

## Video Shows Police Beating of Transsexual at 201 Poplar; Two Officers Fired

Surveillance video shows a Memphis police officer beating a suspect at 201 Poplar in an apparent case of police brutality.

The video, recorded Feb. 12, shows Duanna Johnson in the booking area at the Shelby County Criminal Justice Center after an arrest for prostitution.

The tape clearly shows a Memphis police officer walk over to Johnson — a transsexual — and hit her in the face several times.

“Actually he was trying to get me to come over to where he was, and I responded by telling him that wasn’t my name — that my mother didn’t name me a ‘faggot’ or a ‘he-she,’ so he got upset and approached me. And that’s when it started,” Johnson said.

Johnson said the officer was attempting to call her over to be fingerprinted. She said she chose not respond to the derogatory name the officer called her.

“He said, ‘I’m telling you, I’m giving you one more chance to get up.’ So I’m looking at him, and he started putting his gloves on, and seen him take out a pair of handcuffs,” Johnson said.

The officer hit Johnson several times with the handcuffs wrapped around his knuckles. In the video, you can see the flash of the metal. The tape shows another officer holding Johnson’s shoulders as she tries to protect herself.

After taking several blows, Johnson stands up and swings back.

“I was afraid. I had had enough. Like I said, I thought the other officers that were witnessing this would at least try to stop him,” Johnson said. “I mean, he hit me

so hard. Like the third time he hit me, it split my skull and I had blood coming out. So I jumped up,” Johnson said.

But then she sat back down, and the officer hit her in the face again. Then he maced her. On the tape, other people in the room are seen turning away and fanning their hands because of the smell.

“We wanted some acknowledgement — my client did — so she would know that the Memphis Police Department didn’t condone this,” said Murray Wells, Johnson’s attorney. “We were optimistic that they would be as outraged about this as we are.

“These are the people we depend on to protect us, and I think the majority of officers in Memphis are good officers, and when you see what you see on that video, it’s a scary sight to see that that could happen to any one of us,” added attorney Arthur Horne.

On the tape, Duanna is eventually handcuffed and left on the floor. A nurse comes in, and goes directly to the officer.

“I couldn’t breathe, and they just made me lay there,” Johnson said. “Nobody checked to see if I was okay. My eyes were burning. My skin was burning. I was scared to death. Even the nurse came in and she just ignored me, and I begged her to help me.”

The video clearly shows the nurse walk right past Duanna as she’s rocking back and forth in pain in the background.

A copy of the tape was reviewed by both the FBI and the District Attorney’s office, the latter of which dropped all charges against

Johnson. An FBI investigation into possible civil rights violations is still underway.

Meanwhile, the Memphis Police Department confirmed to that the officer holding Johnson was on probation, and has been fired.

The officer who threw the punches is was put on non-enforcement status pending an administrative hearing and ultimately fired.

The following statement was released by the Memphis Police Department:

“The Memphis Police Department does not condone any misconduct of a police officer that will compromise official law enforcement duties or the rights or safety of our citizens.”

“As it relates to the February incident that occurred at the jail facility, the police department has been conducting a thorough internal investigation.

“As a standard departmental policy, a full, impartial hearing was held with the accused officer. On Wed., June 26 Officer Bridges McRae was fired.

“Officer J. Swain who held Johnson was a probationary officer and has been separated from the Memphis Police Department.

“Memphis Police can also confirm the Federal Bureau of Investigation had been notified and requested to look into the complaint further.

Meanwhile the Sheriff’s Department which runs the jail is investigating how the surveillance tape was released. They said criminal charges may be placed against that person, if found.

## Memphis Celebrates Pride



## Police Explore Motives in Death of Transgendered Prostitute

Memphis Police say 20-year-old Rodney Whitaker may have been murdered because of his sexuality, but caution they are exploring every possible motive.

Friends say Whitaker worked as a transgendered prostitute. He was dressed as a woman when he was found shot to death July 2 near Lamar and Old Getwell. Police believe Whitaker had been working in the area the night before.

Local activists say they would not be at all surprised if Whitaker was targeted because he was transgendered.

“They’re often the people most likely to be fired from a job, kicked out of their homes, ostracized by their churches... so, it’s really hard for them,” said Will Batts of the Memphis Gay & Lesbian Community Center.

So far, there are no suspects in



Rodney Whitaker

Whitaker’s murder

If you have any information that can help police, call Crime-Stoppers at (901) 528-CASH.

## In Canada, Gay Troops March in Pride; In U.S., Another Gay Soldier Discharged

Up north, our Canadian cousins welcomed GLBT soldiers into the mix the last weekend in June for Toronto Pride. Here at home, a gay soldier interviewed in Iraq by television newsmagazine *60 Minutes* has been discharged for violating the U.S. ban on openly gay and lesbian troops.

The inclusion of GLBT soldiers in the Toronto Pride event marks the first time gay troops have taken part in the Toronto parade, reported the *Toronto Star* in a June 27 article. The troops were joined in the parade by others in uniform, including police officers and firefighters.

Gay Naval officer Lt. Stephen Churm was quoted in the *Star* article as saying, "This will send out a national message that the Canadian Forces is an employer of choice for all people."

Churm will be one of 17 Canadian servicemembers appearing at the parade, the *Star* reported.

As for the day's dress code, Churm said, "We're not going to be in full uniform. We'll wear short sleeves because of the weather."

The Canadian military does not have a policy forbidding openly gay troops from service, though Churm reckoned in the article that he still needed to "educate" his colleagues on the issue. Still, Churm has served as an openly gay officer since 2001.

Said Churm of his and his colleagues' presence at Toronto Pride, "I hope it will encourage others to take the initiative and attend events

elsewhere."

But such up-front honesty can be risky for gays and lesbians in uniform who have to choose between serving their country and telling the truth about themselves. In the United States, the military ban on GLBT troops serving honestly has claimed its latest casualty, Sgt. Darren Manzella, a decorated Army officer who was interviewed last December by Lesley Stahl on the CBS news program *60 Minutes*.

In a June 27 article posted online at Gay News Blog, Manzella was cited as telling the correspondent that he had not bothered to hide his sexual orientation for the better part of his military career, and that far from creating the breakdown in discipline that those opposed to a fully integrated military often hypothesize, his superiors and colleagues in Iraq knew that he was gay, and they were supportive of him.

Manzella's discharge under Don't Ask, Don't Tell was official as of June 10.

Said Servicemembers Legal Defense Network's communications director, Adam Ebbin, "The discharge of battle-tested, talented service members like Sergeant Manzella weakens our military in



Darren Manzella

a time of war."

Ebbin continued, "National security requires that Congress lift the ban on gays in the military and allow commanders to judge troops on their qualifications, not their sexuality."

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) is a watchdog and advocacy group dedicated to ushering full integration and equality into the American armed forces.

Though "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has not been repealed, SLDN said that it is diminishing in effect, with more gay troops serving openly.

SLDN claimed that at least 500 soldiers are currently serving as openly gay U.S. servicemembers, with no negative or punitive result.

Manzella served two tours in the Middle East after he enlisted in 2002. In the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Manzella provided medical attention to both soldiers and civilians.

Manzella received a number of awards, including the Combat Medical Badge.

## Anti-gay Organization Finds Itself in Hot Water

The American Family Association of Tupelo, Miss., is always up to something. Usually something related to sex. Often it involves a boycott.

Time was when the AFA seemed most incensed about nudity, pornography, suggestive clothing and the like. A decade or so ago it mailed news organizations still photographs of what might have been a bare breast flashing by in a CBS promotional film. People in newsrooms around the country no doubt studied that mailing very carefully.

The AFA still objects to nudity. Its web site features a complaint that the Department of Defense is allowing Playboy publications to be sold on military bases. It's promoting a House bill that would end that practice. But in recent years, homosexuality has become the AFA's greatest preoccupation. Currently, it's urging people to stay away from McDonald's because, it says, the company promotes "the homosexual agenda, including homosexual marriage." To which a McDonald's official replied: "We have a well-established and proud heritage of associating with individuals and organizations that share our belief that every person has the right to live and work in their community free of discrimination."

The AFA's effectiveness is in some doubt. McDonald's stock is up more than 10 percent during the past year, and sales are steady. Earlier AFA boycotts did not go well either, including those against Procter & Gamble, Disney, CBS and Kraft Foods. The AFA claims it did better with its Ford boycott, but the energy crisis may have had something to do with any success in that arena. The AFA corporate Hall of Shame (also called "the dirty dozen") lists other companies that seem to be doing okay:

Microsoft, Anheuser-Busch, Comcast, Johnson & Johnson, Viacom. The dirty details are at [www.afa.net](http://www.afa.net).

The AFA has recently made bigger waves with a software program it developed that automatically replaces the word "gay" on its news web site with the word "homosexual." The idea is that "gay" leaves a more positive impression than "homosexual."

That policy caused a few raised eyebrows the other day in a report about U.S. Olympic sprinter Tyson Gay. The AFA software on its One News Now web site took an Associated Press story and altered it to read:

"Tyson Homosexual was a blur in blue, sprinting 100 meters faster than anyone ever has. His time of 9.68 seconds at the U.S. Olympic trials Sunday doesn't count as a world record, because it was run with the help of a too-strong tailwind.

"Here's what does matter: Homosexual qualified for his first Summer Games team and served notice he's certainly someone to watch in Beijing.

"It means a lot to me," the 25-year-old Homosexual said. "I'm glad my body could do it, because now I know I have it in me."

The headline over the story read: "Homosexual sets U.S. Record in 100 with 9.77."

It's intriguing to think what would happen if *The Gay Ranchero* ever showed up in the One News Now TV listings. The 1948 film starred Roy Rogers and Andy Devine. Wouldn't the American Family Association have a homosexual old time with that one?

## Lance Bass to Gay It Up on Dancing with the Stars?

Openly gay former boy band icon Lance Bass could Tango his way into homosexual history becoming the first celebrity to dance his way up the *Dancing with the Stars*' ladder—with another man.

Although the *Dancing with the Stars* season seven line-up has yet to be revealed, rumors are circulating that Bass, the former 'N Sync member who came out of the closet two summers ago, could join the cast.

But Bass wouldn't be the first 'N Sync member to lace up his dancing shoes and cha-cha his way into America's hearts. Bass' former boy band co-member Joey Fatone finished in second place on *Dancing with the Stars*' season four.

The show pairs celebrities with dancing professionals and the word is out that Bass, if he joins the cast, would be paired with a male dance pro, reported *The New York Daily News*.

It would be the first time a same-sex couple danced together on that stage and Bass could be the one to cross that threshold and open the door to a male couple tearing up the dance floor together.

ABC has yet to comment on the Bass boy-on-boy buzz.

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# On the Frontier of Transgender Civil Rights

He has meaty forearms, facial hair and speaks in the animated tones of a pubescent boy.

When he dresses in his favorite sweats, he is barrel-bellied and unquestionably masculine. No trace of breasts can be seen under his T-shirt.

But it took most of James Anastos' 37 years to muster the courage to live as a man.

Born female and raised as Amy, every day was a challenge to behave like a girl — a struggle compounded by learning disabilities and placement in a group home where women residents were instructed to wear bras, skirts and other trappings of femininity.

James Anastos was born female and raised as Amy. It took most of his 37 years to muster the courage to live as a man.

"I've always known something was different," Anastos said during a recent interview at the newly opened Tompkinsville LGBT — one of a number of organizations he credits as touchstones in his exploration into gender that began, in earnest, at the age of 30.

"It was like a lightbulb went off in my head when I realized what was going on inside me. I was like, 'Oh yeah, this is it, transgender.'"

Then smiling behind his thick glasses in a way that showed his pride, he added: "This is who we are. If the world can't accept us, we're here, even if they don't like us."

As the gay community has in recent years become increasingly assimilated into the mainstream Anastos and others who are identified as the "T" in the LGBT are at a frontier of civil rights.

For Anastos, since taking steps to live as a man — measures which include giving himself twice weekly testosterone shots in the leg

and submitting an application for an official name change — he says he has met wall after wall looking for placements in programs to help him with his disabilities.

New York City passed a law in 2002 barring discrimination based on gender expression. But it is still the exception. In other parts of the state and in the majority of the country, landlords, employers and social service agencies can deny opportunities and equal treatment to transgender individuals with impunity.

"For all the discrimination that gay and lesbian people face, transgender people face a lot more discrimination and violence," said Diane Arneith, executive director of Community Health Action, which runs a transgender support group once a week at its LGBT Center. "This is one of the last bastions where people feel comfortable being openly discriminatory toward people."

Last month, a group of Staten Islanders was among thousands who went to Albany, N.C., to push lawmakers to pass legislation that would make gender discrimination illegal statewide.

The law has yet to pass, and Arneith said she recognizes the transgender community faces a steep climb toward acceptance and accommodation in a world of boxes checked "M" for male and "F" for female.

"The word transgender is an umbrella term that would describe the entire group of people that don't fit neatly into gender categories the way most people understand them — that binary male-female system where you have male anatomy you are a female and female anatomy, you are a male," said Gal Meyer, director of the Callen-Lorde health center in Manhattan, who explains

the phenomenon to medical students by asking if they went to sleep and had surgery to change their anatomy, would they feel any different on the inside when they woke up.

"Gender identity is a really subjective experience," Meyer said. "Science doesn't understand why most of us are born with gender identities that correspond to our physical bodies and we also don't understand why people don't always have gender identities that conform."

A subset of those who identify as transgender are, like Anastos, transsexual — wishing to eschew the gender assigned at birth, often taking medical steps to do so.

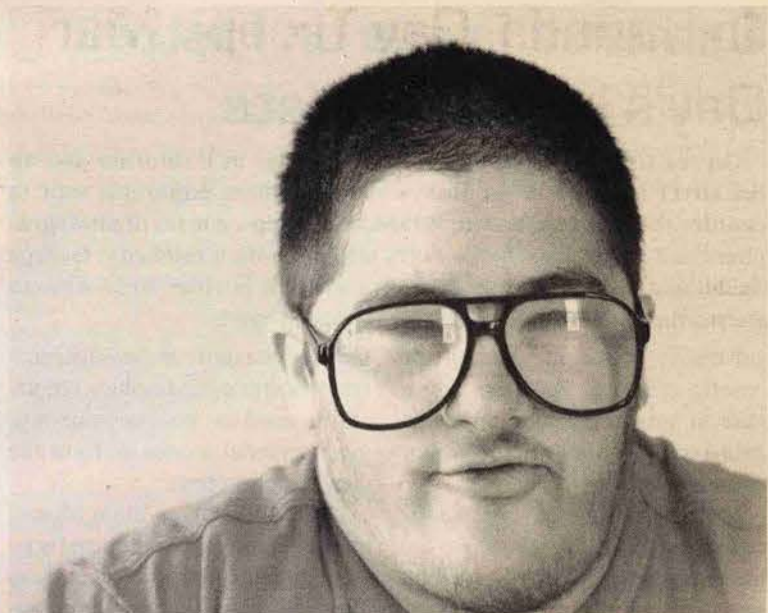
"When he brought this up to me, so many things made sense to me from early childhood," said Anastos' mother, Eileen Klein, recalling her resolutely tomboyish daughter, who attended PS 37 and Hungerford School and lived in a group home with On Your Mark after graduation — a child she learned recently to refer to as "he" instead of "she."

"He used to fight like crazy in the group home when they tried to put a bra on him, and we always thought it was because of the neurologic deficits."

Anastos left the group home around the time he traded Amy for James and lighted out briefly on his own. He landed briefly in a homeless shelter then returned to live with his mother in their small apartment in Rossville.

Now, unable to work because of difficulties with reading, telling time and other basic tasks, Anastos said he wants to get into a day program.

But he said he has been placed on a waiting list and that he overheard talk it was because his pres-



James Anastos

ence as James would make others uncomfortable.

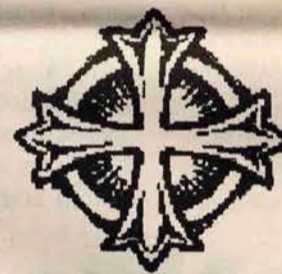
"I have friends there from before who know me as Amy," he said. "I wouldn't want to upset them. I would want them to get to know me again and I hope they would accept me."

Agency officials declined under privacy laws to discuss the particulars of Anastos' case, saying only there needs to be first a determination whether he is eligible for services, and that his gender expression would absolutely be accommodated.

But they admitted the question of how best to serve disabled, transgender clients has rarely come up in the past.

"We do not have a deep history of dealing with people who are transgender," said Dr. David Booth, director of the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office.

"Developmentally disabled people are everything you and I can be, including transgender. This is new territory for us and we're going to have to figure it out."



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## Creator of *Sesame Street's* Big Bird Dies at 91

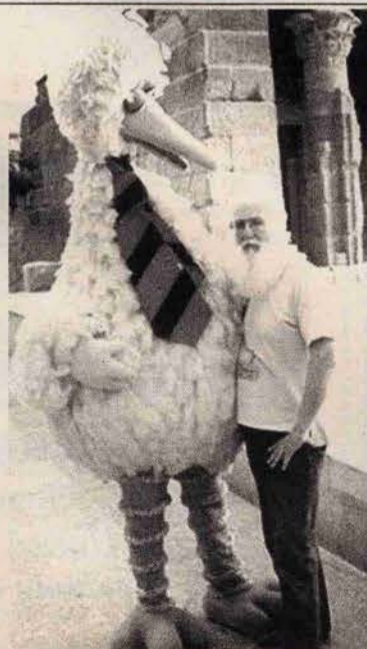
NYTimes.com has published the obituary of Kermit Love, "the costume designer for some of ballet's most renowned choreographers whose greatest fame came as a creator, with Jim Henson, of the beloved *Sesame Street* characters Big Bird and Mr. Snuffleupagus..."

The obit says the death was caused by congestive heart failure.

*The Times* remembers Love's work: "Although Mr. Love collaborated with luminaries of dance like George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Robert Joffrey, Jerome Robbins and Twyla

Tharp, it was the 8-foot-2, yellow-feathered Big Bird and his 7-foot, woolly mammoth-like friend Mr. Snuffleupagus — both perennially 6 years old — that brought him global attention."

Kermit Love lived in Stanfordville, N.Y., with his male partner of 50 years. He was 91.



Kermit Love with his creation, Big Bird

## Cameras Focus on Historic Day's Love, Not Hate

On the first full day of same-sex weddings in California just up the street from the West Hollywood site where paparazzi wait to capture the shopping habits of tabloid darlings, a team of photographers and TV crews tracked every step of another celebrity: George Takei, aka Sulu from *Star Trek*, who with his partner Brad Altman were among the first to obtain a marriage license.

Nearby were a handful of antigay-marriage picketers and a man in a devil costume, matched on the other side of the issue by two men dressed like flying nuns.

But the media horde wasn't focusing on those sideshows; rather, the cadre was angling to capture the emotions of the couples themselves.

"There is nothing extraordinary," Takei said to reporters as Altman held their license. "We are just like John and Mary. We are just part of the diversity of America."

He was right. With the white tents and wedding cakes and tuxedos and white dresses, there was a hint of the ordinary about it all, and that may have been best signaled in the way that much of the media covered the historic moments.

Local stations went live throughout the day of the unfolding nuptials. Network morning shows and *Entertainment Tonight* pressed for interviews. The Los Angeles NBC affiliate set up a camera at West Hollywood Park for a daylong, continuously streaming Web feed of wedding ceremonies.

Perhaps motivated by poll numbers showing ever-growing acceptance of same-sex unions, particu-

larly among those in the all-important younger demographics, reporters focused on getting heart-tugging personal stories and not the carnival of protest.

During June, Gay Pride Month, there is plenty of cringing and consternation in the gay community as TV news crews seemingly can't resist focusing on the antics of a pride parade — the strange brew of drag queens posing as cheerleaders and gramps in leather chaps.

But as the marriages got under way in the early evening on June 16 and local stations broke away for live wedding coverage in San Francisco and Los Angeles, the spectacle of attention-seekers and protesters was muted as the ceremonies commenced.

In his city hall office, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom performed the ceremony for Del Martin, 87, and Phyllis Lyon, 84, who have been together longer than Newsom has been alive. On the steps of the Beverly Hills courthouse, a female rabbi presided over the union of Robin Tyler, 66, and Diane Olson, 54, as TV crews elbowed each other to get the best shots of the tears streaming down their faces and the ceremonial crushing of a glass.

## APATT Includes Summertime Dinners

There's room for everyone at A Place At The Table! Friends For Life's oldest fundraising event, A Place At The Table is undergoing a change this year.

Traditionally held in the fall, the event's steering committee is asking and encouraging hosts to move their parties up to the spring and summer months. However, it is important to note that if hosts still prefer to have their parties in the fall, this is completely acceptable and Friends For Life is very grateful for parties held at any time.

The concept for A Place At The Table is simple. People throughout the community host parties to raise money and awareness for Friends For Life. The parties are unique, but have one thing in common: guests are asked to make a donation and to be as generous as possible.

Parties range from formal seated dinners to casual grills and cocktail parties. Guests are asked to give what they can, not a required ticket



price. This has allowed the event to remain open to anyone and everyone who supports its cause, while at the same time serving as the major fund-raiser for Friends For Life. Since hosts donate the cost of their parties, overhead for the event is kept to a minimum.

Another change in the event is that A Place At The Table is being separated from the Halloween

party.

The tremendous success of the Halloween Party has made it clear that this should be a separate fundraising event which will provide additional funds to Friends For Life to allow it to continue its vital mission in the community.

This year's Halloween party is titled, 'Once Upon A Time...Scary Tales' and will be held on October 25. Admission will be \$35 to the event and promises to

be the party of the year.

Hosting an A Place At The Table party will support the vital work of Friends For Life. If you would like to host a party, complete the Host Sign-Up Form and submit to Friends For Life. For more information, contact Gina Fortner at Friends For Life (272-0855 ext. 223) or by email at [Gina.Fortner@friendsforlifecorp.org](mailto:Gina.Fortner@friendsforlifecorp.org).

## Arkansas Cage Fights Turn Gay, Crowd Goes Crazy

Crowds in Arkansas came for the lure of cage fighting and \$1 beer, but police say what they got instead was men ripping each others' clothes off and kissing — a stunt suspected of being orchestrated by Sacha Baron Cohen of *Borat* fame.

"We had a contract for cage fighting. We were deceived," said Dwight Duncan, president and CEO of Four States Fair Grounds in Texarkana, where the first of two Arkansas fights raised suspicions in May.

Matt Labov, a Los Angeles-based publicist for Baron Cohen, said he had no comment about the faked fights. One of Baron Cohen's movies is due out next year.

The day after the June 5

Texarkana bout, Fort Smith's convention center hosted "Blue Collar Brawlin." Fort Smith police Sgt. Adam Holland said organizers told him a character named "Straight Dave" would goad a planted audience member into the ring for a fight.

The two men would then wrestle, rip away some of their clothes and share a brief kiss reminiscent of one between Baron Cohen and Will Ferrell in the film *Talladega*

*Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*.

Producers said "there would be a romantic embrace," Holland said. "They said it was kind of to essentially make fun, poke fun at wrestling — two guys rolling around on the floor, all sweaty."

An elaborate array of mounted and handheld video cameras caught the crowd of 1,600's reaction as the two men "went right up to the line" of the city's morality laws, Holland said. The two men stripped down to their underwear, kissed and rubbed on each other, the sergeant said.

The audience, as well as local fighters drawn to take part in the show, became enraged. "It set the crowd off lobbing beers," Holland said. "They had beers in plastic cups. Those things can get some distance on them actually."

Holland said it took officers about 45 minutes to clear the convention center, as the two actors sprinted away through a specially set-aside tunnel.

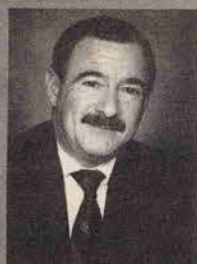
Those in attendance were told by several signs on display that they'd be filmed and signed waivers before the event. Convention center sales director Karin Hobbs declined to name the event's sponsor.

"If time and space are curved, where do all of the straight people come from?"

Author Unknown

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## Baldwin Sees ENDA, Hate Crimes Passing Next Congress

The only open lesbian in the U.S. House of Representatives is predicting that in the next session of Congress, bills related to employment non-discrimination and hate crimes will have a better chance of passing than legislation aimed at repealing the Defense of Marriage Act or "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisc.) made the comments at a Center for American Progress forum geared toward highlighting the importance of the Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act, which would grant the partners of gay federal employees the same benefits that are available to the spouses of straight counterparts.

Sen. Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) joined Baldwin in the panel discussion. Other speakers at the event included former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former U.S. Ambassador to Romania Michael Guest, who resigned his 26-year career as a Foreign Service officer last year in protest of federal employment practices.

Baldwin said she is "very optimistic" that ENDA and a hate crimes measure would pass Congress next session, particularly if Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama, who has supported the initiatives, takes the White House.

She also said she expects progress on the Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act, which has not moved this session from the House and Senate committees to which it had been assigned.

But Baldwin said the success in "repealing discriminatory laws" already on the books "is a little less clear."

"I think we will see more discretion on those — whether or not it can move to next level of repeal will be a challenge," she said.

Baldwin stated she did not "have a perfect crystal ball" for what would happen in the next Congress, but said she thinks it would be easier to "hit the ground running" with ENDA and a hate crimes measure as opposed to other initiatives.

She noted that Congress has already taken some action on ENDA and hate crimes this session, so lawmakers are familiar with those issues and more willing to take up the matters again next year.

Baldwin also said there are difficulties in repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the Defense of Marriage Act because some of the lawmakers who voted for the measures in the 1990s are still in Congress.

Smith, who is up for re-election in Oregon this year, expressed similar sentiments that ENDA and a hate crimes measure would pass Congress when a new president

takes over in 2009 — but the senator asserted these acts would pass whether the new chief executive is Obama or Republican candidate Sen. John McCain.

Smith, who was recently endorsed by Log Cabin Republicans, said McCain has "been with [him] on a number of gay and lesbian issues," but did not during the panel discussion mention any issues they agreed upon.

"I know John McCain's heart," he said. "I just never found John McCain really hard over on these issues — or ideologically driven on these issues."

Smith also struggled with words when trying to defend his support for benefits for the partners of gay federal employees as well as his previous support for the Federal Marriage Amendment.

The senator said he voted for the FMA because he didn't want "federal judges to impose it on other states that were voting differently."

"If states want to democratically go about it, then that's what they should do, but I do not want a federal judge imposing it on other parts of the jurisdiction," he said.

Smith noted he has been a "devout Mormon" for 33 years and said if the government starts redefining marriage it could have detrimental consequences for some groups.

He added that "tinkering" with the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman would have implications that "are much broader than the gay and lesbian community."

The AP reported Smith has since apologized for making these comments. He told AP polygamy and same-sex marriage are unrelated.

Both lawmakers expressed their support for Domestic Partner Benefits and Obligations Act during the event.

Smith said "with a new Congress and a new president, the stage is set" and the number of Senate co-sponsors for the bill will grow to get it passed next session.

Baldwin expressed similar optimism that the House would pass the legislation and called congressional action this session "a dress rehearsal" for passage that would come later.

## Gay Days at America's Mega-churches

Gay and transgender families and allies reflect on six Sundays spent at America's most influential churches. Their journey, titled the American Family Outing, initiated dialogue with a new generation of evangelical leaders.

On Father's Day 2008, a group of LGBT and straight-ally families attended services at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. The next day, a smaller group of about eight families met with pastors and other staff of the influential mega-church for lunch and an emotional conversation about faith, family, and the status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the church.

The visit was the conclusion of a six-week family road trip to initiate dialogue with mega-church congregations across the nation. In December 2007, organizers of the project—which is called The American Family Outing—invited the leaders of six mega-churches to match families from their congregations with LGBT and straight-ally families for a meal and conversation. Then, on Mother's Day 2008, the outing began with a visit to Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, Tex.

"Through the American Family Outing, we were able to share our families and our lives as out and proud LGBT people of faith with some of the biggest religious leaders in America," says Paige Schilt, Soulforce media director and one of the lesbian moms who participated in the project. "Along the way, we learned a great deal about the state of mainstream evangelical culture."

"On the one hand, there's still a

tremendous amount at stake for high-profile churches to meet publicly with LGBT families. They took a lot of heat just for talking to us, and we appreciate that.

"We also learned that an openly gay or lesbian person cannot become a member or serve in most of the churches we visited. When LGBT people hear that 'all are welcome' at a mega-church, we encourage them to investigate the quality of that welcome.

"On the other hand, we also learned that support for reparative therapy and other kinds of ex-gay programs seems to be diminishing. We heard more talk about celibacy and less talk about change.

"We also heard, from many of the churches, a sincere interest in continuing the conversation with LGBT justice seekers," Schilt concluded. "We look forward to future dialogues, public and private."

Nationwide, more than 50 LGBT and LGBT-affirming families took part in this remarkable journey to build bridges with mainstream and conservative evangelical communities, which also visited Bishop T.D. Jakes, Bishop Harry Jackson, Bishop Eddie Long, and Rev. Bill Hybels.

One of the people who participated in the meeting with Saddleback Church was Bob Bednar, a straight, married father of two from Austin, Tex..

"Being there showed me in a

powerful way exactly how brave my LGBT team members were to go into that kind of atmosphere and insist that church leaders recognize their pain and start to see it as their own pain, too," said Bednar.

"As a straight ally, it was inspiring to work alongside them. But the experience also showed me how far we have to go. The churches see the pain, but they don't seem to understand that the pain doesn't come from being LGBT, but from trying to reconcile being LGBT with a theology puts conditions on who people can be and whom they can love."

As a fitting conclusion to a project about faith, love, and justice, several participating couples—including Soulforce founders Mel White and Gary Nixon—were married in California on June 17 and 18, 2008.

The American Family Outing is a collaboration between Soulforce, COLAGE, National Black Justice Coalition, and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

Soulforce is a national civil rights and social justice organization. Its vision is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance. For more information, go to [www.soulforce.org](http://www.soulforce.org).

## Senate Votes To Let Out-Of-State Gays Marry

The Massachusetts Senate voted July 15 to throw out an old law that prevents out-of-state gay couples from getting married in the Bay State.

In less than 15 minutes on a voice vote, the Senate agreed to repeal a 1913 law that prohibits gay couples from out-of-state marrying in Massachusetts.

"This eliminates the last (piece) of state discrimination in our marriage laws," said Marc Solomon, of Mass Equality.

Anti-gay marriage legislators sat quietly while advocates said that the 1913 law is rooted in racism.

"They specifically named the reason why they wanted to do that. We've got to make sure we are all consistent in our policy," Sen. Diane Wilkerson said.

Those opposing gay marriage now cite the state Supreme Court.

"The court ruled the law was constitutional and had no history of racial bias, so all of these allegations that this is a racial issue are done by the spin meisters," said Kris Mineau, of the Massachusetts Family Institute.

"I don't think it will be impacted tremendously. I think we will pick up a few weddings from people who used to live in Massachusetts

and now moved elsewhere, coming home to get married. I always feel like weddings are tied to home," caterer Marc Haley said.

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# Appeals Court Blasts Immigrant Verdict

In unusually direct language, a three-judge panel of the New York-based 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals criticized federal Immigration Judge (IJ) Alan Vomacka for his handling of a Guyanese man's appeal that he not be deported for fear that his life would be endangered if he did.

The man, who will be identified in this reporting only as Ali given the potential harm he faces, made his appeal under the international Convention Against Torture (CAT), one of the legal avenues available for immigrants aiming to stay in the U.S..

"In light of the inappropriate remarks by Vomacka — which included gratuitous comments on the petitioner's sexuality, as well as unfounded speculations about homosexuals in general — we believe the appropriate course is to grant the petition for review, vacate the [Board of Immigration Appeals, or BIA] decision, and remand this case for a rehearing before a new IJ," wrote Circuit Judge Guido Calabresi for the court in *Ali v. Mukasey*, decided on June 18.

Ali, it appears, is no angel — he "established a long arrest record and was convicted of nine theft-related crimes" from the time of his U.S. entry with other family members as a teenager in 1980. He was twice previously deported to Guyana, but managed both times to escape from security forces there and find his way back into the U.S.

Ali recounted that after his first deportation he was immediately placed in police custody in Guyana and subjected to harsh treatment including outrageous physical and sexual abuse. When it seemed the same thing was going to happen on his second deportation, he immediately took steps to evade his captors and return to the U.S..

Apparently Ali did not resolve his own issues about his sexual orientation until late in this process — he did not raise it as a ground for seeking CAT relief until the third removal proceedings were already underway. That raised credibility issues for Vomacka, the immigration judge.

One other complication was that it was a different immigration judge, in Maryland, who earlier found credible Ali's testimony that he had been mistreated upon his earlier deportations. Vomacka com-

plained that he found it difficult to listen to those tape-recorded proceedings that had not been transcribed.

Judge Calabresi noted that Vomacka also stated that it was difficult "to understand why a respondent would be willing to disclose forcible rape by jail guards, but not willing to discuss his own sexual orientations [sic] as a homosexual." The immigration judge speculated that the issue of homosexuality might be a red herring raised by Ali to delay his deportation.

But Ali had explained that homophobic comments made by the police officers who raped him — they called him anti-man, a synonym for faggot — and his fear of life imprisonment for sodomy, along with the fact that for a long time he did not consider himself gay, all led to his failure to raise his sexuality earlier in the immigration proceedings.

Calabresi summarized the horrifying testimony from the Guyana Human Rights Association about the violence and hostility aimed at gay people, which Vomacka had accepted into evidence.

According to Calabresi, Vomacka viewed Ali's claims as incompatible, writing that "violent dangerous criminals and feminine contemptible homosexuals are not usually considered to be the same people." Vomacka concluded there was a "lack of specific objective evidence" that Ali would be tortured because he was a criminal deportee, and he "wondered how anyone in Guyana would even know that Ali was a homosexual," since there was no "partner or cooperating person" with whom he had a relationship which would mark him as gay — nor was he "likely to form such a close relationship within a foreseeable period of time."

Noting that Ali is a convicted criminal with "professed mental problems" and "some problems with his personality" who "is not particularly communicative or articulate" nor "particularly skilled

and mature in the way he expresses himself, shows his feelings, etc.," Vomacka concluded that "the picture of him as a proud, professed homosexual in Guyana seems to be more an expression of wishful thinking than something that's particularly likely to come true."

To top it off, Vomacka concluded that "the evidence failed to establish that homosexuals in Guyana are persecuted, much less tortured," Calabresi noted.

Despite concerns about Vomacka's possible bias in deciding Ali's case, the Board of Immigration Appeals judge who heard Ali's appeal affirmed the IJ's ruling. Calabresi noted that the BIA judge was "troubled" by Vomacka's "gratuitous remarks" as well as his speculative reasoning about what skills it takes to form a gay relationship in Guyana, but concluded none of that had "rendered the hearing unfair."

The BIA judge also affirmed Vomacka's conclusions that insufficient evidence existed that either criminal deportees or homosexuals face torture in Guyana.

Calabresi, noting the expert testimony about harsh treatment of both groups, the evidence of detainee rape, and the practice of "death squads," with the acquiescence of the government, hunting them down and murdering them, found Vomacka's finding a gross distortion of the record.

Calabresi wrote, "Vomacka clearly abrogated his responsibility to function as a neutral, impartial arbiter," in voicing stereotypes about homosexual orientation — particularly in pointing to "common understanding... that violent dangerous criminals and feminine contemptible homosexuals are not usually considered to be the same people" — without any supporting evidence in the record.

Calabresi also wrote, "Ali claimed that he would likely be tortured in Guyana (a) because he is a homosexual, and (b) because he is a criminal deportee, but also (c)

because he is a homosexual criminal deportee. In other words, he is a homosexual who, because of his criminal deportee status, almost certainly would be detained by government authorities upon arrival. By treating aspects of Ali's identity as incompatible, IJ Vomacka essentially dismissed, without consideration, a crucial component of Ali's application for relief."

In arguing that Ali would not be considered gay unless he had a partner, Vomacka relied on "stereotypes about homosexuality and how it is made identifiable to others," Calabresi wrote.

Finally, Calabresi dismissed as "impermissible" Vomacka's speculation about Ali's inability to form relationships, in a way that betrayed "disrespect for the petitioner."

Overall, "the appearance of bias or hostility" in Vomacka's ruling makes meaningful review of his conclusion impossible and Ali's case must be sent back for rehearing by a different immigration judge.

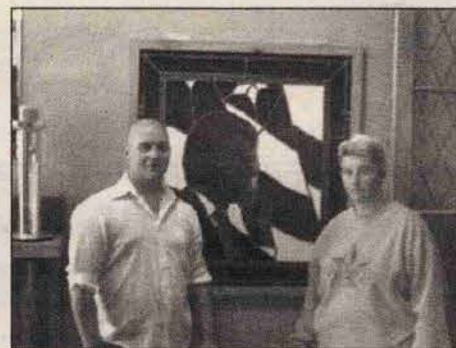
## Stained Glass Window Sale to Benefit FFL

The sale of a stained glass window of former President Bill Clinton, crafted by two local artists, will be donated to benefit Friends For Life.

Artists Keith Rash and Robbie O'Kelly designed and completed the window in 2002 because the project was "personal to us; Bill Clinton was our president." Once the project was completed, Ms. O'Kelly contacted the William Jefferson Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, which accepted the window and where it remained for six months before being returned to O'Kelly.

"I want Friends For Life to benefit from the sale of this window because I believe in the great work the agency is doing. I have been personally touched by HIV/AIDS from having many friends pass because of the disease," O'Kelly remarks.

She wanted to create the stained glass window of President Clinton because to her knowledge there had never been a stained glass portrait



Keith Rash and Robbie O'Kelly



of a president produced before. The beautifully crafted window is 42 inches high by 36 inches wide and took three months from the beginning of the design to finished product.

This project was not a new one for O'Kelly and Rash who have been friends for 14 years and who have worked together for almost the entire period. They have produced hundreds of stained glass windows and other art objects which are sold at their business, Evergreen Art Glass, located at 575 N. McLeán.

The team is well-known in the Memphis community, having been commissioned to completely restore the stained glass of St. Peter Cathedral. For more information about purchasing the stained glass window of President Clinton, contact Kim Moss at Friends For Life (272-0855 ext 233 or you may view the window where it is hanging at Evergreen Art Glass.

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## Congress Learns About Transgender Bias

The June 26 hearing was an important first step in educating Congress about why a federal law protecting transgender employees is sorely needed.

When David Schroer applied to be a specialist on terrorism at the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, his stellar resume led to a job offer.

The highly decorated retired Army colonel had served 16 years in Special Forces, with 450 parachute jumps and combat experience in Panama and Haiti. Following 9-11, Schroer directed a classified 120-person Pentagon group involved in the war on terror.

But after telling his prospective boss over lunch that he was gender transitioning to Diane, Schroer recalls being told, "I was not a good fit for the library."

To transgender Americans, Diane Schroer's story is all too familiar. No federal law prohibits firing or not hiring someone who decides to transition away from their birth gender.

But, in a historic first, Congress heard June 26th from Schroer and other transgender Americans about how honesty often leads to a lost career, homelessness and even sui-

cide. "Hero to zero," Schroer aptly calls her experience.

It was a model civil rights hearing, much to the credit of Chairman Rob Andrews, D-N.J., who heads the employment subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee.

Witnesses included gay Reps. Barney Frank and Tammy Baldwin; four transgender people, including an aeronautics engineer; and a spokesman for Michigan-based Dow Chemical Co., one of more than 150 Fortune 500 companies with a non-discrimination policy on gender identity.

In addition, a lawyer specializing in discrimination litigation offered suggestions about legislative language that helps deter lawsuits. And lawyer Glen Lavy of the anti-gay Alliance Defense Fund argued employers who cite religious beliefs should be allowed to discriminate against a transgender person.

The hearing was an important first step in educating Congress about why Uncle Sam should guar-

antee transgender workers the right to be evaluated solely on ability.

Sabrina Tarabozetti, who has two college-age kids, told of losing her job working on the space shuttle after announcing she was transitioning: "When I face discrimination, they face it, too. What happens to me because I am transgender also happens to them, not only because they love me, but because I still provide for them."

Why shouldn't there be a federal law?

Lawsuits? The retired colonel is suing now. In fact, having national guidelines with clear rules would help employers — opening them up to a talented pool of workers while providing a roadmap for avoiding lawsuits.

Religious beliefs? Chairman Andrews left lawyer Lavy flustered after pushing him to explain whether his argument for religious immunity means white supremacists should be allowed to refuse to hire African Americans and pacifists should be able to refuse to hire military reservists.

Restrooms? There's no need to invent the wheel on this one. As transgender lawyer Shannon Minter pointed out, trans-affirming states and companies have found a simple rule works: Only after transitioning full-time to a new gender identity does the worker use the corresponding restroom.

"What we have seen, time and time again, is that any discomfort that co-workers may feel very quickly dissipates," Minter said.

Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Calif., summed up why America should protect transgender workers. Evoking Martin Luther King Jr., she declared: "Laws cannot change people's hearts. But they can restrain the heartless."

## Ex-Starbucks Employees Sue for Discrimination

After supporting Seattle's Gay Pride Parade, sponsoring numerous events for gay-rights groups, and stirring up controversy in 2005 by printing a quote from gay novelist Armistead Maupin on its cups, Starbucks is being sued by two former employees who say they were discriminated against while working for the coffee giant's diversity program—because they're gay.

Joseph Hooks and Dorothy Baker worked at Starbucks's corporate headquarters in Seattle. They claim their boss, Starbucks's Director of Equal Opportunity Employment, Craig Sawyer, discriminated against and harassed them and pressured them to move elsewhere in the company.

Through their attorney, David Breskin, both plaintiffs declined to comment for this story. They are seeking unspecified damages.

The court filing alleges that Sawyer told another Starbucks staffer he had "grown up in an environment... where there was prejudice against homosexuals" and that he was "on a personal journey" to overcome his bias.

In the filing, Hooks — a former employee of Washington State representative Adam Smith and currently a staff member in Mayor Greg Nickels's office — claims Sawyer repeatedly made "anti-homosexual remarks" and repeatedly referred to him using female pronouns, at one point barring him from a lunch meeting, telling him "just the boys are

going to lunch."

Hooks also claims Sawyer pressured him to take a position elsewhere in the company. In May 2007, court documents say, Sawyer sent out an e-mail falsely stating that Hooks had resigned, and Starbucks management packed up his desk.

In her filing, Baker claims after she told Sawyer she was gay, he refused to meet with her and made unreasonable and unfair demands. Baker also alleges Sawyer told her about work he'd done with gay men with AIDS, whom he called "pathetic." Another time, Baker alleges, he told her "how he had been wrestling with one of the guys and had thrown him through the wall." In her filing, Baker says she felt "very threatened" by Sawyer.

Baker was placed on administrative leave last January while the company conducted an investigation. Starbucks reportedly found no evidence of harassment and fired Baker, although she says in court documents that she was denied a copy of the investigation.

## Wisconsin Gays Warned About Big Marriage Penalty

Gay couples in Wisconsin have been warned that they could face jail time and fines if they marry outside the state.

Under a little-known state law, Wisconsin residents can be prosecuted if they enter a marriage outside the state that would be illegal in Wisconsin, with penalties that include a \$1,000 fine and up to nine months in prison. In 2006, voters approved a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman.

After the California Supreme Court ruled a state ban on gay marriage unconstitutional, Fair

Wisconsin, a gay rights group, e-mailed 10,000 of its supporters, the *Milwaukee Journal* reported. The group warned two couples who said they were considering California weddings of the potential consequences.

"I'd rather be prosecuted than persecuted," one person responded.

Julaine Appling, executive director of the Wisconsin Family Council, said the state should enforce the law.

"Labels are for filing. Labels are for clothing. Labels are not for people."

—Martina Navratilova

## QUEER NOTES

Queer News and Commentary

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# Memphis Celebrates Its Pride



Not surprisingly for a hot afternoon, the beer garden at the festival was very popular.



Members of the Memphis Women's Rugby Team don't just grapple on the field.



Vincent Astor (r) announces the parade winners.



MPD recruiters were on-hand at the festival to talk with the community about police careers.



Some people came prepared with chairs for a front row seat at the festival stage.

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Some Holy Trinity members took a truck for the parade.



Members of the Bluff City Sports Association show their pride in the parade.





# Michelle Obama Stronger on Gay Rights Than Associated Press Reported

Words matter, and Michelle Obama is a woman of powerful words.

Commentary by Steve Ralls

On June 27, in a passionate address to the Democratic National Committee's Gay and Lesbian Leadership Council, Michelle Obama delivered a rousing call-to-equality and put her husband on record as a fighter for the full equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. "Barack believes," she said, "that we must fight for the world as it should be, a world where we work together to reverse discriminatory laws."

Invoking "those who marched and bled and died, from Selma to Stonewall," Michelle implored Democrats to continue those early crusaders' march "in the pursuit of a more perfect union."

And it was unions, no doubt, that were on the minds of the LGBT audience that Michelle was reaching out to. With marriages under way in California, and a national debate about marriage equality for all couples taking place in living rooms and legislatures from coast to coast, many in the gay community are looking and listening to see

if Obama will stand up strongly for our families or allow the country to be divided and conquered over the issue once again.

The question, for many gay voters, boils down to whether the Obamas can change the tone of the conversation, within the country and the party, about what it means to be equal and free?

According to Michelle, yes, they can.

Within her remarks to the GLCC, Mrs. Obama shared an extraordinary insight into the Obama campaign's respect for same-sex couples that set Senator Obama apart from almost any other Democratic lawmaker in the country . . . and certainly apart from any other nominee.

The Associated Press, using the creative and unfortunate powers of the editing pen, reported that Mrs. Obama told the crowd that evening that, "states should make their own decisions on the matter" of marriage and civil unions. But in fact, she went progressively further.

What she actually said was that states should "decide for them-

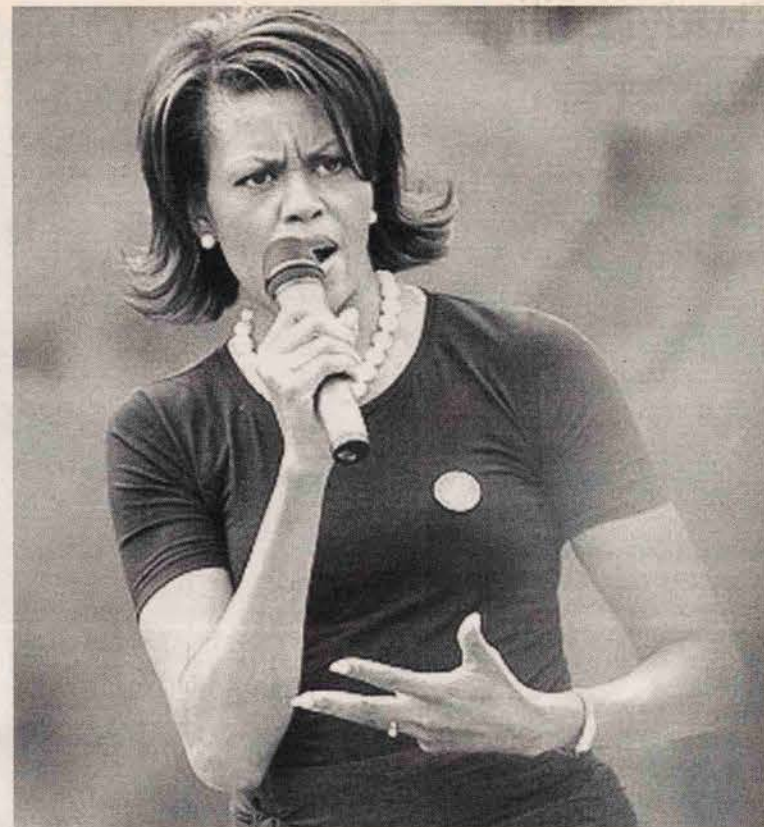
selves how best to pursue equality for gay and lesbian couples — whether that means a domestic partnership, a civil union, or a civil marriage."

She did not endorse the option to simply push any form of recognition to the side.

Those remarks are a far cry — and light years ahead — of the characterization that AP used in its reporting. Indeed, it's the (very significant) difference between hiding behind states rights and calling on states to do the right thing.

Michelle Obama's words should also set the campaign apart from the GOP for gay voters who have openly raised concerns about Senator Obama's lack of a track record on our issues. As Senator McCain endorses a divisive anti-marriage amendment in California, Senator Obama and his wife have taken the latest, meaningful in that march that began in Selma and Stonewall.

"The world as it is should be one that rejects discrimination of all kinds," Michelle Obama told the DNC. And, she made clear, should be one that embraces families of all



kinds, too.

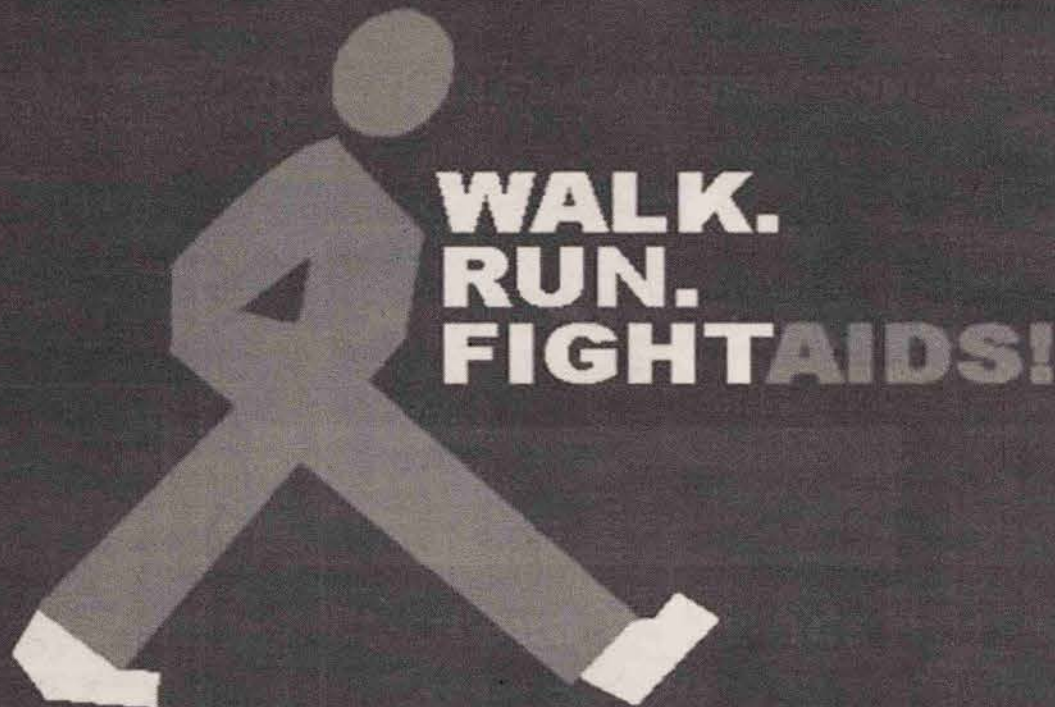
"A world that recognizes that equality in relationship, family, and adoption rights is not some abstract principle," she declared, "it's about whether millions of LGBT Americans can finally live lives marked by dignity and freedom."

"[I]t's not just about the positions you take, it's also about the leader-

ship you provide," she told the crowd at the DNC.

Words are powerful and Michelle Obama was a woman of much more powerful words than the media is giving her credit for.

Can the LGBT community take heart in the leadership Michelle brings, and in the words she says? Yes, I think, we certainly can.



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# Queer Notes

Commentary by Jim Maynard

July was a month to celebrate — Jesse Helms died! The right-wing racist, homophobic bigot who helped Ronald Reagan remake the Republican Party into a Christo-fascist party is no longer around to attack gays, lesbians, blacks, women and poor people. May he spend eternity in queer hell forced to watch the LOGO channel. (Unfortunately, the GOP is still under the control of Christo-fascists.)

Speaking of Christo-fascists, naughty bathroom toe-tapper Larry Craig and “pro-family” Republican adulterer David Vitter have re-introduced the “Marriage Protection Amendment” to protect “traditional marriage” from gay and lesbian couples who prefer to be married to the people they love and have sex with.

After some secret meetings with the Log Cabin Republicans, John McCain has come out in support of the anti-gay marriage Proposition 8 in California, after promising Christian Right groups that he would speak out more against gay rights and abortion. The LCR has been trying to “educate” the gay community on McCain, but they seem to have failed gay politics 101 (i.e., don’t support anti-gay candidates or political parties).

On the two most important issues to conservative gay Republicans, marriage and the military, John McCain takes the anti-gay position. He supports the military’s failed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy; and he not only opposes marriage equality and civil unions for gay couples, he is endorsing anti-gay marriage amendments in California and Arizona. John McCain is siding with the anti-gay Christian Right!

While some gay Republicans are supporting Barack Obama, others are sticking to John McCain because they don’t believe “single-issue” politics should keep them from supporting Republicans. They care more about “traditional Republican” issues like increasing military spending and cutting taxes and social programs. We progressives do not consider social justice and equality to be just a “single issue.”

John McCain’s “Flip-Flop Express” keeps on rolling. McCain opposed the Bush tax cuts as “irresponsible,” but now wants to extend them, even while the costs of

the Iraq war, which he wants to continue indefinitely, continues to climb. He opposed offshore oil drilling, but now supports it, even though it would have no effect on gas prices in the immediate future, and energy companies already have millions of acres of land to explore.

He used to support *Roe v. Wade* as the law, but now promises the Christian Right that he will appoint more conservative judges to overturn it. He said that the U.S. should withdraw troops from Iraq if the Iraqi government asks us to, but now that they have asked us to, he doesn’t support a timetable for withdrawal. He tells the Log Cabin Republicans one thing, and anti-gay Christian groups something totally different. So much for the “straight-talk” express.

According to John McCain’s economic advisor Phil Gramm, we are in a “mental recession,” and we should stop whining about gas prices, home foreclosures, unemployment, health care, and other liberal issues. Phil Gramm was a lobbyist for the mortgage industry, which helped push the deregulation of the housing market which led to the current crises. He also pushed the “Enron loophole” which deregulated energy to allow speculators to push up the price of oil and gas.

Gramm has also expressed the common conservative belief that poor people in the U.S. have it made compared to the rest of the world. Guess he hasn’t been to any Western European countries like Sweden, Denmark or France. John McCain admitted that he doesn’t know much about economics, and if he depends on the economic advice of Phil Gramm, he should be disqualified from being president!

I’m still waiting on my “stimulus check” from the IRS. According to some reports, the government is stimulating porn addicts. Porn companies have reported sharp spikes in new memberships on their websites since the IRS starting mailing “stimulus” checks. (Too bad I have to pay rent and get new tires for my car with my “stimulus” check!)

Barack Obama has taken some heat for a few of his own “flip-flops.” Now that the Democratic primary is over, Obama has been moving to the political “center” for the general election, and some of

his progressive supporters on the left are not too happy.

The big issue he has apparently changed his position on is FISA (the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act). During the campaign he opposed granting immunity to the telecom companies who went along with the Bush administration’s illegal wiretapping of American citizens. However, he voted for the recent revision to FISA, which grants the telecoms immunity.

While I was disappointed that Obama voted for the FISA bill, I understand why he did it. If Obama had voted against the FISA bill, the Republicans would use it to attack him for being weak on the “war on terrorism.” He also supported the bill because there are other improvements in FISA, and he is more concerned about fighting terrorism than taking a political hit from the left. It’s a no-win situation though, since the GOP will try to smear him as being weak on terrorism and national defense anyway.

Obama has also been criticized for saying he may reconsider his timetable to withdraw troops from Iraq after consulting with military commanders. While some call this a “flip-flop,” he actually took the same position throughout the campaign and stated so in the Democratic debates.

There are other issues where Obama has taken some “centrist” positions that many liberals and progressives disagree with. He supported the Supreme Court decision on gun control, which overturned the Washington, D.C. ban on handguns, and he criticized another Supreme Court decision that ruled that the death penalty was too severe for child rapists. Now what candidate for president could be elected who thought the death penalty was too cruel for child molesters or who opposed the right of people to own handguns? It looks to me like Obama is playing smart politics, even if I am to the left of his positions on these issues.

Some liberals and gay activists are concerned about Obama’s plan to expand Bush’s “faith-based” programs to allow religious and secular groups to get government support to provide social services and programs. While I am also concerned about government-funded religious groups, I don’t think Obama is moving to the right on this issue. He was a community activist and worked with churches and religious groups which provided social services in Chicago. Furthermore, unlike Bush, Obama’s plan would prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians, and prohibit funding of anti-

gay programs.

While I prefer that social programs be secular or government-run, I believe Obama respects the constitutional separation between church and state more than Bush and the Republicans. Obama’s plan would not be limited to religious groups, and would include gay-supportive churches and organizations. It also allows Obama to show that liberals also care about “faith and values” and practice what they preach.

While Obama has “moderated” his position on some issues, he has reiterated his strong commitment to LGBT civil rights. He spoke out against the California anti-gay marriage Proposition 8, and all anti-gay marriage amendments. He told the *Military Times* that he wants to change the military policy to allow gays and lesbians to serve openly. Since another military study has been released showing that allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military would not weaken morale, this may be a policy that the military will finally support. Hopefully, Obama will not pick Sam Nunn, one of the architects of the DADT policy, to be his V.P. running mate, even though Nunn has recently

questioned the policy himself.

The Tupelo-based American Family Association has announced another boycott. They have called for a boycott of McDonald’s because of its support of the “homosexual agenda.” I’m not sure what that means, but I doubt Ronald McDonald is too concerned. The AFA has boycotted Disney, Burger King, Ford, and Bridgestone Tires for their support of “the homosexual agenda,” and none of them have caved in to the AFA’s bigotry. I guess I have an excuse now to eat a cheap unhealthy lunch at McDonald’s!

Did you hear about the Arkansas gay cage fight? Apparently Sasha Boran Cohen (Borat) staged a cage fight in Texarkana for a new movie, advertised as a macho heterosexual brawl. However, the Arkansas redneck audience was shocked when the two fighters began tearing their clothes off and started kissing! Reports are that it got pretty ugly and violent. Funny how homophobes love to watch men fight and kill each other, but consider it disgusting to see men kiss or fall in love. Guess that is “traditional family values.”

(Read more *queer news and commentary* at [queernotes.blogspot.com](http://queernotes.blogspot.com))

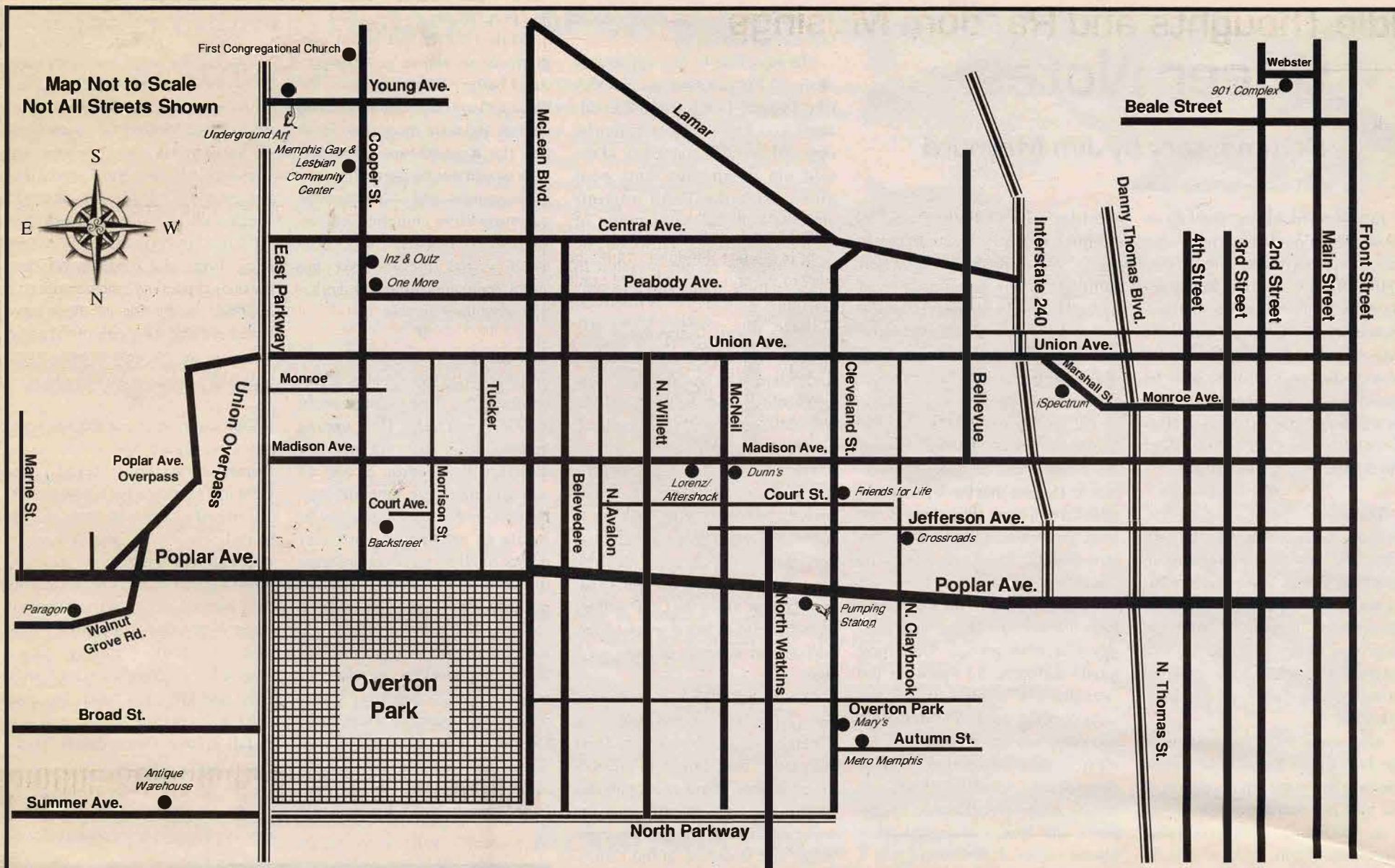
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TENNESSEE  
**TEP**  
EQUALITY PROJECT  
Shelby County Committee

Monthly Meeting  
Wed., Aug. 13, 6:30 p.m.  
Quetzel (668 Union)



## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

<p><b>July 20</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MGLCC Board Meeting 4pm, MGLCC</li> <li>* MGLCC Annual Membership meeting &amp; Election, 5pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 21</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feast For Friends, 6:30pm, St. John's Methodist</li> <li>• Women's Rugby Practice, 6:30pm, Toby Park</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 22</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Phoenix AA (Open Group), 8pm, Grace St. Luke's, 1790 Peabody</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 23</b></p>	<p><b>July 24</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cotton Pickin' Squares, 7pm, Holy Trinity UCC</li> <li>• Gayme Night, 6:30pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 25</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q-Cafe, 7pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 26</b></p>
<p><b>July 27</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stonewall Democrats, 2pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 28</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's Rugby Practice, 6:30pm, Toby Park</li> <li>• Perpetual Transition, 7:30pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 29</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Phoenix AA (Open Group), 8pm, Grace St. Luke's, 1790 Peabody</li> </ul>	<p><b>July 30</b></p>	<p><b>July 31</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gayme Night, 6:30 pm, MGLCC</li> <li>• Cotton Pickin' Squares, 7pm, Holy Trinity UCC</li> <li>• PFLAG, 7 pm, Central Library, 3030 Poplar</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q-Cafe: 7pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 2</b></p>
<p><b>Aug. 3</b></p>	<p><b>Aug. 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feast For Friends, 6:30pm, St. John's Methodist</li> <li>• Women's Rugby Practice, 6:30pm, Toby Park</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Phoenix AA (Open Group), 8pm, Grace St. Luke's, 1790 Peabody</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men's Potluck, 6pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cotton Pickin' Squares, 7pm, Holy Trinity UCC</li> <li>• PFLAG, 7pm, Main Library, 3030 Poplar</li> <li>• Show Tunes Sing-a-Long, 6:30pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q-Cafe, 7pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaze Ad Reservation Deadline for Mid-August Edition</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aug. 9</b></p>	<p><b>Aug. 10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's Rugby Practice, 6:30pm, Toby Park</li> <li>• Perpetual Transition, 7:30pm, MGLCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 11</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Phoenix AA (Open Group), 8pm, Grace St. Luke's, 1790 Peabody</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tennessee Equality Project monthly meeting, 6:30, Quetzal (668 Union)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cotton Pickin' Squares, 7pm, Holy Trinity UCC</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q-Cafe, 7pm, MGLCC</li> <li>• Gaze Due Out</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aug. 15</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirror Image, 7pm, Holy Trinity</li> </ul>

# Idle Thoughts and Random Musings

By Allen Cook

Kudos to Mid-South Pride for what turned out to be a really good gay pride parade and the largest pride festival I can remember since it was held at the Overton Park Shell.

I was going to say it was much better than expected, but somehow that implies that I expected it to be less than spectacular. Let's just say that it was much more than expected. I was very pleased.

Having been around for perhaps 30 or so gay pride events in Memphis, I've seen the procession evolve from a march to parade — from an angry protest to a vital celebration.

And I've seen the festival evolve from a cookout in a vacant lot on Marshall to a full-fledged tented outdoor festival complete with entertainment, vendors and an air of professionalism not seen in many other area festivals. Sure, it's not San Francisco, but it is Memphis and it made me proud.

The participants in the parade were judged by two members of the *Just For Us* magazine team.

Winners included:

- Best in Show — The Cow Patties (the world's nelliest trophy is again in keeping of the MGLCC)
- Best Use of Theme — Holy Trinity UCC, Cotton Pickin' Squares and Memphis Area Gay Youth (MAGY)

- Best Walking Group — MAGY
- Best Rolling Group — Backstreet, Mystic Krewe of Pegasus and Crossroads

Congratulations to all.

One more festival thing. The new 100-foot flag is terrific. Thanks to all those involved with putting it together, but special thanks go to Mike Morgan for the overall design and Miki Zuluski for the thousands of stitches.

I was sorry to hear that the Jungle is no more — it's now called Dunn's but word is it will remain gay.

I guess that means that the last of the old school bar owners has retired. We hope that Sharon Wray will not fade away. She's too much of a force of nature to do that. Enjoy your retirement, dear. You

paid enough dues for two or three of you.

Emerald Theatre Company is looking for a few (seven) good men and a lady to play characters in their upcoming production of *The Last Sunday in June*.

It is the last Sunday in June, the day of the annual Gay Pride Parade through New York's Greenwich Village. Tom and Michael, his partner of seven years, intend to spend the day planning their impending move from the Big Apple, but their plans are rerouted as one friend after another drops by to view the parade from the window of their apartment. An afternoon originally designated for shopping at Pottery Barn instead turns into a series of conversations about relationships, self-acceptance and the very meaning of what it is to be gay.

Auditions will consist of a cold reading from the script and will be held Mon., July 28 at 7 p.m. at Theatreworks, 2085 Monroe. Show dates are weekends from Sept. 12–21.

For more information, contact them at [etcmemphistheatre.com](http://etcmemphistheatre.com).

For those of you who are also on the D-list, you'll likely enjoy Kathy Griffin's appearance at the Orpheum Sat., Sept. 6, at 8 p.m.

Don't delay buying your tickets because Eddie Izzard's show last month sold out on no time, leaving quite a few people disappointed.

The moral of that story is the Memphis should get over being a last-minute ticket-buying town.

## Clay Callaway Classic Crooner

Review by Vincent Astor

In an age of much banging, twanging, excessive styling and discord at 10,000 decibels, Clay Callaway's CD *Darn it, Baby That's Love* is like balm for a soul like mine. I heard excerpts prior to his being booked for the 2008 Pride Festival and knew I didn't want to miss it. I was not disappointed and neither were those who complimented his performance to organizers of the festival.

Clay originally hails from southern Arkansas and, through many adventures, now lives in Hilo, Hawaii. Our good fortune to get him at a Memphis festival stems from an engagement to direct *South Pacific* at the South Arkansas Arts Center in his hometown of El Dorado. The Memphis festival fell during that time and the show opened in July. He has a great respect for the show tune and for what were known "back in the day" as standards. He selected several for the CD which are out of the mainstream and he gives them a gay man's touch.

There is great variety, songs ranging from "You Ain't Woman Enough to Take My Man" (done as written but with absolutely no camp) to "Darn It, Baby That's Love" (in the best classic swing tradition) to "My Superman" which I could listen to a thousand times and just imagine.

He says of himself: "In the past 20 years I managed to find love, work somewhat in the shadows of

"the [music] industry" (as in, behind the scenes) in Los Angeles, New York, Sweden, [the] Dominican Republic and all points in between, boomeranged through Nashville and came to live in Hilo, Hawaii. Hawaii is so full of music and incredible voices that I found myself facing this love I have to sing out loud and once again I fell in love with the audience, and they seemed to like me, too. This album isn't a political statement. It is a musical effort meant to entertain and to reach out and touch a community of people that have always supported and inspired me."

The CD is old style but in a good way. His choice is to perform the songs as the writers intended with just enough style to make it wonderful. I personally welcome a change from the pop star who generally overlays so much style that the tune beneath is difficult to discover. Long live the crooners—I could fall in love so easily.

For more information go to [www.claycallaway.com](http://www.claycallaway.com).

# Gaze

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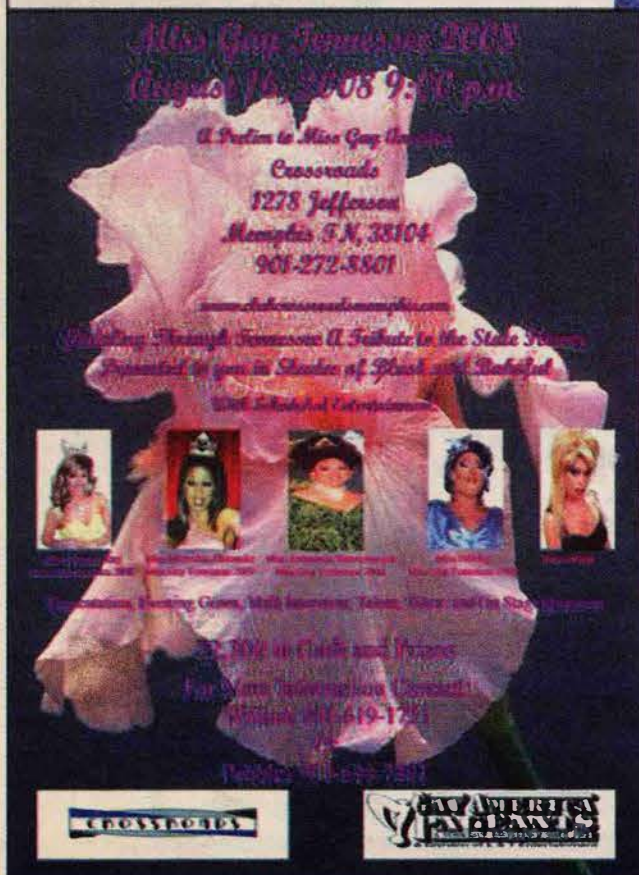
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