

The HERLAND VOICE

March, 1999

HATE CRIMES BILL

ADVANCES

On February 17, the Judiciary Committee of the Oklahoma State House of Representatives voted 5 to 3 to recommend passage of HB1211. The Hate Crimes bill introduced by Representative Don Ross of Tulsa amends Oklahoma's current hate crimes statute to include crimes committed against a person because of her/his sexual orientation. It also would increase the penalties for committing a hate crime, lengthening the jail term by 25 percent and boosting the fine by 25 percent. HB1211 is currently awaiting action by the full House of Representatives which must pass the measure by March 11 and send it to the Senate in order for it to remain alive for the current session.

Existing state law decrees that anyone convicted of committing a hate crime is guilty of a misdemeanor for the first offense; the penalty is a \$1,000 fine and/or confinement in the county jail for up to a year. A second or subsequent offense is considered a felony, which can be punished with a prison sentence of up to 10 years and/or a fine of up to \$10,000. The current Oklahoma hate crimes laws addresses crimes committed against a person because of her/his race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, or disability.

Continued on page 2

EQUALITY BEGINS AT HOME

Oklahomans will join with thousands of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in Equality Begins at Home, an unprecedented national week of action for equality. Human rights supporters from across the state will rally March 27 on the Capitol steps in Oklahoma City calling for more effective state leadership against discrimination. The rally is sponsored locally Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus and a number of other supporting organizations including Herland.

Equality Begins at Home, slated for the week of March 21--27, is a major initiative to push state lawmakers to support a platform of equality. Planning for these by local activists is well under way. From Montana to Maine, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people will come out and speak up in simultaneous events nationwide, most of which will take place at state capitols. These actions will, among other things, build support for laws that counter hate violence, ban employment discrimination, provide for safe schools for all students, ensure the right to adopt and become foster parents, and address health issues including HIV/AIDS.

"The timing of the Oklahoma City rally couldn't be better," according to Paul Thompson, the male co-chair of OGLPC. Referring to HB1211, Thompson said, "The proposed legislation would include protections for gays and lesbians and we will know by the time this rally takes place if the House passes it. If it does, this will be a great celebration. If it doesn't, we'll be demanding to know why."

Equality Begins at Home is coordinated by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations. As part of its coordinating efforts, the Task Force provided Federation member groups \$5,000 each to support their Equality Begins at Home organizing efforts and hired a national coordinator for the event. Dozens of national organizations have signed on in support of this week of action.

"Equality Begins at Home is not an end point but a beginning point. We are going to make our statewide organizations stronger, mobilize more people, register more voters, and demand greater accountability from our state legislators and policy makers," stated Kerry Lobel, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director. "It is this organizing at the state level that will ultimately counter the hostility and gridlock we have come to know from our nation's capital," she added.

Never before in the history of the gay rights movement has there been a coordinated political campaign of actions in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Equality Begins at Home represents a new phase of the movement - a focus on state organizing and legislatures. *(continued on page 2)*

WALK & TEA

Join us at Herland
for a 30 minute walk.
Sunday, March 14 at 2 p.m.

• tea, coffee and refreshments

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EQUALITY BEGINS AT HOME

(continued from page 1)

The vast majority of debates and decisions about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender equality occur in state legislatures. Equality Begins at Home will bolster the infrastructure of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender movement within the states - where the heart of the struggle for equality lies - and lead to greater success in the overall struggle for equality.

"The battleground for equality has moved to the states, and so have we," said Paula Ettlbrick, Equality Begins at Home national coordinator. "We are throwing down the gauntlet and demanding that state officials resist the right wing's efforts to deny us our basic rights as citizens," Ettlbrick added.

Equality Begins at Home is part of a campaign to counter the growing muscle of the right wing and its anti-gay attacks. In the last few years, the right has passed dozens of anti-gay laws in dozens of states. In addition, 1998 was one of the most vicious years in recent memory. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott likened homosexuality to kleptomania and sex addiction. Congress introduced a number of mean-spirited anti-gay measures. Right-wing groups launched a major advertising campaign attacking gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, and voters approved anti-gay ballot measures in Alaska; Hawaii; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Fort Collins, Colorado; and Ogunquit, Maine.

"Our demands are simple and in line with basic American values: the right to be safe, to have a family, to hold a job, and to participate fully as citizens. It's exactly what every American wants and deserves," said Gina Reiss, co-chair of the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations and executive director of New Jersey Lesbian and Gay Coalition. □

Hate Crimes Bill *Continued from page 1*

Rep. Ross said his decision to bring the legislation was made after 21-year-old Matthew Shepard was tied to a post and pistol whipped to death in Wyoming last year. Testifying before the Judiciary Committee, Ross said he overcame his own homophobia to author the bill. Prior to the death of Matthew Shepard, he never saw a need. Today, he said, his understanding is different.

In presenting his final argument for passage before the House Judiciary Committee, Ross read a letter he wrote to Shepard to explain why he was sponsoring HB 1211.

"...Matthew, you never wronged anybody. Some bigots thought their anti-gay proclivity would be advanced — their hatred could be legitimized. I do not understand all of the whys of the gay lifestyle. Quite frankly, I don't think much about it either way.

But I do know there is nobody that deserved the final judgment you received because a lawless element of our society would suspend decency in an evil attempt to set a political, religious, moral or lifestyle standard. They thought you were dangerous because you were different.

Matthew, in your name today I offer an assault against hate. That we will not kill any mother's child because we differ with the way they choose to live their life and face their God. I choose not to allow your death without a

condemnation. I choose not to conform with such hideous vermin. Any violence because of another's sexual orientation cannot reduce a good nation to barbarism. ... "

Ross concedes that including sexual orientation in hate crime legislation is controversial, and vows that he will not force a vote in the House of Representatives unless he gets what he calls "demonstrated, bipartisan support." He has said that he will bring the measure up for consideration if 40 representatives will pledge their support.

"I don't want this issue to be used by one side or the other for political gain," Ross said. "The focus should be on working together to do what's best for all Oklahomans. I believe this bill does that, but if the support isn't there, I won't go forward."

A broad coalition of religious and civic organizations are working for passage of the bill. Among the supporters are the Tulsa Metropolitan Council of Churches, the Progressive Alliance, the Interfaith Alliance of OKC, PFLAG, Women's Integrated Network, Cimarron Alliance, the Peace House, Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, the NAACP, the ACLU of Oklahoma and the Say No Hate Coalitions of Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

Bill Rogers, a spokesperson for the Cimarron Alliance Foundation, urges Oklahomans to call their representatives and encourage support of HB1211. "Our representatives will listen but they must here from us," he said.

All state representatives can be reached through the capitol switchboard at (405)521-2711. □

FAMILY REUNION '99

Family Reunion '99 is the first statewide conference sponsored by the newly formed Oklahoma Lambda Intercollegiate Coalition (OLIC). The conference, scheduled for Saturday, March 27 will consist of three major components. First a day-long conference on gay issues will be held at UCO in Edmond. Secondly, conference participants will participate in the Equality Begins at Home rally at the Oklahoma State Capitol and finally a semiformal dance, the "Pride Prom" will close out the day.

The conference will feature guest speakers Peggy Johnson and Paul Barby. Scheduled workshops include: "Spirituality of a Gay Lifestyle," "Eroticizing Safer Sex," "Intercultural Study of Homosexuality," and "Gays in Native American Culture." PFLAG will host a special workshop for parents "Being a Parent of a Gay Child" and a special workshop for high school students will discuss "Starting and Maintaining a Gay-Straight Alliance."

Registration is open to students as well as other interested individuals. Registration for the conference is \$10. More information is available on the GLBA web site -- www.ou.edu/student/glba -- or by contacting OLIC c/o GLBA University of Oklahoma, 633 Elm St. 306 Ellison Hall, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-3115.

OLIC is an umbrella organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight student alliances from colleges in Oklahoma. □

OKLAHOMA HATE CRIME LAWS

Congress defines a hate crime as "a crime in which the defendant intentionally selects a victim, or in the case of a property crime, the property that is the object of the crime, because of the actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person." *Section 280003(a) of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (28 U.S.C. 994 note).*

Hate crimes typically draw harsher penalties from judges and are considered felonies after the second offense. Twenty-one states currently include sexual orientation in their hate laws, but all attempts at including sexual orientation among Oklahoma's categories have, to date, been shot down by state legislators. The State of Oklahoma Hate Crime statutes cover incidences of violence directed against individuals because of their race, religion or ethnicity and mental or physical disability. HB 1211, currently in the Oklahoma House, would amend that statute to include sexual orientation as a protected class; and would increase the charge in some cases from a misdemeanor to a felony. Bill author Don Ross, (D), Tulsa, has promised not to allow removal of the sexual orientation clause in order to facilitate passage of the rest of the bill. An amendment to the bill which some would like to see would add the language "the actual or perceived" before the listing of protected classes, as the Federal statute does.

The Oklahoma City City Council enacted its hate crimes ordinance in March 1988 after anti-Semitic graffiti was painted on local Jewish temples and a cross was burned at a black church

on the birthday of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. That ordinance, which passed with an 8 - 0 vote, included sexual orientation as a protected class.

Unfortunately, in 1989 the Supreme Court found a similar ordinance in St. Paul, Minnesota unconstitutional, and the Oklahoma City City Attorney's office predicted the ruling could have an impact on Oklahoma City, saying, "The ordinance will become 'more or less dormant' now, and city police and the Prosecution Division of the City Attorney's office will be notified that the law appears to be unenforceable."

In 1993 the Oklahoma City Human Rights commission attempted to bring a compromise hate crimes ordinance to the Council, which voted 6 - 3 not to consider it.

In 1995 Councilman Mark Schwartz, who headed the council's judiciary committee, brought another compromise ordinance to the Council. It was clear at the time that no ordinance expressly naming sexual orientation as a protected class would pass the council, and the revised ordinance did not name protected classes. It called for mandatory minimum penalties to be leveled against a person if it was proved a certain type of crime was committed against someone and proved the crime was motivated by discrimination. Crimes cited by the ordinance proposal were vandalism, assault, and assault and battery. Mandatory minimum punishments of fines and jail time were suggested for each.

There was tremendous organizing on the part of those both pro and anti human rights and hate crimes statutes, and despite an eloquent appeal for passage by Councilwoman Willa Johnson, both measures failed 6 - 3 and the Human Rights Commission was disbanded.

As one victim of gaybashing in Tulsa said recently, "Changes need to be made (in the laws). You never demean yourself by offering protection for someone else." □



RECENT BOOKS ON LEGAL, LEGISLATIVE AND CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES

Freedom To Differ: The Shaping of the Gay and Lesbian Struggle for Civil Rights, by Diane Helene Miller (New York University Press)

Legal affairs: Essential Advice for Same Sex Couples by Frederick Hertz (Henry Holt)

Nation of Rights: National Cultures, Sexual Identity Politics, and the Discourse of Rights. Carl Franklin Stychin (Temple University Press)

Strangers to the Law: Lay People on Trial. Lisa Keen and Suzanne B. Goldberg. (University of Michigan Press). The book is about Amendment 2 trial in Colorado, both authors were involved in the trial, one as a journalist and the other as a lawyer.

Lasagna DINNER

March 19 • 7 p.m.

Church of the Open Arms

1212 N. Hudson, Oklahoma City, OK

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The Voice is offered as an open forum for community discourse. Articles reflect the opinions of the author and not necessarily those of Herland Sister Resources. Unsolicited articles and letters to the editor are welcomed and must be signed by the writer with full name and address. Upon request, letters or articles may be printed under a pseudonym or anonymously.

Subscriptions to The Voice are free upon request although a donation is requested to meet publication and distribution costs.



TEST YOUR WOMEN'S HISTORY I.Q.

1. Which mother led a 125-mile march of child workers all the way from the mills of Pennsylvania to President Theodore Roosevelt's vacation home on Long Island?

2. Before the 1960s, farm workers in the U.S. were not paid even the minimum wage, and had no influential representatives to fight for their rights. What part did Dolores Huerta play in changing this situation?

3. The line of beauty products she created for African-American people made her the first Black woman millionaire in the United States. Who was she, and when did she do this?

4. She took her job as "First Lady" seriously, traveling the country and the world to gather information about the problems and concerns of workers, children, minorities, and the poor. She wrote a daily newspaper column and made frequent radio broadcasts. Who was this active wife of a president?

5. When the Mexican Revolution of 1910 reached the Texas border, she and her friends organized La Cruz Blanca, The White Cross, to take care of the wounded. They nursed people from both sides of the fighting. She was also known as a journalist and community activist. Who was she and where did she live?

6. Who was the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian Islands, deposed when American business and military interests wanted to annex Hawaii to the U.S.?

7. Daughter and granddaughter of Paiute Indian chiefs from Nevada, she lobbied Congress, wrote extensively, and traveled across country during the late 1800s lecturing on the hardships brought upon Native Americans by the U.S. Government. Her name?

8. Her 1939 Easter Sunday concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial drew a crowd of 75,000. Who was she, and why was she singing there?

9. Who printed the first copy of the Declaration of Independence that included the signers' names?

10. She is regarded as the greatest ballerina born in America. Her father was the Chief of the Osage Indians. Can you name her?

11. Why is Rachel Carson (1907-1964) considered the mother of the environmental movement?

CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY!

The Women's Studies will present a series of documentaries and movies in honor of International women's day and Women's History Month.

March 8th -- *Warrior Marks*

March 23rd -- *Dream Worlds II*

March 30th -- *The Beauty Trip*

All movies will be shown at 7 PM. in room 222 E. Couch Center (corner of 4th and Asp) on the University of Oklahoma campus. For more information contact Dr. Julia Ehrhardt 325-5258, juliac@ou.edu □

ORGANIZATIONS JOINTLY OPPOSE DEATH PENALTY

February 9, 1999 — Today 11 major organizations representing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities announced their joint opposition to the death penalty.

The issue came to the forefront in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities with the upcoming trial of those accused of beating Matthew Sheppard to death in Wyoming. The two men, Aaron James McKinney and Russell Arthur Henderson, both 21, were arrested and accused of his murder. On December 28, Prosecutor Cal Rerucha filed notices of intent to seek the death penalty against both men.

Statements issued by the organizations cited the inequality present in the use and criticized the death penalty as an violation of basic human rights and an ineffective deterrent to crime. "The death penalty instead stands as a most extreme example of the race and class bias which pervades much of our society," commented Kate Kendall, Executive Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Julie Dorf, Executive Director of the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission said: "Human rights are not a euphemism for gay rights. We cannot pick and choose human rights."

Other organizations participating in announcement were Gay Men of African Descent, LLEGO - National Latina/o LGBT Organization, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, the Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center of New York, ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, the Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, the New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. □

QUIZ ANSWERS: (1) The feisty labor organizer, Mary Harris Jones (1830-1930), did just that in 1903. Called "Mother" Jones by everyone, her goal for the march was to bring the evils of child labor to the attention of the president and the national press. (2) Dolores Huerta (b. 1920), a long-time Chicana labor activist, co-founded the United Farm Workers union in 1962. She served for over two decades as the union's vice-president and chief lobbyist, savvy labor contract negotiator, and nationwide speaker. (3) In 1905 Madam C.J. Walker (1867-1919) began developing an effective hair lotion, and then a special comb to straighten curly hair. She eventually employed 3,000 people, mostly Black women, to work in her factories and sell her line of products. (4) Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was America's First Lady for 12 years. Later, she served as U.S. delegate to the United Nations where she was instrumental in securing passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (5) Jovita Idar (1885-1946) lived in Laredo, Texas. As a journalist, she wrote articles for Spanish-language newspapers, like *El Progreso* and *El Heraldo Cristiano*, which argued for Mexican Americans' equal rights. (6) Queen Liliuokalani (1838-1917). A revolution, encouraged and actively assisted by American interests backed by a U.S. Navy gunboat, established a provisional government in 1893. Among her lasting legacies: she composed over 200 songs, including "Aloha Oe." (7) Sarah Winnemucca (1844-1891), later named a chief in her own right. Her autobiography, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims*, was one of the first books by a Native American. (8) Marian Anderson (b. 1902), who had earlier been barred from the singing in the Washington's Constitution Hall because of she was Black. Her open-air concert was a triumph over bigotry for this international star. (9) Mary Katherine Goddard (1736-1816), newspaper publisher, had such a strong reputation in the colonies that when Congress fled to Baltimore in 1776 they trusted her with the revolutionary task of printing their treasonous document. (10) Maria Tallchief (b. 1925), gained international stardom as prima ballerina of the New York City Ballet in a career that spanned 23 years. In 1980, she and her sister, Marjorie, founded the Chicago City Ballet. (11) Rachel Carson (1907-1964), a writer and biologist, touched off an international controversy about the environmental effects of pesticides with her 1962 book, *The Silent Spring*. © 1997-1999 National Women's History Project.

For more information and ways to celebrate women's history check out the National Women's History Project at www.nwhp.org.



MARCH 21-27, 1999
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begins
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IN REVIEW

by Jill Garner

There are a few shows this month I'd like to spread the word about.

First let me say that I had the great fortune to hear Terri Hendrix play at the Blue Door last month. I hadn't ever heard her but I liked what I had read about her, and she lived up to every good thing that was written. Not only that, but one of the highlights of my evening was seeing Lloyd Maines walk up on stage with her to play guitar. If you don't know who Lloyd Maines is, pick up a few CDs of Texas artists sometime, look at the producer's name, and it's likely to be his. He's also a very talented steel guitar player in high demand, and the father of Natalie Maines, lead singer of the Dixie Chicks. It was great getting to hear him play, and see someone whose name I've seen several hundred times. Terri's music is a mixture of pop, country swing, jazz influences, etc. Got it? It's hard to put a label on her but her show was a lot of fun and she made a roomful of fans that night. In one article I read about her, they called her the "new media darling of Texas" so it sounds like she's getting some recognition, at least in Texas. Her new CD called *Wilory Farm* is very good and I recommend it.

The Kennedy's will be performing March 12th. Both Pete and Maura Kennedy played in Nanci Griffith's Blue Moon Orchestra before striking out on their own. I've seen them a couple of times now and they put on a really good show. For starters, Pete Kennedy is a wizard on the acoustic guitar. He has at least one CD of his guitar playing, which he'll probably be selling at the show. He's so fun to watch and listen to. Maura is the voice of the group, although Pete provides wonderful harmonies. They've written a lot of great songs together and I can guarantee you this is a show worth seeing. This will be the third time they've brought me back. If I can pass up one of my favorite singers in Dallas that night, Lynn Miles, they've got to be good.

March 14th brings Ann Hills and Michael Smith to the Blue Door. I've seen Ann Hills there before and she's so good. She has one of the prettiest voices and has several CDs to her credit. I highly recommend her. And while I can't speak for Michael Smith, since I've never heard him, I know he'll be great because I've honestly never heard anyone at the Blue Door who wasn't.

Stacey Earle will be back in town March 27th at the Blue Door. If you missed my review of her last month, believe me you'll want to go hear her. She and her husband put on a great show and it's killing me that I'm going to be out of town for this one. I'd absolutely love to see her again. Please, please go hear her and support her so she can keep making

music. She has so much talent and it must run in the family because she's the sister of Steve Earle. I highly recommend this show!

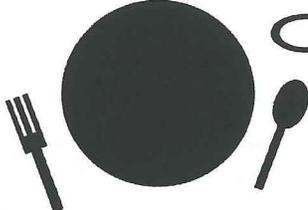
March 28th, Carol Elliot and Buddy Mondlock will be performing at the Blue Door. I've never heard either one, but I listened to both of them a little bit the other night on the Internet and this sounds like yet another great show. I planned my vacation badly this year since I'll miss this one too. Who knew there'd be such wonderful concerts the week I'll be gone? Carol Elliot describes herself as a "debutante gone bad". She's been involved in the country music business for awhile, but I'm not sure that's how I'd categorize her music, what little I've heard. I think this will be a great show, but really, what show in a room the size of your living room, with some of the most talented artists in the business, isn't a great show?

Mark your calendars for April 9th because Celeste Krenz will be in town, also at the Blue Door. This is one very talented woman and I can't wait for this show. I've listened to several of her songs so far on the Internet and I'm floored. She's really, really good, and one description I saw of her describes her voice as "sterling silver on velvet." I'd agree. This one is destined to be great. Hope to see you there! □

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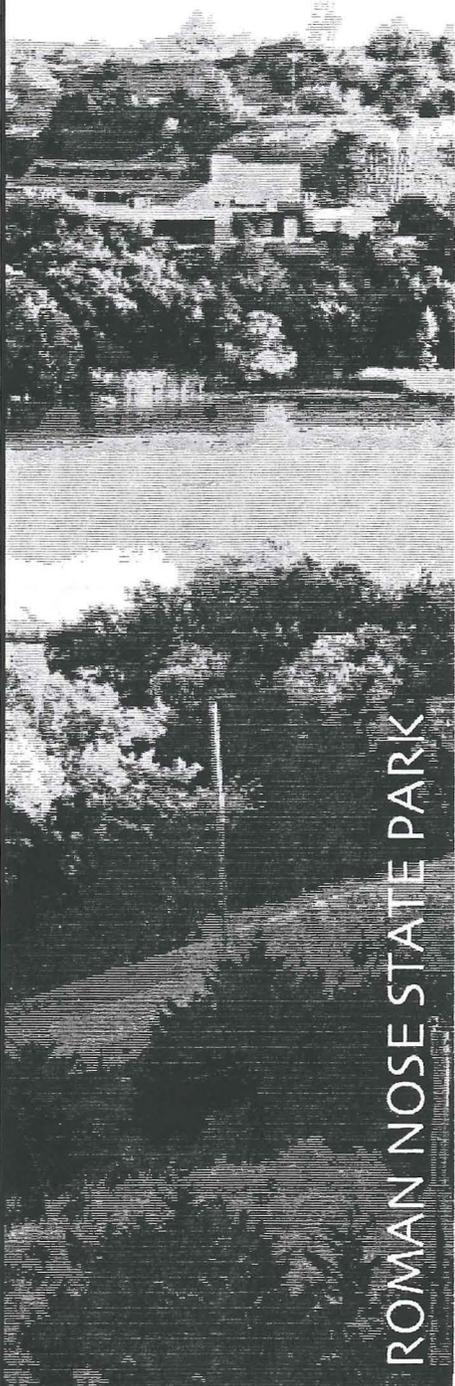
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REGISTRATION FORM

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