as Jack and Jill's. (That's the whole point of calling it "marriage equality.") And if we make that equivalence, we cannot also say that children–some of whom Jack and Bob may be raising–need their mothers and fathers. Indeed, the latter claim would now seem offensive, even bigoted.

So Gallagher's argument poses a dilemma: either maintain the message that children need their mothers and fathers, and thus oppose marriage equality; or else embrace marriage equality, and thus relinquish the message. You can't have both.

Whatever else you want to say about this argument, it's not crazy. It's about how to maintain a message that seems well motivated, at least on the surface: children need their mothers and fathers.

Elsewhere I've argued that the claim "Children need their mothers and fathers" is ambiguous. On one reading it's obviously false. On another, it's more plausible, but it doesn't support the conclusion against marriage equality. For even if we were to grant for the sake of argument that the "ideal" situation for children is, on average, with their own biological mother and father, we ought not to discourage–and deny marriage to–other arrangements: stepfamilies, adoptive families, and same-sex households. It's a non-sequitur.

But that (familiar and ongoing) argument is somewhat beside the point. The Message Argument does not say that promoting children's welfare logically entails denying marriage to gays and lesbians. It says that, in practice, it is virtually impossible to maintain the message "Children need their mothers and fathers" while also promoting the message that "Gay families are just as good as straight ones." And given a choice between the two messages, Gallagher favors the former.

I think urging parents–especially fathers–to stick around for their offspring is an admirable and important goal. It's also one that has personal resonance for Gallagher, who has spoken candidly of her experience as a young single mother left behind by her child's father.

I also think that there are 1001 better ways to achieve this goal than fighting marriage equality. The fact that NOM targets gays and gays alone makes it hard to believe that we are merely collateral damage in their battle to promote children's welfare.

That said, I want to thank Gallagher for clarifying her position. I want to assure her that I'll take The Message dilemma seriously. I plan to grapple with it in future columns (and our forthcoming book).

But I also want to pose for her a counter-dilemma, which I hope she'll take equally seriously.

For it seems to me that, in practice, it is impossible to tell gay couples and families that they are full-fledged members of our society, deserving of equal respect and dignity, while also denying them the legal and social status of marriage.

Yes, marriage sends messages, but "children need their mothers and fathers" is scarcely the only one. Marriage sends the message that it's good for people to have someone special to take care of them, and vice-versa–to have and to hold, for better or worse, 'til death do they part.

Marriage sends a message about the importance of forming family, even when those families don't include children; about making the transition from being a child in one's family of origin to being an adult in one's family of choice.

Gallagher claims that she loves and respects gay people, and I want to believe her. But how can she sustain that message while also opposing marriage equality? How does her own preferred message not tell gay families–not to mention stepfamilies, adoptive families, and single-parent households–that "Your family isn't real"?

Yes, marriage sends messages. So does its denial.

(John Corvino, Ph.D. is an author, speaker, and philosophy professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. His column "The Gay Moralist" appears at 365gay.com, from which this is reprinted. Read more about him at johncorvino.com.)

Sports Illustrated Profile Of Gay Rugby Player Gets Inside The Closet

CARDIFF (Observer Update) - One of the most beautifuly heartbreaking stories about life inside the closet comes from an unexpected source this week: Sports Illustrated, reported 365Gay.com.

Written by National Magazine Award winner Gary Smith and called "The World's Bravest Athlete," the article looks inside the life of Gareth Thomas, the Peyton Manning of the pro rugy world.

Thomas came out in December 2009 to a flood of unexpected warmth in his home country in Wales, and is the only pro-athlete playing to be openly gay - in the world.

But Smith goes back to before Thomas was out and goes deeply into how he hid his sexual orientation and what it was like to be in the closet. This is an article you need to read in its entirety. Blogging about it won't do it justice. He is not gay himself, but Smith really captures how deeply, physically painful it is to hide your sexual orientation from people you love.

Smith describes how Thomas tried to be invisible, how he drank, how he married - and yet, Smith writes, "He had to compress his homosexuality into a smaller and smaller lump, shove it lower and lower until he actually pictured it and felt its location: a small black ball lodged in the lower left side of his abdomen."

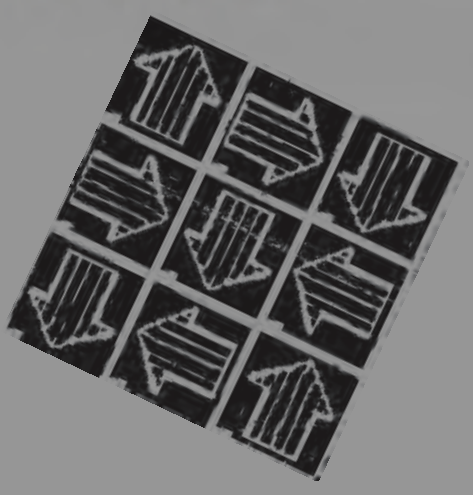
Though the story doesn't really touch on the complete lack of out gay male athletes in America (even Johnny Weir glosses over his sexual orientation with a wink), Smith does write:

"How do we answer Gareth Thomas? Where is our pioneer? Why hasn't one gay male athlete on a major professional team sport in our country–one who's still playing, not one retired–ever come out? Even the U.S. military is preparing to cross the line that 25 other countries' armies already have. Will team sports be the last place in the U.S. where a gay man feels he must hide and lie?"

Smith adds:

"Maybe, when we sit down in front of our games this weekend, if we peer into the players' eyes and realize that one of every 10 of them may be living the nightmare that Gareth Thomas has lived, the spell would be broken. Unless, of course, the one in 10 has long since been frightened away from our playing fields and courts and rinks and been winnowed to the one in 20 or 30."

Indeed.



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Charges Against Teens Accused Of Trying To Kill Classmate Reduced

LEXINGTON (Observer Update) - Kentucky District Judge Henria Bailey-Lewis reduced the charges against Corinne Schwab and Ashley Sams, both 18, who are accused of the attempted murder of a lesbian classmate. The two now face fourth-degree assault and menacing, both misdemeanors. A third teen, 17, is also charged in the case. Her current charges are unclear, reported 365Gay.com.

Cheyenne Williams, the alleged victim in the case, accused the trio of girls of taking her to a Flat Lake Falls and threatening to push her over a cliff. Williams testified the four had been friends for years and when the other girls brought up the idea of killing her, she thought they were joking.

According to the Lexington Herald-Leader, Williams testified the 17-year-old put the chain from Williams' wallet around her neck. Williams was forced to walk into the woods with the girls hitting her and poking her with sticks. "I begged them to stop," she testified.

Attorneys for the three accused teens said the story is not true, nor is it plausible. The attorneys said the girls could not have forced Williams into the car because she is heavier than they are. They also questioned why Williams waited three days before reporting the incident.

"I think justice was served," attorney James Baechtold, who represents Schwab, told the Herald-Leader.

Attempted murder victim Cheyenne Williams

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Hawaii Lawmakers OK Civil Unions, Send Bill To Gov.

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HONOLULU (Observer Update) - Hawaii is a step closer to joining a small group of other states in allowing same-sex civil unions, reported 365Gay.com.

In a move that still needs the governor's signature to become law, the House of Representativesapproved a measure that has drawn some of the state's biggest protest rallies.

Republican Gov. Linda Lingle hasn't said whether she'll reject it or sign it into law but her office said later that she will carefully review the bill.

The House voted 31-20 in favor of the legislation, which had been stalled but was unexpectedly revived on the last day of this year's legislative session. The Senate passed it in January. The measure would grant gay and lesbian couples the same rights and benefits that the state provides to married couples.

If approved, Hawaii will become one of six states – along with California, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington – to grant essentially all the rights of marriage to same-sex couples without authorizing marriage itself.

Five other states and the District of Columbia permit same-sex marriage: Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Louisiana Senate Committee Kills Gay Adoption Measure

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BATON ROUGE (Observer Update) - A measure that would have expanded adoption rights to Louisiana same-sex parents and unmarried couples died in a Senate committee.

The bill was a combination of two measures that would allow unmarried couples to adopt and allow an existing parent to petition a court to be a second legal parent. But debate centered around the rights of same-sex couples.

"This bill is nothing more than social experimentation using our children as guinea pigs," the Rev. Louis Husser of Crossgate Church told Nola.com.

Louisiana law now allows only married couples and single individuals to adopt. It is possible for a gay couple to adopt a child, but only one parent is given legal rights.

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Gov. Bobby Jindal's office registered the governor's opposition to the bill, Nola.com reported, but nobody from the administration testified during the committee hearing.

White House Responds To Gates DADT Letter

WASHINGTON, DC (Observer Update) - In response to a letter by Defense secretary Robert Gates to House Armed Services Committee chairman Ike Skelton warning Congress against a legislative repeal of "don't ask, don't tell" this year, a White House spokesman has issued the following statement to The Advocate:

"The President's commitment to repealing "don't ask, don't tell" is unequivocal. This is not a question of if, but how. That's why we've said that the implementation of any congressional repeal will be delayed until the DOD study of how best to implement that repeal is completed. The President is committed to getting this done both soon and right."

The letter, obtained Friday by the Associated Press, warned that legislative repeal prior to the completion of a DOD study "would send a very damaging message to our men and women in uniform that in essence their views, concerns, and perspectives do not matter."

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COMMENTARY. . .

by John Culhane

The Paradox Of Legal Gay Unions

By John Culhane, Professor of Law, Widener University

In late 2000, David and I traveled to Vermont to enter into a civil union. At the time, this "marriage in all but name" alternative was the only legal option available for same-sex couples who wanted state recognition of their unions.

As we crossed the state line from Vermont back into New York at the end of an unforgettable weekend, David looked at the wedding rings newly at home on our hands and said: "Well, they didn't disappear."

Over the years, I've thought about that statement from time to time. On the level that matters most, the comment is dead-on: Our marriage crosses and transgresses many lines, both spatial and transcendent, and in that sense isn't dependent on any state's laws.

But we could have made such a commitment without the state's (secular) blessing, so we obviously cared about the legal recognition.

And when it comes to the legal effect of our union, we and other same-sex couples find ourselves living on Bizarro Earth, where logic is shelved and results are backward. Let me explain how David's statement is both right and wrong from the legal perspective.

Gay and lesbian couples married (or civilly united) in a given state may find that their unions, paradoxically, have little or no legal weight but may also be impossible to exit.

The first part of this problem is well-known. A gay couple married in, say, Massachusetts does have the state-conferred benefits of marriage, but only as long as they remain in that state. If they move to a state that doesn't recognize their union - in other words, most states - their marriage doesn't exist. So they can't file state joint income tax returns, gain any exemption from estate taxes that might be available to opposite-sex couples, visit each other in the hospital, and on and on.

Even if they don't move, the rings they wear might figuratively vanish on an out-of-state vacation – in addition to the hospital visit problem, a surviving spouse might not be able to sue a negligent motorist for the wrongful death of her partner.

And even if the couple remains in the state until they day they die, the evil Defense of Marriage Act – the repeal of which appears to have disappeared from sight – means that their marriage is a nullity for federal purposes.

But recent developments in Texas and Pennsylvania remind us that same-sex marriages are even harder to get out of than they are sometimes legally useless to be in.

As a lawyer, one of the unpleasant thoughts that has intruded on me is that my civil union wouldn't enable a "civil divorce" (now there's an oxymoron) in our home state of Pennsylvania, even if the day ever came that we wanted to take that sad step. Vermont, like virtually all states, has this strange dichotomy: Out-of-staters can travel there to marry, but can only dissolve their unions by becoming residents for a period of time (usually six months or one year).

That's not a problem in most cases, because a divorce entered into in one state will be recognized in another. A straight couple married in Vermont can divorce in any state, and Vermont will give that divorce decree full faith and credit.

Not so for our unions. A few years ago, a friend who'd also gotten civilly united in Vermont called me, almost in tears, because her partner had met someone else and now her union needed to be dissolved.

But the pain of her personal loss was being compounded by the fact that she didn't see a way out of her situation. Unable to move to Vermont, she found herself trapped in a nightmare that not even The Marriage Ref could solve.

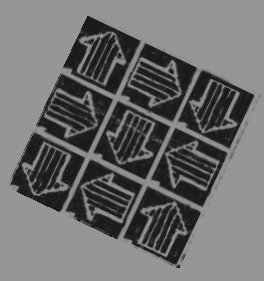
Luckily for her, she was wrong. The two women live in New Jersey, and because of that state's more progressive legislation and courts, a judge was willing to dissolve the union and allow the parties to get on with their lives. That wouldn't have happened in most states, including the one just across the Delaware River.

Down in Texas, the trial judge's decision to allow a gay couple to divorce was challenged by the Attorney General, and the appellate court heard arguments on the messy matter last week. The easiest thing would be for the court to hold that granting the divorce would simply be recognizing that the marriage was valid in the state where it was celebrated (Massachusetts, in this case). The court might take that approach, just to avoid getting swamped by the constitutional wave that would otherwise crash down on it.

What if the divorce isn't recognized? There's a procedure called a "voidance," but the remedies and division of property aren't as reliable in those cases. So the two men won't be able to close the circuit cleanly, and may find themselves in a confusing and stressful tangle for years to come.

When will this change?

(Culhane writes for 365Gay.com, from which this is reprinted.)



BUZZ - BUZZ - BUZZ - BUZZ -- LGBT Hotel Chain To Open

NEW YORK (Observer Update) - A New York-based hospitality group is planning to open five LGBT-oriented hotels in America before expanding overseas, reported advocate.com.

Calling itself a luxury lifestyle resort collection, G Worldwide intends to launch properties in New York, Florida, California, and Las Vegas, according to its website. The hotels are described as being "uber high-tech facilities" operated by "some of the most innovative, creative people in design, food & beverage, nightlife, events, and hospitality." No specific dates for opening are mentioned on the website, which officially launches in a month.

In February, another group of New York developers made clear their intention to open a boutique gay hotel in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood.

Tucson Observer Archives

Lesbian Catholic School Teacher Banned From Classroom

VANCOUVER (Observer Update) - Lisa Reiner is on the payroll as a music school teacher at Vancouver, Canada's Little Flower Academy, a Catholic school. But she is forbidden to enter the classroom, reported 365Gay.com.

Reiner returned to school following the birth of her first child, carried by her partner. She told reporters that parents of her students complained to the school that they were concerned a lesbian teacher might influence their daughters, the Globe and Mail reported. School officials told her that her contract would be paid out, but she could not teach.

"The Catholic school has knowingly employed her as a lesbian during the current school year, but suddenly dismissed her without warning," a news release from the B.C. Pride Education Network stated. "Ms. Reimer was told that she was dismissed because many parents had complained since they had become aware of the fact that she had recently become a parent and that her spouse was a woman."

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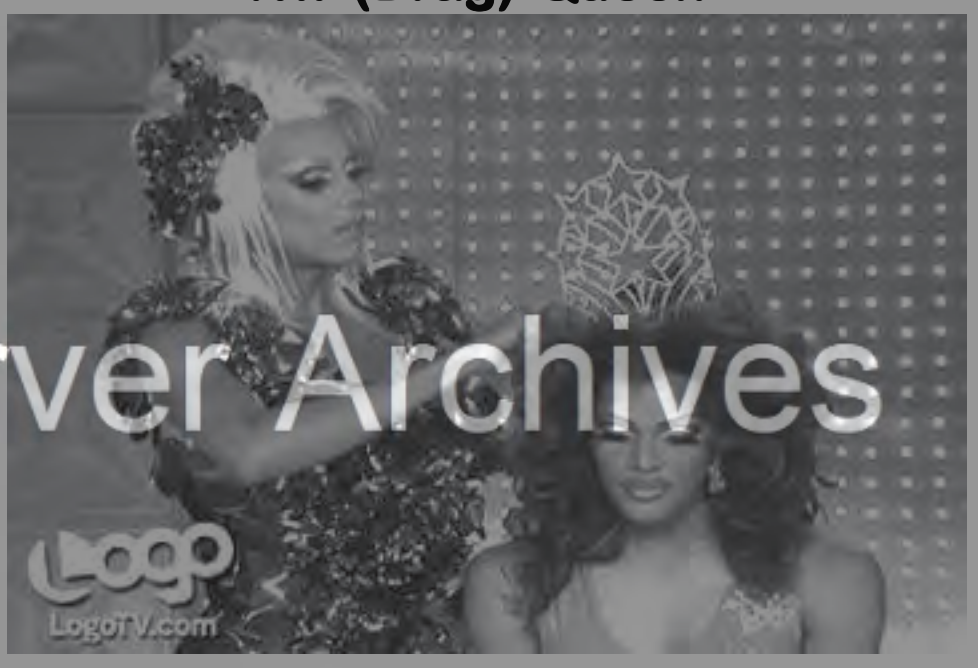
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MARRIAGE

Tyra Sanchez Crowned Nw (Drag) Queen



LOS ANGELES (Observer Update) - In a knock-down, drag-out finale, Miss Tyra Sanchez became the new queen of the runway on "RuPaul's Drag Race," beating (literally) heavy competition from both Raven and Jujubee.

In the process, she nearly hyperventilated.

"If I'm performing, I hold my breath," she told our sister site NewNowNext. "My mom's always saying, 'Girl, let your breath go!' At that moment, it was just like, are you serious? … Is this really true? It was just like, 'Oh my god, I'm gonna pass out.' "

Thankfully, she didn't.

Has being in the competition improved her life? Not in the most important way, she said.

"I'm still in the same position I was before, but now it's because I want to be, not because I have to be."

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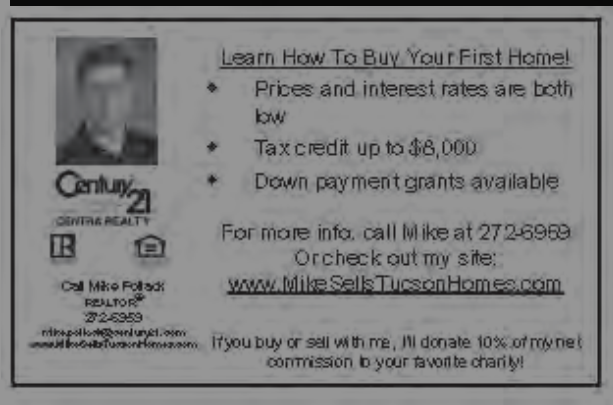

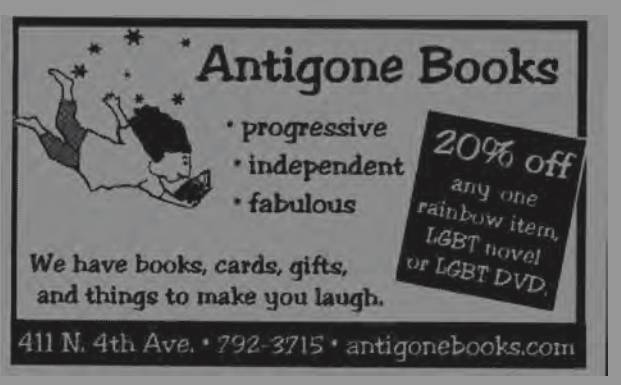

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JELL-Oh 2110: The final figures were not available at presstime but from the looks of some of those present it was a fun, fun affair. Details next week: PHOTOS: Bill Morrow.

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Poet's Corner

GUN LAWS, ARIZONA STYLE

by Ron Rose - Tucson

It's time to go home and shoot Granny
I knocked off my last 6-pack of beer
My brains are locked up in my fanny
Maybe I'll hunt me a "Queer".
A wetback would do, even a Jew
Thanks to Phoenix I've got me a gun
Don't check me for crime, so what I've done time
Our lawmakers have made shooting fun.
Ain't no money for schools
Them's Tea-Party rules
Taxes don't cut it with us
Liberals are fools, guns are our tools
So please don't make no more fuss.

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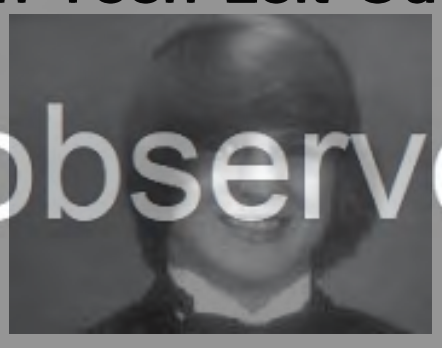
Lesbian Teen Left Out Of High School Yearbook

JACKSON (Observer Update) - Constance McMillen isn't the only lesbian student in Mississippi facing discrimination at school. Ceara Sturgis, a student at Wesson Attendance Center, feels it too, 365Gay.com reported.

Earlier in the school year, Sturgis, a lesbian, asked her school to include a picture of her in the yearbook wearing a tuxedo rather than a dress. School officials balked.



Ceara Sturgis

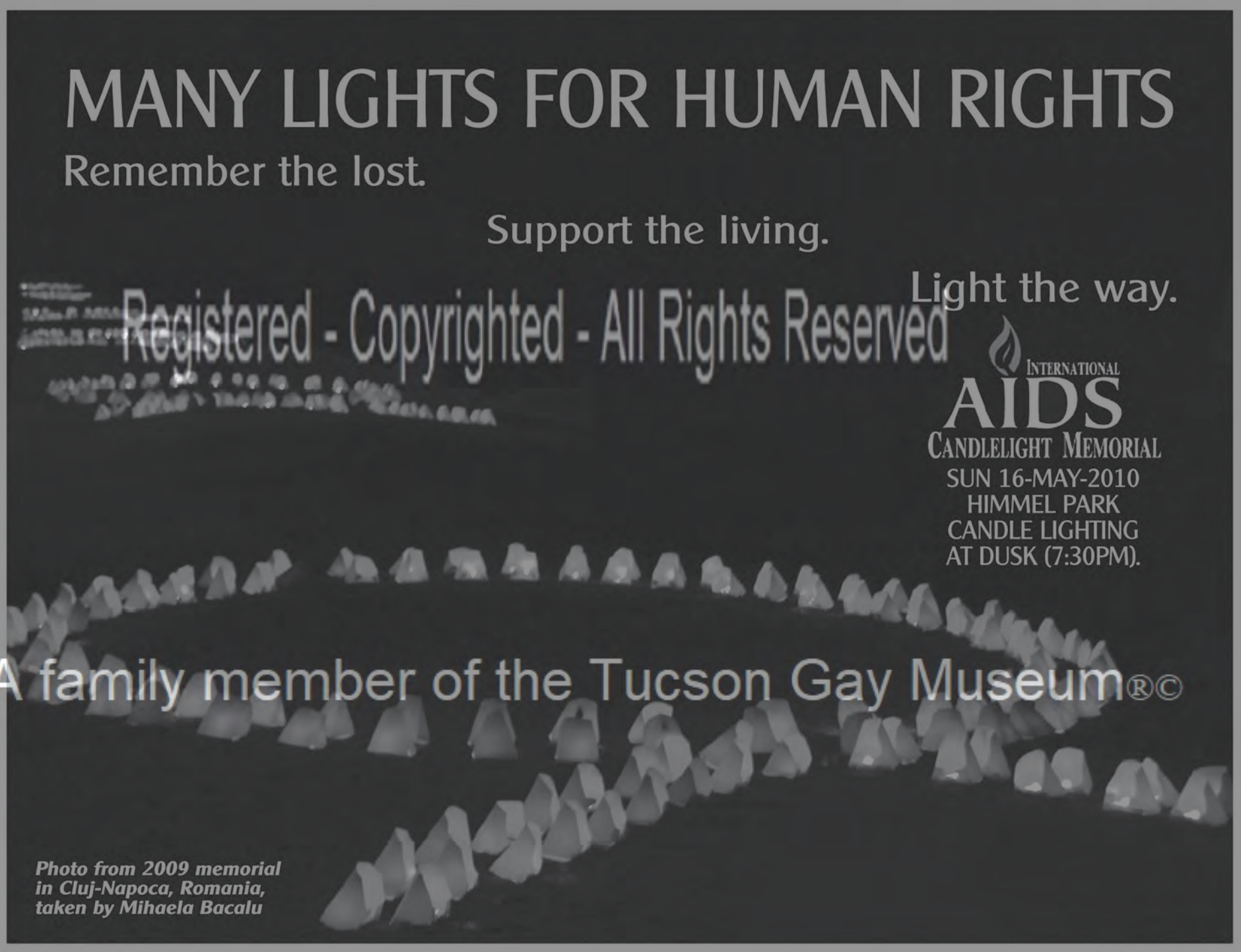
The American Civil Liberties Union joined in the fight, sending a letter to the school demanding Sturgis' tuxedo photo be used. The school still refused.

When Sturgis flipped through her high school yearbook, handed out last Friday, she found no reference to herself. No picture. No name. Nothing.

"It's like she's nobody there, even though she's gone to school there for 12 years," her mother Veronica Rodriguez told the Jackson Free Press. "They mentioned none of her accolades, even though she's one of the smartest students there with wonderful grades. They've got kids in the book that have been busted for drugs. There's even a picture of one of the seniors who dropped out of school."

Sturgis is an honor student who played goalie on the varsity soccer team.The ACLU has not announced whether it plans to pursue the case.

tucsonobserverarchives.org



DAILY BAR CALENDAR

SUNDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am It's Latin Sunday like the good ol' days. Catch DJ Dmenace spinning the best Cumbias. Get your Bucket of Beer ... 5 Bud Bottles for $5!

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 11am. Beer Bust Sunday - $1 draft beers (12 oz), domestic only; $2.25 domestic long necks.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. Karaoke on the Patio 4-8:30pm. Burger BBQ 5-8pm + $1 pint draft. 9pm-close Karaoke inside with Troy & $1.50 Well or Domestic Beer, $2.50 Call or Premium Beer. DJ Hurricane on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Peter's Build Your Own Bloody Mary Bar 11am-2pm. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excluding special events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-8pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar 2pm-2am. Beer Bust 2pm-7pm. Karaoke with Michael D 9pm-Close. Drag Bingo every other Sunday 8-9pm. Check our Ad for Special Events or Parties

MONDAY

THE BIZ - Closed for employee training.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 p.m. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Bucket o" Beer - $10 Domestic, $12 Imports and microbrews (4 beers to a bucket, for 2 or more people, Some brands excluded).

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close $5 Scratch Long Island Varieties. 9pm-close DJ Hurricane with "All Request Music".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Happy Hour 11am--8pm (excl spec events) Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm Back Pocket Patio Bar 8pm-close. Karaoke with Michael D. 9pm-close.

TUESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 and Game Night all night long. Play Wii, beer pong and pool with the staff.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3-8. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. Pitcher Special $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.00 lg. Pitcher (excluding Blue Moon & Dos XX Amber).Girlz Nite Out. Girlz pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Ladies only Texas Hold 'Em Poker 6 p.m. Y-Not Karaoke with Anna at 8pm

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close "2'sDay" - $2 Well or Domestic Beer. DJ Q 9pm-close.

WOODY'S - Open 11am- 2am. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close, Caribbean Party Night with Woody's own Specialty Mojitos, Caprioskas and Martinis with Tucson's Hottest Bartenders.

WEDNESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Wild Wednesday 18+ Party with DJ White Shadow spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and top 40 remix dance of today. 21+ NO COVER. 18+ $8 Cover.

COYOTE MOON PUB -Open 3pm. Happy Hour All Day $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitchers. Karaoke with Ynot Entertainment at 9pm.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. "Diva-Licious" show w/Bunny FuFu. 11pm - -close "Reverse Happy Hour". DJ Q Inside & DJ Mike Lopez playing 80s music on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am;. Happy Hour 11am-8pm excl. special events). Ful Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Bar open 8pm-close. Service Industry Employee Special All Day Long - $1 off all drinks except schnapps and draft. Different Themed Underwear Party 9pm-close with $1.00 off for those who participate (excl. Schnapps and Draft). Retro 80s & 90s Dance with DJ Clint 9 til close..

THURSDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Y-NOT Karaoke 9pm-2am with Meco pouring the best drinks in town. Come out and play.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg.. Pitcher. Boyz Nite Out - boys pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Bicardi Thursdays - $3.00 Bicardi Rum - all flavors.

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 10pm-close "Boyz Nite Out" w/Bartenders in their underwear. DJ Hurricane spinning Top 40 & DJ Mike Lopez on the patio. $1.75 Long Island, $1.50 Tequila Shots, $3 Skyy Cape Cods and $4 Skyy Cosos.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl Spec Events); Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close. Cheap Party Day **FREE POOL**, $1.00 PBR Longnecks, $2.00 Tecate Longnecks. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm - close..

FRIDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 pm. GoGo Fridays with 2-4-1 drinks for the ladies til midnight. Catch Shorty spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and Top 40 remix dance of today.

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 Sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitcher. $2.75 All Mexican Beers and Dos XX Amber. Dance lessons at 7pm $5 per person, Country Dancing 8:30 p.m. to close with DJ Pat.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 9pm -close DJ Hurricane inside. 10pm-close DJ Mike Lopez with "I'm a Sexy Bitch Night" on the patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-11pm Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Enjoy the Live piano & vocal sounds of Susan Artemis 6-9 p.m.;

SATURDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am. Latin night with Latin Drag Show the 1st, 3rd and 4th Saturdays of the month. DJ Dmenace spinnin' the best Cumbias, Salsa & Merengue. $3 pitchers and $2 Tequila shotz all night long!

COYOTE MOON PUB – Open at 2pm. Happy Hour 2-8pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Plus check out the bartenders choice of shot specials. $5.00 cheese-burger & fries. $3.00 Cuervo and $4.75 Jager Bombs. Check our calendar for the Saturday Night Special Entertainment.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 5-8pm Karaoke on the patio $1Draft Pints. 9pm "Saturday Starrlett's" w/Bunny FuFu & Janee Starr. After the show, DJ Q spinning inside & 10pm-close, DJ Mike Lopez with the "Party on the Patio".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 10am-8pm (excl spec events); Full Menu Kitchen open11am-11pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm til close. Check our ad for Twice-A-Month Special Events or Themed Parties.

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Bar Specials

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

COYOTE MOON - Ciinco de Mayo celebration here with $2.50 Mexican Bees, well margaritas and Dos XX pinnts. $3.50 Josse Cuervo. Karaoke At 8:00 p.m. with Anna

WOODY'S - Celebrate Cinco de Mayo here. $3.50 Cuervo Margaritas, $2 Tecate longnecks. $2.75 Coronas plus special Taco Buffet.

SATURDAY, MAY 8

COYOTE MOON - 9PM. Benefit show for Bianca Solei in her quest for Miss Gay Arizona America featuring special guests

SUNDAY, MAY 9th

WOODY'S - Benefit for TIHAN

FRIDAY, MAY 14

WOODY'S- A special Meow Mix featuring "God-Eess amd She' In concert 10:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 15

WOODY'S - "Cap and Gown Graduation Party 9:00 to closing. Hot dance, drink specials for Grads and Alum's.

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'A Terrible Law, Unfair And Wrong'

Dear Mr. President,

I am the mother of two young children, and an Iraq war veteran. I joined up just like my dad – a retired Army officer – and my sister, who currently serves in the Guard. My brother is a reservist and has been deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. Two weeks ago, our family gathered together as he is leaving again for Afghanistan - his 4th deployment. Even my husband, Jay, served as an officer in the Air Force until 2008.

Like my dad, I chose the Army. I reached the rank of Captain and was a platoon leader in the military police. I was there during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

I had some of the best NCO's (non_commissioned officers) in the Army who could accomplish any mission. Several members of my platoon received decorations for valor during the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On my last day of active duty, some of my old squad leaders revealed to me that one of my former team leaders was gay. They figured it was safe to tell me, as I was leaving the Army. My first feelings on the matter were, frankly, a little surprised, followed by complete indifference.

I was surprised because I had never suspected the soldier of being gay. But then, I never really had any thoughts about her sexual orientation whatsoever. When I reflected on it, it didn't make one bit of difference in how she performed her job or how she related to the other soldiers in the platoon. She had the respect of her squad leaders (fairly conservative men, mind you), who kept her secret and continued working with her side_by_side for years.

As an officer, I would have been bound by my position to report such "credible information" that would have led to the discharge of a great NCO. I am glad that I was never placed in the position of having to choose between one of my soldiers and enforcing this terrible law, which I feel is unfair and wrong.

Please, Mr. President – at this critical time – do not allow those serving their country to be forced to choose between good, honorable soldiers, and upholding an unfair law.

Please, do not continue to allow gays and lesbians in the service to have to choose between hiding a part of their identity and continuing to serve their country.

Please, help Congress repeal "Don't Ask Don't Tell" now.

Respectfully,
Former Capt. Rebecca H. Elliott
Untied States Army

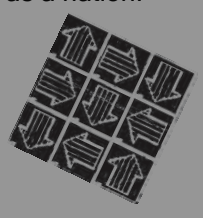
("Stories from the Frontlines: Letters to President Barack Obama" is a new media campaign launched to underscore the urgent need for congressional action and presidential leadership at this critical point in the fight to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT). Every weekday morning as we approach the markup of the Defense Authorization bill in the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, SLDN and a coalition of voices supporting repeal, will share an open letter to the President from a person impacted by this discriminatory law. We are urging the President to include repeal in the Administration's defense budget recommendations, but also to voice his support as we work to muster the 15 critical votes needed on the Senate Armed Services Committee to include repeal. The Defense Authorization bill represents the best legislative vehicle to bring repeal to the president's desk. It also was the same vehicle used to pass DADT in 1993. By working together, we can help build momentum to get the votes! We ask that you forward and post these personal stories.)

Anti-Gay May Day Event 'A Bust'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - "May Day 2010: A Cry To God For A Nation In Distress" – a religious event held Saturday in Washington, D.C., that featured leaders of the "ex-gay" movement like Tony Perkins – was a disappointment to organizers, writes gay rights activist Wayne Besen, advocate.com reported.

Besen is the founding executive director of Truth Wins Out, a group that advocates against the "ex-gay" movement. He was in attendance at the "May Day" event, which aside from the Family Research Council's Perkins, included speakers like Peter LaBarbera, president of Americans for Truth (about Homosexuality), a "group dedicated to exposing the homosexual activist agenda."

Besen believes only about 300 attended the gathering at the Lincoln Memorial, and that organizers expected many more people at the $70,000 event. "Forgive our nation for our sexual sin," LaBarbera said at "May Day 2010." "Forgive us for our excessive tolerance as a nation."



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