

Illinois Gender Advocates



Advocacy for the Transgender and Gender Variant Community

A §501(c)(3) Charitable Organization

Volume 2 Issue 9

September 2003

Anti-Transgender Violence Erupts Again in D.C.

From Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network

August 21, 2003 – For the second time in less than a week, a transgender woman was brutally killed in Washington, D.C. on Thursday.

Police found the victim's partially nude body in a field early Thursday morning, the Associated Press reported. The victim, Emoni Spaulding, had been shot but also had severe head wounds.

Hours earlier, another transgender woman, Punani Walker, was shot in Washington and had to be hospitalized in critical condition. Police reportedly said the two attacks were not related.

No arrests have been made in the two incidents.

On Saturday, transgender performer Bella Evangelista was fatally shot in what police are investigating as a potential hate crime. A suspect for the shooting is in custody.

The Washington-based Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the nation's largest GLBT rights advocacy group, mourned the killings.

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**The Next Meeting of
Illinois Gender Advocates
Will Take Place at 7:30 p.m. on
Thursday, September 5, 2003
And Will Be Held at
New Spirit MC Church
542 S. Scoville Avenue
In Oak Park**

Whatever

Gay Marriage Doesn't Affect the Transgender Community, Right? Wrong!

By Beth Plotner

The President wants to codify it the Pope has warned legislators not to vote for it. Yet 2 provinces in Canada have enacted it and 2 countries in Europe have it. But is it an issue for our Community?

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Anti-Transgender Violence Erupts Again in D.C.

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“No person should live in fear of being attacked just because of who they are,” Elizabeth Birch, HRC’s executive director, said in a statement. “These hate crimes are vicious reminders of the work left to be done in ensuring the safety of every member of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.”

“In a year where 12 individuals have reportedly lost their lives to anti-transgender violence in the United States of America,” Gwen Smith, founder of the Remembering Our Dead Project, said, “it is astounding that we have yet to see national hate crimes protections inclusive of gender identity.”

One year ago, two Washington-area transgender teens were shot multiple times while sitting in a parked car. The killings remain unsolved, despite a \$50,000 reward.

How to contact us...

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312-409-5489

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

TYRA Youth Hotline:

312-217-1120

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<http://www.genderadvocates.org>

Whatever

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While marriage rights may not be a burning issue in the Transgender community but it should be. The right to hold a job, have a place to live, the right to public accommodations, the right to credit are the rights we have been seeking, have won in a number of places and continue to seek. We are seeking these rights along with our sisters and brothers in the LGB community. Marriage Rights or gay marriage has been in the news a lot lately. It has been a hot topic in Washington

and the Vatican. This is an issue the Transgender community needs to strive for in our quest for full equality.

Within the Transgender community we represent all forms of sexual orientation. Straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual etc. But here’s a twist some of you might not have thought much about. While we might identify as straight there are some in society who would perceive us as gay and vice versa. If you’ve found that special someone and are planning to get married there might be those in government who have other plans.

Say you go through a complete gender transition including surgery. Who can you legally marry under our current marriage laws? Someone of your birth gender or someone opposite your birth gender? The logical answer would be someone of your birth gender. Yet there are those who would say the answer is neither. I’m not making this up. There are some on the right who say we have given up our right to marry when we transition.

What about those of us who are married when we transition and stay in the marriage? Some of these same folk would have the marriage ended. Never mind splitting property or questions of child custody.

Think I’m paranoid? What about Littleton and Gardiner? Though the court in the Kantaras case had a positive ruling that case is currently being appealed. We’ve had one case right here in Illinois go against us and another case testing the validity of a Transgender person marrying is set to go to trial in Cook County in less than a month.

Marriage isn’t for everyone. Just because there is a right to marriage doesn’t mean you have to get married. There are many couples that have lived together for decades without being married. I’m not just talking about couples in the LGBT community. I’m also talking about straight couples that have also had children and raised them to adulthood.

So marriage is our fight too. It’s not about whether you want to walk down that aisle or not it’s about the right to walk down the aisle.

Minutes for the Monthly Meeting of May 2000

By Rebecca Davis, Secretary

Chairperson Beth Plotner called the meeting to order at 7:55 PM on August 7, 2003.

Legal: Beth provided an update to the Simmons case. Mr. Simmons is a FTM who is trying to gain custody of his children after a divorce from his wife. Even though the children desire to be with their father, he has been denied

custody. Beth stated that there has been enough money raised for a retainer for a motion to appeal.

Legislative: In Illinois, S.B. 101 is on hold while sponsors try to line up enough supporting votes to have the bill pass the Senate. There might not be any further action on the bill until next year's session.

In Washington, D.C., a new version of ENDA is being drafted to include language favorable to transgendered individuals. The effort is being led by HRC, the Human Rights Campaign.

Youth: IGA's youth program, TYRA, is beginning to have a weekly attendance of several transgendered young people. Casey Schwartz, a facilitator from Howard Brown has helped with the TYRA program. TYRA's most recent effort working with DCFS helped to get a transgendered youth out of a mental institution and placed in a foster home. Resources are needed for the TYRA program. See the TYRA website for information on the program.

Events: The "Remembering Our Dead" vigil will be held at the Thompson Center on November 19, 2003 at 6:00 PM.

The Rainbow Spirit awards are scheduled for November 15, 2003. The convention for "Creating Change" will be held in Miami November 5-9, 2003.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Be Sure to Attend Our Next Meeting

Our next regular meeting will be held on Thursday, September 5, 2003, at 7:30 p.m. at the New Spirit Metropolitan Community Church, located at 542 S. Scoville Avenue in Oak Park. Please enter by the side door on Adams Street, then go up the stairs and turn right to the meeting room. Ample free parking is available on the street.

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
- NTAC
- Human Rights Campaign
- Gay.com / Planet Out. com
- Rebecca Davis
- Peggy O'Hare
- David A. Fahrenthold
& Simone Weichselbaum

Special thanks to the Houston Chronicle and the Washington Post.

Nominations Are Next Month

Just a reminder that we will have nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair next month with the elections being held in November.

Due to term limits, after serving as Chair for the last 3 years I will not be running.

If you're interested in running be sure to be at the meeting next month. If you want to be involved but don't want to be Chair or Vice-Chair let the candidates know. The Chair and Vice-Chair will be appointing a new Board. We can always use people who want to get involved and make a difference for those people in the Transgender and Gender Variant Communities.

Beth Plotner

Save the Date: Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil to Be Held on November 19, 2003

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the annual Day of Remembrance Candlelight Vigil, starting at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 19, 2003 at the Thompson Center, located at the corner of Randolph and Clark Streets in Chicago. This observance commemorates the transgender and gender variant individuals throughout the world who were killed as during hate crimes committed against them during the preceding year.

Equality for California Transgender Citizens!

Governor Signs Bill Into Law

From the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC)

California Governor Gray Davis presented the gift of freedom to thousands of his fellow Californians on Saturday, August 2nd. In signing AB 196, which clarifies the state's Fair Employment and Housing Act by including gender identity and expression, Governor Davis brings California into a leadership position of a growing human rights struggle. California now becomes the most populous jurisdiction to enact equal rights for transgendered citizens.

The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), who endorsed the bill in this session and in its previous attempts, was "overjoyed" with Gov. Davis' signature. The bill was introduced by Assemblymember Mark Leno (D-San

Francisco), sponsored by Equality California (EqCA), and formally supported by more than 50 other local, state and national groups.

Many in the transgender community were pleasantly surprised with news of the Gov. Davis' signature. This was the third attempt for this legislation, and the embattled governor has recently had plenty of partisan salvos to fend off. While the prospects for enactment seemed less optimistic given the political environment, the results were positive.

"I can't even begin to explain the joy and surprise I feel," said an ebullient Gwen Smith, founder of Remembering Our Dead, a website devoted to transgendered victims of murder. "I'm amazed – and pleased – that Gov. Davis chose to sign this bill, even in the midst of mounting attacks from the religious right and from the conservatives behind the recall attempt."

"Transgender people seek nothing more than the opportunity to support ourselves and our families and to be treated with dignity and respect," said Shannon Minter, Legal Director for the California-based National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). "By enacting AB 196 into law, Californians are sending a powerful message that no person can be denied employment or housing based on gender-related characteristics."

The amended California law describes discrimination based on 'sex' as including discrimination based on 'gender,' which includes a person's "identity, appearance or behavior whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth." Thus, the law protects effeminate men and masculine-appearing women as well as the transgendered.

"The governor exhibited clarity under pressure," said Vanessa Edwards Foster, chair of NTAC. "We only wish more of our political leaders could show as much leadership. Gov. Davis demonstrated his concern for all of California's citizens – not simply those who think, look like, or contribute to the same causes as he does," Foster commented. "It's far too rare a trait in these politically polarized times."

NTAC applauds the fair-minded California legislators for joining Minnesota, Rhode Island and New Mexico in protecting transgender citizens from discrimination. NTAC believes that all nondiscrimination laws and bias crimes laws should include gender-identity and expression. Discrimination has no place in our nation.

Gwen Smith summed it up simply. "It is a big win for California's transgender community."

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.

Feedback...

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

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Injected Silicone Suspected in Third Death

By Peggy O'Hare, Houston Chronicle

August 21, 2003 – A third person has died from what police suspect are silicone injections, alarming investigators that many in the transgender community are not heeding warnings about the dangers of such body enhancement techniques.

David Harold Reese, Jr., 31, died Sunday at Memorial Hermann Northwest Hospital, two days after receiving silicone injections to enhance his buttocks, said Houston Police Department Homicide Lt. Steve Jett.

Reese, of the 4300 block of Sherwood Lane, lived as a woman and went by the name "Coco," friends said. Police believe Reese asphyxiated, Jett said, but the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office has not determined the official cause of death.

Investigators are looking for the person who gave the injections and who could face criminal charges.

The silicone injections are believed to have caused two other deaths and sickened several people since May, police said. In one of those deaths, police have arrested a person they suspect gave the injection.

The liquid silicone, which analysts have likened to brake fluid, is injected under the skin to enhance people's breasts and buttocks. The technique has long been popular in the transgender community because it is cheaper than surgery, offers instant results and enables recipients to perform sexually as males, concerned activists say.

Reese received his shots in Houston Friday, Jett said. He seemed fine at work that day, but called in sick Saturday morning, co-workers said. In multiple phone messages left for a co-worker, Reese was hyperventilating and spoke in short gasps because of breathing difficulties, friends said.

Reese went to Memorial Hermann Northwest Hospital later Saturday, then went home, Jett said. Reese was reportedly given medication and went to bed, friends said.

On Sunday, Reese returned to the hospital, where he died around 11 a.m., Jett said. Hospital officials would not comment on Reese's case or why he was allowed to go home Saturday, citing patient privacy laws.

Reese's family declined to comment Wednesday.

Police have pleaded for anyone who received such injections to seek medical attention immediately, but news of a third death raises concerns the transgender community is ignoring those warnings and taking risks anyway.

Jett said he expects even more deaths.

"The community sentiment is they've been doing this a long time, and they're going to do whatever it takes to make themselves beautiful," Jett said. "It's a lifestyle, and they want to continue that lifestyle."

Few are cooperating with the investigation, which has hampered police's efforts.

"People are not volunteering a lot of information to us or the doctors – a lot of the people won't even talk to us," Jett said. "Our people are doing everything they can to get out there and develop witnesses."

In one of the other cases, police has arrested a person they suspect injected silicone into a person who later died.

Guadalupe Camarena, 32, who lives as a woman, was charged Aug. 8 with aggravated assault in the death of Delfino Gonzalez, 22. Police Camarena injected silicone into Gonzalez, who died days later from asphyxiation after the substance entered his blood stream.

Investigators have recovered a liquid they believe Camarena had bought and have sent a sample to Rice University. Analysts there will determine if it matches the substance found in Gonzalez's body, said Houston Police Department Sgt. Doug Osterberg.

Important Dates!

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend as many of these events as possible.

September 4, 2003 (Thursday) – Regular monthly meeting of Illinois Gender Advocates, at the New Spirit Metropolitan Community Church, 542 S. Scoville Ave. in Oak Park, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

September 12, 2003 (Friday) – Illinois Gender Advocates Television, part of the LGBT consortium on Hotline 21, Channel 21 Cable Access TV, Chicago, starting at 6:30 p.m. Guest to be announced.

October 2, 2003 (Thursday) – Regular monthly meeting of Illinois Gender Advocates, at the New Spirit Metropolitan Community Church, 542 S. Scoville Ave. in Oak Park, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair to serve during the following year will be made at this meeting.

October 10, 2003 (Friday) – Illinois Gender Advocates Television, part of the LGBT consortium on Hotline 21, Channel 21 Cable Access TV, Chicago, starting at 6:30 p.m. Guest to be announced.

November 7, 2003 (Friday) – Illinois Gender Advocates Television, part of the LGBT consortium on Hotline 21, Channel 21 Cable Access TV, Chicago, starting at 6:30 p.m. Guest to be announced.

HRC Mourns the Murders of Two Transgender Women and Brutal Attack of Another Transgender Woman in Nation's Capital

Attacks Come One Year After the Unsolved Murders of Transgender Washingtonians Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis

From the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

WASHINGTON, DC (August 21, 2003) – The Human Rights Campaign mourns the brutal murders of two transgender women and the brutal attack of another transgender woman this week in the nation's capital. The attacks come one year after the unsolved murders of Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis, transgender teens who were brutally gunned down Aug. 12, 2002, in Southeast Washington.

“On behalf of HRC, I would like to extend our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of the transgender individuals lost in these senseless acts of violence,” said Elizabeth Birch, HRC's executive director. “No person should live in fear of being attacked just because of who they are. These hate crimes are vicious reminders of the work left to be done in ensuring the safety of every member of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.”

An unnamed male-to-female transsexual was found beaten and shot early this morning in a field in Southeast Washington. The cause of death is unknown at press time. In Northwest Washington, police found another transgender woman shot and in serious condition on Wednesday evening.

Police are also investigating the Aug. 16 murder of Elvys “Bella Evangelista” Perez, a popular drag performer, as a hate/bias-motivated crime. Antoine D. Jacobs, 22, was arrested for the killing in Northwest Washington, which police believe occurred after Jacobs paid Perez to have sex and later shot Perez to death upon learning she was biologically male.

According to a news release issued by the Metropolitan Police Department's Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU), police “are working to keep the community informed regarding the recent violence.” There is also increased police visibility in areas “known to be frequented by members of the transgender community.”

“The district's GLBT liaison unit is to be commended for its quick response to these brutal attacks and its willingness to keep members of the community informed of its progress,” added Birch. “As a community, we are fortunate to have the resources of such a responsive unit. However, this also underscores the need for Congress to act quickly to pass comprehensive federal hate crimes legislation.”

Currently seven states – California, Hawaii, New Mexico, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Vermont – and the District of Columbia have hate crimes laws that include both sexual orientation and gender identity. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (S. 966), a measure pending in the Senate, would add real or perceived sexual orientation and gender to the categories currently covered in federal hate crimes law.

For information on hate crimes, visit www.hrc.org/issues/hate_crimes. For information on the Washington attacks and the investigation, visit the GLLU website at: www.gaydc.net/gllu/.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Illinois Gender Advocates Announces

The logo for TYRA (Trans Youth Resource and Advocacy) features the letters 'TYRA' in a stylized, grey, serif font. The 'Y' and 'R' are connected at the top, and the 'A' has a decorative flourish on its right side.

Trans Youth Resource and Advocacy Youth Drop-In Center

**Every Wednesday from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.
At Holy Covenant UMC (the Mural Church)
925 W. Diversey, Chicago
Near the Diversey Brown Line L Stop**

**For Transgender Youth Ages 14-20
Call the Youth Hotline, 312-217-1120
for more information**

TYRA drop-in center is a safe and confidential place for young transgender people between the ages of 14 to 20 to come and meet other youth who also identify as transgender, or are questioning their gender identity.

Transgender Community Alarmed by D.C. Shootings

By David A. Fahrenthold and Simone Wiechselbaum, Washington Post Staff Writers (Staff writers Petula Dvorak and Jose Antonio Vargas and staff researcher Bobby Pratt contributed to this report.)

August 22, 2003 – Attacks during the past week against men who live as women, including two shootings Wednesday night and yesterday morning, have left two dead in the District and alarmed activists of the transgender community.

D.C. police said the two latest shootings, which occurred five miles apart, did not appear to be connected. They also said there was no link to the fatal shooting of a transgender person Saturday, a case that has resulted in an arrest.

Activists in the transgender community, who have held several vigils in the past week, said Washington has emerged as one of the most dangerous places in the country for men who live as women. There have been five killings since last summer, most unsolved, police said.

“Our lives are being taken by the simple fact that we are who we are,” said Ruby Bracamonte, who spoke at a news conference called yesterday to discuss the attacks. “My message is this: We are all human beings. Whatever you do, don’t forget that.”

Detectives are looking for similarities between the two cases, including examining ballistics evidence and trying to determine whether the attacks were connected to nearby “strolls,” areas where transgender prostitutes work.

The summer also has been marked by a series of gang wars and an increasing homicide rate in the city. Yesterday, Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey declared that the city was in a crisis and suspended rules on officers’ schedules and sick leave to give commanders more flexibility.

In the city’s transgender community, this month’s cycle of vigils and anguished news conferences began with the one-year anniversary of the slaying of two transgender teenagers in Southeast Washington. Deon “Ukea” Davis and Wilber “Stephanie” Thomas were each shot more than 10 times as they sat in a car, a double homicide that remains unsolved.

Then, Saturday morning, Elvys Augusto Perez, a well-known drag performer who went by the name “Bella Evangelista,” was shot and killed on Allison Street NW. Police arrested a 22-year-old man and said he had paid Perez for oral sex and then returned in anger after he learned that Perez was a man. With the arrest, police classified the shooting a hate crime.

A 1999 survey found about 4,000 transgender people in the District, three-fourth of whom were men living as women.

Many in that community feel victimized by hate crimes, said Jessica Xavier, a District activist who did the study and works as a volunteer coordinator for the Whitman-Walker Clinic. Xavier said that 26 percent of transgender people surveyed said they had been intimidated and that 17 percent said they had been assaulted with a weapon.

“There’s a war against transgendered women going on in this country,” Xavier said. “It’s a pandemic of violence.”

Gwen Smith, a San Francisco activist who runs a Web site, <http://www.rememberingourdead.org/>, said at least 283 transgender people have been killed worldwide since the 1970s. Smith said a disproportionate number of the killings had occurred in the District.

Last year, Smith said she counted 14 killings in the United States, including the two teenagers who were shot to death in Southeast in August. This year, she said, there had been 11 such homicides, including two in the District: Perez and Kevin “Mimi” Young, stabbed to death in Northeast Washington in April. With the shooting death yesterday of Aaryn Marshall, 25, in Southeast, the District now accounts for one-fourth of the national death toll this year, according to Smith’s data, which are based on media reports.

Marshall, who friends said went by the name “Emonie Kiera Spaulding,” was from Springfield, Mass., and Henderson, N.C., and had lived in the Washington area for about two years. An uncle, John Marshall, said that he remembered Marshall as a child who loved music and sang in the church choir but that they had not seen each other in two years.

Marshall was identified at the scene by friends, police said. John Marshall, called to the D.C. medical examiner’s office to make a formal identification, said he was unable to do so from the photo that he was shown by authorities.

“I couldn’t make it work. I looked at the picture for 15 minutes at least,” John Marshall said. “And I just couldn’t make it work.”

Friends said Marshall was part of a group of gay and transgender friends who frequented an apartment on Mellon Street SE and a bar, the Players Lounge, on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE.

Marshall was last seen alive by friends about 1:15 a.m., leaving the apartment for an all-night convenience store. About 2 a.m., police received a report of gunshots in the area of Second Street and Malcolm X Avenue SE, near a wooded area that residents said draws drug users and prostitutes.

Officers found Marshall lying nude in a grassy area about seven feet off the street. Marshall had been shot in the chest and left arm and had other injuries indicating a fight, police said. Marshall was declared dead at the scene. Police sources said no clothes and no shell casings were found near

Marshall's body. They speculated that the victim was driven to the spot in a car and then shot.

Friends said that Marshall was always upfront about being a man and that they didn't believe that the killer could have been a sexual partner who felt deceived. They said the killing left them puzzled and fearful. "People are being lucked off left and right, just because of their sexuality," said a 20-year-old who gave the name Diamon Vowels. "Something is up."

Wednesday's shooting occurred about 9:50 p.m. in the 300 block of I Street NW, in an industrial and mainly deserted wedge of land between New York and Massachusetts Avenues.

Responding to the sound of gunfire, police found a 24-year-old D.C. resident with a gunshot wound to the torso. The victim was not fully conscious and said nothing to officers on the scene, police said.

The site is near the center of transgender prostitution in Washington, Fifth and K Streets NW, but police said they were unsure whether the shooting was connected to the sex trade. Yesterday, the victim, whose name was not released, was still in critical condition, a police spokesman said.

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: _____

Have you ever been a victim of a hate crime or discriminated against because of your gender identity, expression, or image? Yes / No (circle one)

If yes, may we document your case for our report? Yes / No (circle one)

Please mail, along with your check or money order, to:
Illinois Gender Advocates, 47 W. Division St., #391, Chicago, IL 60610