

Illinois Gender Advocates



Advocacy for the Transgender and Gender Variant Community

A §501(c)(3) Charitable Organization

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April 2003

Illinois Lobby Day to Be Held in Springfield on Wednesday, April 2

Proposed legislation to provide human rights protections for gender identity and sexual orientation is now pending in the Illinois State Senate (SB 101). On Wednesday, April 2, 2003, concerned citizens from all parts of Illinois will converge on Springfield as part of the Lobby Day sponsored by Equality Illinois, to ask their legislators to support this important bill and to cast a “yes” vote when the bill comes up for a vote. Members and supporters of Illinois Gender Advocates are urged to participate actively in the Lobby Day as much as possible.

Free transportation to Springfield is available on the morning of Lobby Day. Buses will leave from the Chicago office of Equality Illinois (3713N. Halsted) at 7:30 a.m. on April 2, with a stop in suburban Bolingbrook. The bus will return at approximately 9:00 p.m. on the same day. Anyone taking the bus to Springfield for Lobby Day may park without charge at the Center on Halsted parking lot at the corner of Waveland Avenue and Halsted Street.

Those who decide to travel on their own should check in at the Equality Illinois Lobby Day Headquarters, which are located in the Lincoln Room of the Mansion View Inn, 529 S. 4th Street, upon arrival in Springfield. Volunteers will be there to assist you from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Information and guidance about how to present the issues to your legislators will be available for those who want it.

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**The Next Meeting of
Illinois Gender Advocates
Will Take Place at 7:30 p.m. on
Thursday, April 3, 2003
And Will Be Held at
New Spirit MCC Church
542 S. Scoville Avenue
In Oak Park**

Miranda Writes...

The Price of Invisibility

By Miranda Stevens-Miller

News Flash... News Flash... A resolution was introduced in the U. S. Senate early in March that would amend the Senate rules to prohibit employment discrimination in senatorial offices the basis of sexual orientation. The measure was introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and is similar to the failed resolution that she introduced last year when the Democrats held a majority in the Senate. It is not expected to

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Illinois Lobby Day to Be Held in Springfield on Wednesday, April 2

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Lobbying of the Senators and Representatives will take place from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka will provide a lunch in her office (Statehouse 219) from 11:30 to 12:30. Following the lobbying session, participants can celebrate with supportive legislators for dinner and a cocktail reception at the Station House, 306 E. Washington, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

Everyone intending to participate in Lobby Day – including those who will travel on their own to Springfield – are asked to telephone Richard Streetman, Equality Illinois' Lobby Day Coordinator, at 773-477-7173. Equality Illinois needs to know how many people will be attending in order to know which legislators will be covered, and so that plans can be made to provide sufficient food for participants.

Even if you cannot attend Lobby Day in person, you can call or write to your Senator and Representative to urge their support for SB 101. Be sure to see the "Take Action" page of the IGA web site (<http://www.genderadvocates.org>) for additional information, including the text of SB 101, information about SB 101 that legislators need to know, the answers to questions that legislators ask about gender identity and much more. If you are uncertain about the names of your legislators and how to contact them, that information can also be obtained from links provided in the IGA web site.

SB 101 has received a favorable vote from the Senate Executive Committee (see article on page 5) and will be coming to the floor of the Senate for a vote in the near future. Now is the time to let your Senator know that you strongly support this bill, and expect him or her to vote "yes" when the bill comes to the Senate floor.

Miranda Writes...

(Continued From Page 1)

pass this year in the much more conservative Senate.

While we should be applauding Senator Feinstein for introducing such a necessary and reasonable resolution, one can't help but wonder why she didn't go just a little bit further to assure that the entire LGBT community was included.

Oh sure, you can say to me, "Oh Miranda, cut her some slack. She went out on a limb for the gay community and she innocently forgot about transgenders." But that's just not the case. There is more than meets the eye going on here. Turns out that Senator Feinstein was asked repeatedly by national LGBT lobbying organizations, including HRC, to add the words "gender identity" to the resolution, and she refused to do so.

Why would she refuse to add the words "gender identity" to a resolution that has no chance of passing anyway? Is it because she is unaware of the transgender community? I don't think so... as former mayor of San Francisco she cannot help being not only aware of but also perhaps familiar with the transgender community.

Is it because she is oblivious to the movement that has grown over the last decade to a point where it is considered "uncool" to leave out the T on LGBT? I don't think so... even HRC has expanded its congressional nondiscrimination pledge to include not only sexual orientation but also gender identity or expression. And HRC used that argument on Senator Feinstein, but it fell on deaf ears.

So what's the deal here? Why would a progressive Senator from arguably the most LGBT friendly state in the nation, and certainly from the most LGBT friendly city, refuse to acknowledge that we have the same rights as any other member of the LGBT community? Why wouldn't she take a chance even on a relatively inconsequential and doomed resolution?

I don't know the answer, but she's not the only one who is having trouble with including us. Rumor has it that the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (a.k.a. the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act or LLEEA) will be introduced by Senator Kennedy without explicit coverage of transgender people. And chances are that ENDA will be introduced without mention of gender identity and expression.

And did you ever notice that whenever the straight press reports on SB101, the LGBT anti-discrimination bill pending in Springfield, they always refer to it as the gay rights bill? And did you notice how many times the gay media talks about SB101 and sexual orientation, forgetting that the gender identity is also included in it? And have you ever gone to events that are sponsored by LGBT organizations just to find that those very same organizations often forget to mention transgender? Or they fail to provide support for the transgender people in their organizations?

We worked long and hard to make sure that transgender people are recognized as part of LGBT community. But right now there are only a few dozen transgender activists scattered across the United States. We've made a big difference in the cities and counties that have passed gender identity inclusive laws. But at the federal level, it's not working. If we can't get agreement from the most enlightened and progressive senators that it is not acceptable to fire us, or even kill us, then what chance do we have to ever get these measures passed into federal law?

Well folks, that's the price you pay for invisibility. If they don't see you, then you're not there. If you're not there, then your vote doesn't count. It's all that simple. It's a political equation. And it's all well and good to have a few spokes-trans out there representing the transgender community, but a few loud people does not a political voice create. If you want

recognition then you have to be visible. If you want rights, then you have to work for it.

*Miranda Stevens-Miller welcomes your comments at
MirandaSt1@aol.com*

How to contact us...

Illinois Gender Advocates

47 W. Division St., #391
Chicago, IL 60610

Telephone Hotline:

(312) 409-5489

Please leave a message. We will get back to you as quickly as possible.

E-Mail:

IGA@genderadvocates.org

Web Site Address:

<http://www.genderadvocates.org>

It's All About Me... NOT!

By Lisa Scheps

(Editor's Note: From time to time, we publish an article that is not strictly news in the traditional sense, but which is nevertheless of significance to the transgender community – or at least of significance to your Editor. The following is one such article. Lisa Scheps was a leader in the Chicago area trans community and a tireless worker on behalf of trans issues. Perhaps even more importantly, she freely and frequently opened her heart and her home to members of this community – including your Editor – at times when such help was desperately needed. Although we will sorely miss her grace, wit, and humor, we can derive some solace from knowing that Texas will never be the same.)

Hey you guys! Remember me? I fell off the face of the earth about 4 months ago. Well, I'm here to report that I actually did not fall off the face of the earth. Many many years ago, my dear friend Christopher Columbus, revealed that the earth was, indeed, round. So falling off the edge was unlikely. (But I hear it HAS happened to some... just not me).

But where did I go? Have I given up the cause? Have I closeted myself in the safety of stealthdom? Have I moved to Istanbul, changed my name to Lytivia, and am now heading up the Save the Camels from Filthy Infidels committee? While Istanbul sounds intriguing and I do have a passion for

the plight of the camel, let me tell you that I am alive, well and still in Chicago... for now. (I plan to stay alive and well, but read on to find out about me and my life in Chicago).

You also may have noticed that my name no longer appears with the title of Vice Chair of IGA... you'll notice that my name doesn't appear AT ALL. It was with a great deal of thought and consideration that I chose not to run for a second term. I still plan to be active in the Transgender community and strive for recognition for all of us as strong, viable members of society with all the rights, privileges, protections and responsibilities that membership provides (doesn't that sound official)

SO WHY HAVE YOU DISSAPPEARED? YOU'RE NOT ANSWERING THE QUESTION?

Ok, ok, get off my back. The answer isn't that simple... well maybe it is, but remember... I like drama and suspense.

I haven't disappeared at all, I still exist. But as of the end of March I will no longer exist in Chicago. That's right ladies and gentlemen I'm leaving the relative safety of the Midwest and going straight to the gender front lines. Yep, you guessed it, I'm on my way to Texas. TEXAS?!!! Are you crazy? TEXAS?? (Do you really have to ask that.)

But why Texas? I'd like to tell you that Texas is arguably the most closed minded, transphobic, myopic, unforgiving state in the Union and I am going down there with the express desire to work diligently in the State Legislature to open the minds of the pig-headed lawmakers that have wreaked havoc on our community for years and years. While I do plan to do that, it is not the primary reason. Believe it or not I hale from the Lone Star State and I am simply heading home.

After years of really difficult work on myself I have a new better relationship with my family and it is important to me to be close to them. I have nieces and nephews that hardly know me and it is time for me change that. "But, Lisa, aren't you from Houston? I hear you are moving to Austin. That isn't 'home'." Ok, kids, I wanna be close to the family but not TOO close.

I will continue work locally and nationally to help further the cause. As you all know, we have so much work to do. And in a very real way it is good that I am going to Texas. That state needs help! And that is what has happened to me (see, I told you that I didn't fall off the face 'o the earth). So next time y'all come on down south be sure to give me a jingle; my email remains the same: lscheps@mindspring.com.

It is with a great deal of sadness that I say farewell to my brothers and sisters here in Chicago, but I take solace in the knowledge that you will ALWAYS be my sisters and brothers. Stay the course and keep fighting! YEEE HA!

This time it IS all about me...~~not!~~

Feedback...

Problems? Questions? Disagreements? Want to submit an article? Please write to us. We love to get mail.

Board Members of Illinois Gender Advocates:

Chair:

Beth Plotner
BethP@genderadvocates.org

Vice Chair:

Diana Williamson
DianaW@genderadvocates.org

Secretary:

Rebecca Davis
RebeccaD@genderadvocates.org

Treasurer:

Marsha Jackson
MarshaJ@genderadvocates.org

Legislative Director:

Miranda Stevens-Miller
MirandaM@genderadvocates.org

Development Director:

Jacob B. Mueller
JacobM@genderadvocates.org

Directors at Large:

Sara Fenwick
fenwick87@attbi.com

Toni Monzo
msanthonia@yahoo.com

Staff Director of Illinois Gender Advocates:

Director of Youth Advocacy:

Josephine Christopher
JosephineC@genderadvocates.org

on youth. Well as Chair here is my official response: WRONG!

Yes, we have started working on youth advocacy. We call it TYRA (Transgender Youth Resource and Advocacy). We're still working on Legislative and Legal advocacy just as we've always done. If you think we're just working for youth let's take a little walk down memory lane.

Evanston, DeKalb, Chicago and Cook County have all enacted ordinances making discrimination based on one's gender identity illegal. Due to space limitations I'm not going to reprint the ordinances but take my word for it nowhere do they say they just protect youth. In fact these ordinances probably do more to protect adults. Getting and keeping a job and a place to live is more a worry of our adults than youth.

So that's the past. It still is the present. We haven't given up on the work that this organization was started on. I know there will be a good contingent from this organization going down to Springfield to lobby for SB101 on April 2nd so that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity will be outlawed throughout the entire state. I'm going. Are you?

As an advocacy organization we are doing what we can for all members of the transgender community regardless of their age. I do not feel I need to defend this organization's commitment to adults. At this time no one but IGA is advocating for our youth. Yes, there are some transgender organizations that have announced youth projects. Our youth project is in place and by the time you read this our weekly youth drop in will already have had at least one session.

If you feel that there is specific work we should be undertaking let us know. Better yet get involved. It's easy to criticize. We generally meet the first Thursday of the month. We have a new meeting location in Oak Park. Come on by get involved. This is your community. This is your life.

Be Sure to Attend Our Next Meeting; New Meeting Location to Be New Spirit MCC Church

The next regular meeting of Illinois Gender Advocates will be held on Thursday, April 3, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. in the New Spirit MCC Church, located at 542 S. Scoville Avenue in Oak Park. The church is on the northeast corner of Scoville Avenue and Adams Street (five blocks east of Oak Park Avenue and one block south of Madison Street). This is a safe residential neighborhood with ample free parking on the street. Please call the IGA hotline (312-409-5489) if you have any questions regarding our new meeting location.

Whatever

From Cradle to Grave

By Beth Plotner

There seems to be a perception or, to say the least, some feelings that IGA has changed its direction to concentrate just

Thanks to Our Contributors:

A big thank you goes out to those who contributed articles to the newsletter this month. It is really appreciated from month to month. Thanks!

- Beth Plotner
- Diana Williamson
- NGLTF
- GenderPAC News
- Miranda Stevens-Miller
- Lisa Schepps
- NTAC

Illinois Senate Executive Committee Passes GLBT Rights

SPRINGFIELD, IL (February 27, 2003) – The most conservative committee of the Illinois Senate voted to pass a bill banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The 8-5 vote was along party lines with Democrats casting yes votes and Republicans voting no. The bill, which has been around since 1974, now goes to the full Senate for consideration. The bill's sponsor is optimistic about its passage.

“This is the first time that the Senate Executive committee passed this bill. We are ecstatic,” said Rick Garcia, political Director of Equality Illinois. “For years this civil rights legislation was bottled up or stopped in this committee and today's vote is a huge step forward.”

Testifying in favor of the bill were Garcia and the bill's sponsor, State Senator Carol Ronen (D-Edgewater). Opposing the legislation was Rev. Bob Vanden Bosch of Concerned Christians of America. The proponents explained the content of the bill and suggested that the legislation promoted equal treatment for all people under the law. Vanden Bosch testified that the bill violates religious institutions' rights, will hurt businesses and pave the way to the sanctioning of gay marriage and “protections for all other kinds of sexual behaviors.”

Rebuffing Vanden Bosch, Garcia suggested to the senators that they listen to businesses, especially religious businesses themselves. “A slew of Catholic orders of nuns and brothers that operate hospitals, schools, and social service agencies are on record supporting this legislation. As does Advocate Health Centers, the state's second largest private employer sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran and Episcopal Churches,” noted Garcia. “Clearly these religious groups would not endorse legislation that was bad for their businesses or that would violate their deeply held religious beliefs.”

“The bill has an excellent chance of passing the Senate this year,” said Ronen. “More and more of my colleagues are recognizing that this is a simple matter of fairness. They recognize that the opponents' arguments are not based on fact,

but simply an attempt to mislead. I'm confident we will pass this bill.”

Among those submitting statements of support were American Airlines, LaSalle Bank, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Advocate Health Centers, SEIU, National Coalition of American Nuns, AFL-CIO, Lutheran Advocacy Network, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Chicago Bar Association, the ACLU, NOW and the AIDS Foundation of Chicago.

National Activists Grapple with the Future of Gay Rights Movement at Chicago Collegiate Pride Fest

Colleges, Universities Partner with City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations on LGBT Youth Issues

National political and cultural activists from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community – including Riki Wilchins, Michelangelo Signorile, and Robyn Ochs – will headline the activities at Chicago Collegiate Pride Fest 2003 on Saturday, April 5, announced Clarence N. Wood, Chairman of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR). The event will take place at the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph St., from 3:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Pride Fest 2003 is open to the public, with a suggested donation of \$10. For more information, contact Patrick Finnessy at 312-413-9862 or pkfinn@uic.edu or visit <http://pridefest.glbc.uic.edu>.

A highlight of the program will be the National Discussion with Riki Wilchins, executive director of the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition, and Michelangelo Signorile, former editor-at-large and columnist for the gay and lesbian newsmagazine *The Advocate*. Wilchins and Signorile will face-off over the changing roles of gender and sexuality in the LGBT political movement.

A new feature this year is breakout sessions intended to provide LGBT students with practical skills they can use in advancing the LGBT movement. Art as Activism will examine both artistic content and the use of art as LGBT activism. Media and Activism will provide participants with the basic skills for working with the media to achieve quality coverage of the LGBT community.

The Fest will also feature entertainers, including Amy Armstrong, Chicago Kings, and Dramatic Diversity Theatre Company, and a resource room with exhibits by organizations and businesses providing services of relevance to LGBT youth.

Pride Fest 2003 is the second annual event. This year's Pride Fest is a collaboration of University of Illinois at Chicago, Columbia College Chicago, Northwestern University, Roosevelt University, University of Chicago, and the CCHR Advisory Council on LGBT issues.

"Collegiate activism is important for the success of the LGBT movement," says Patrick Finnessy, chair of the Pride Fest committee and director of the Office of GLBT Concerns at UIC. "With this event, we are working to educate and inspire the next generation. It is our hope that students will take the information and energy found here to communities across the country."

"Last year's Collegiate Pride Fest was a great success," continued Finnessy, "and this year we have doubled our space in the Cultural Center. We will be in GAR Hall, the Rotunda, Claudia Cassidy Theater, and Preston-Bradley Hall."

New Mexico Passes Hate Crime Bill; Anti-Discrimination Bill Set for Vote

Passed Bill Provides Explicit Transgender Protections in State's Hate Crime Law

From National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)

SANTA FE, NM (March 21, 2003) – The New Mexico House passed Senate Bill 38 with a vote of 39-27 yesterday, sending the bill to the governor's desk for signature. The bill establishes a state hate crime law, which covers sexual orientation and gender identity, providing extra prison time for offenders whose crimes are found by a court to have been motivated by hate. Meanwhile, a vote on one of the pending anti-discrimination bills is imminent; to send an anti-discrimination bill to the governor, either the House or the Senate needs to pass the other chamber's already passed version. Both the Senate and the House anti-discrimination bills do the same thing: add "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" to the state's Human Rights Act. At a press conference on March 13, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson asked the Legislature to send him both the pending anti-discrimination and hate crimes bills so that he could sign them into law.

"This is a time to celebrate the hard work and dedication of the activists in New Mexico, who brilliantly moved these bills through the legislative process for years," said Lisa Mottet, the national Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) Transgender Civil Rights Project Legislative Lawyer. Mottet recently traveled through the Southwest, including New Mexico, meeting with key activists. "The folks in New Mexico did everything right: they told their stories to legislators; mobilized a grass roots base of support; and they would not

accept exclusive language – gender identity had to be part of the package."

Senate Bill 38 adds sections to Mexico's criminal sentencing code to allow judges to increase sentences when the judge or jury finds that the crime was committed because of the actual or perceived race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation of the victim. The Coalition for Equality of New Mexico and New Mexico Gender Advocacy Information Network (NMGAIN) led the lobbying efforts on this bill. New Mexico joins a handful of states with hate crimes laws containing explicit transgender protection, the most recent being Pennsylvania which added protection last year.

"Passage of this bill in New Mexico shows that more of the nation is realizing that protecting transgender people from discrimination is both important and the right thing to do," according to NGLTF Executive Director, Lori L. Jean. "The New Mexico success establishes beyond question that when we do our organizing work well and take the time to educate legislators about transgender people, thoughtful and fair-minded leaders will support it. Now the federal government needs to wake up to this reality and follow the example set by fair-minded jurisdictions across the country by passing similar legislation."

New Mexico activists are anxiously waiting for one of the pending anti-discrimination bills to be sent to the governor as well. If passed by the additional chamber, House Bill 314 or Senate Bill 28 will prohibit discrimination in employment, public accommodations, housing and credit based on sexual orientation and gender identity by amending the New Mexico Human Rights Act. New Mexico is set to become the third state to explicitly cover gender identity in its anti-discrimination law. Currently, two states, Minnesota and Rhode Island, have such laws, as well as 53 cities or counties across the country.

"The work of NMGAIN to assist in the passing of this bill was helped by the research, counsel and encouragement of the NGLTF, especially the Transgender Civil Rights Project," according to Virginia Stephenson, President of HMGAIN.

In other states, pieces of transgender-inclusive or transgender-specific legislation are experiencing movement as well. The Washington State House passed its anti-discrimination bill on Monday, with a vote of 59-39; that bill now moves to the Senate. California Assembly Bill 196, which would clarify that California's existing sex discrimination laws cover transgender people, passed out of its first committee this week. Activists in Illinois are also hopeful that their anti-discrimination bill may experience unprecedented movement.

NGLTF lent support to New Mexico activists through its Transgender Civil Rights Project which provides legislative and strategy assistance, including evaluation of legislative language, to activists and organizations working to pass trans-

inclusive anti-discrimination bills or to add transgender protections to existing laws.

Founded in 1963, NGLTF works to eliminate prejudice, violence and injustice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at the local, state and national level. As part of a broader social justice movement for freedom, justice and equality, NGLTF is creating a world that respects and celebrates the diversity of human expression and identity where all people may fully participate in society.

NTAC Applauds AFL-CIO Transgender-Inclusive Stand Against Bigotry and Hatred

From the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC)

February 28, 2003 – The AFL-CIO Executive Council, representing over 13 million employees in the United States, spoke out this week against all forms of bigotry and hatred. In a statement posted to the Executive Council page at the AFL-CIO web site <www.afl-cio.org> on February 27, labor leaders recognized that much work remained in making equality a reality for all Americans. This is the first time that the AFL-CIO leadership specifically included transgendered people in a call for an end to bias.

“Employment, housing and other forms of discrimination, as well as acts of violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity and gender expression, continue unabated.”

Donna Cartwright, a member of the AFL-CIO Pride at Work National Executive Board said, “This is a wonderful day for transgender people, and a proud day for the labor movement. The AFL-CIO’s action in recognizing that transgender and gender-different people need protection against discrimination and hate crimes is in the best traditions of labor solidarity and support for human rights.”

Noting a post-o/11 increase in attacks on civil liberties, the AFL-CIO promised to challenge discrimination in housing, employment, education, healthcare access and other areas.

In a very clear message, the AFL-CIO leaders vowed to stand with their allies and with the civil rights community to oppose all forms of discrimination based upon race, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, religion or age. “All of these forms of discrimination harm union members and all workers, who face the additional challenge of economic exploitation and employer retaliation when they attempt to assert their rights in the workplace.”

Marta Ames, Executive Director of Pride at Work <www.prideatwork.org>, considers the AFL-CIO resolution an important step forward for the GLBT community. “The

resolution does not come out of a vacuum,” she said, “but instead reflects the energy and commitment of leaders and activists in the transgender community, the dedication and involvement of Pride at Work members, and the support of many individuals and departments within the AFL-CIO.”

Vanessa Edwards Foster, Chairman of the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), said, “The AFL-CIO has shown true vision in supporting all workers, not just certain segments of the workforce. We only hope government can follow their lead.”

NTAC applauds the AFL-CIO intention to work with Congress and state and local governments to pass laws that ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to live and work in an environment free of physical intimidation, prejudice, retaliation, harassment and bias.

Founded in 1999, NTAC – the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition – is a §501(c)(4) civil rights organization working to establish and maintain the right of all transgendered, intersexed, and gender-variant people to live and work without fear of violence or discrimination.

GPAC Condemns Shooting Murder of Michigan Transgender Teen

From GenderPAC News

GREEN OAK TOWNSHIP, MI (Feb. 28, 2003) – The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition today condemned the shooting murder of a transgender teen-age woman in Michigan.

Police discovered the decomposed and badly beaten body of a 19-year old transgender woman with a fatal gunshot wound to the head in an abandoned home an hour outside Detroit on Feb. 21.

The woman, who reportedly went by the name “Niki” for the last two years, was born Anthony Lionell Nicholas in Detroit, according to investigator’s analysis of the victim’s fingerprints. Police are investigating the death as a homicide.

The murder comes within months of the killings of Ukea Davis and Stephanie Thomas in Washington, DC, and Gwen Araujo in Newark, CA.

“Violence against transgender teens continues to claim young lives at a terrible pace. Our sympathies go out to Niki’s family,” said GenderPAC Executive Director Riki Wilchins. “Public attitudes about gender must be changed, and the U.S. Congress must pass hate crimes legislation that addresses victim’s gender expression and identity.”

Early press reports had covered the victim as “a male” wearing “women’s clothing.” However, a spokesman for the

Triangle Foundation, a state LGBT group noted, "Police are being very aggressive, very non-judgmental, and very committed to this case."

Oscar Winner Hilary Swank, Director Kimberly Peirce Speak Out on Araujo Killing

From GenderPAC News

WASHINGTON, DC (Mar. 4, 2003) – Actress Hilary Swank, who won an Oscar for her portrayal of Brandon Teena in the movie *Boys Don't Cry*, today issued a strong statement condemning the murder of Latina transgender teen Gwen Araujo and calling for new laws to discourage gender-based violence.

"The brutal murder of Gwen Araujo is yet another painful reminder that the gender hatred that also killed Brandon Teena is alive, and work remains to be done," said Swank. "Congress must pass hate crimes laws, and organizations

much change public attitudes, if all Americans – including those who transcend gender norms – are to live freely with dignity and respect."

Swank's words were echoed by director of *Boys Don't Cry*, Kimberly Peirce, who issued a statement that read, "Youth who cross gender lines – whether they are gay, straight, or transgender – continue to be targets for violence. We need tough laws that will punish those responsible and deter future attacks."

Similarities between the two crimes have led some to compare them. Teena, a transgender man, was romantically involved with a local woman in Falls City, NE. He was murdered in 1993 after two of the woman's male friends took him into a bathroom, where they found that he had female genitals, and then assaulted him, later killing him.

Araujo, who was romantically involved with a local man, was killed in October, 2002 in Newark, CA. Several of the man's friends, including one woman, took her into a bathroom, and discovered that she had male genitals. Two of the men then beat and strangled, her, leaving her in a shallow grave nearby.

Application for New or Renewal Membership

YES, I would like to join (_____) or renew (_____) my membership in Illinois Gender Advocates.

Name(s) _____

Name to Be Used on Mailing Label (if different from above) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP+4 _____

Home Telephone _____ Work Telephone _____

E-mail Address _____

Membership Level (check one):

(_____) Student/Youth - \$10 (_____) Regular Membership - \$30

(_____) Supporting Member - \$100 (_____) Benefactor - \$250

(_____) Other - \$ _____

How would you like to be involved with Illinois Gender Advocates? (Please check all that apply.)

(_____) Keep informed by newsletters (_____) Participate in monthly meetings

(_____) Participate in actions (_____) Join a working group or committee

(_____) Liaison with other human rights groups. Please specify _____

(_____) Do you have any special skills that could help us out? (legal / legislative, artistic / design, technical / computer) Please specify: _____

Please mail, along with your check or money order, to:

Illinois Gender Advocates, 47 W. Division St., #391, Chicago, IL 60610