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community
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Herland Voice

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Woman convicted after stillbirth released

By Lynn Paltrow, JD

Executive Director, National Advocates for Pregnant Women

On November 19, 2008, after serving only one year from the date of sentencing, Theresa Lee Hernandez was released from prison.

Ms. Hernandez was arrested in 2004 and charged with first-degree murder (a crime with a potential penalty of 25 years-to-life imprisonment) and second-degree murder for having suffered a stillbirth. The state of Oklahoma claimed -- without any scientific basis -- that the stillbirth was caused by her methamphetamine use.

In 2007, as her case approached trial, national and state-based organizations, advocates and experts organized, educated and spoke out against the prosecution. These efforts were instrumental in helping Ms. Hernandez avoid a life sentence and in enabling her counsel, Robin Shellow and Jim Rowan, to negotiate a plea bargain. That plea, entered last November, resulted in a sentence of 15 years, to be revisited after Ms. Hernandez served one year in prison.

As the Tulsa World reported: "Theresa Lee Hernandez, 31, appeared before Judge Virgil Black for a sentencing modification hearing. At the request of prosecutors, Black agreed to "suspend the remainder of her sentence and ordered her released from custody." Ms. Hernandez will go to a private treatment program for 90 days and will be on probation for 10 years.

Just a week before Ms. Hernandez's November 19 release, the second of two public forums regarding pregnancy, parenting and drug use was held. This forum, held at the Integris Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City, was co-sponsored by the local chapters of the National Association of Social Workers and of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the YWCA Oklahoma

(continued next page)

UPCOMING EVENTS

**New Year's Day
Potluck at Herland
1-4 pm
Join in our tradition!**

**Sat., Jan. 3, 10, 17,
& 24**

Herland Bookstore Open
1-5 pm

**Sat., January 10th
Herland Supper Club
& Movie
Italiano's 4801 N Lincoln**

**Sat., January 31st
Herland Planning Retreat
(Bookstore Closed)**

**Save the Dates!
Sat., February 14th
Herland's Red & White
Party**

**May 15-17 Herland
Spring Retreat**

(continued from previous page)

City, and Oklahoma State University's Gender and Women's Studies program. The panel discussion included local experts, doctors Eli Reshef and Dana Stone, and continued a conversation that drew upon evidence-based research concerning pregnancy, parenting and drug use. This conversation had begun at an Oklahoma forum one year earlier, in anticipation of Ms. Hernandez's sentencing.

Ms. Hernandez' release was not typical. Even in cases where a conviction is completely overturned, prisoners are almost always returned to prison for processing - something that can take weeks or even months - before they are finally released. In Ms. Hernandez' case, the judge ordered that her handcuffs be removed right in the courtroom and that she be allowed to leave straight from the courthouse to her awaiting family and friends.

The Channel 9 news story, "Freed from Prison," began by noting that "The case created a firestorm with doctors and women's advocates who rallied to the woman's side."

Herland Supper Club and a Movie, Too!

Join the Herland Supper Club on Saturday, January 10, at 5:30 pm for dinner and a movie. We will have the theater room at Italiano's Pasta and Pizza, 4801 N. Lincoln Blvd, all to ourselves. Their menu includes mouth-watering dishes like baked ziti and meatball supremo, lighter fare like soups and salads, and a pizza and pasta bar. And Italiano's has a full selection of wines and beers.

We will be eating in their theater room and will watch a true classic—*Desert Hearts*—while we eat. Filmed in 1985, this was one of the first lesbian love stories to hit the big



screens. Set in 1950s Reno, Nevada, *Desert Hearts* tells the story of a 35 year old professor that comes to town to file for divorce and falls for a free-spirited 25 year old casino worker. Join us as we revisit this timeless classic.

more events!!

Friday, January 2 Miss Brown to You Galileo Bar & Grill 3009 Paseo 9 to midnight \$5

Saturday, January 3 Louise & Mary Full Circle Bookstore 50 Penn Place 7-9 pm no cover

Tuesday January 6 PFLAG-OKC Church of the Open Arms 7 pm

Thursday January 8 PFLAG-Norman St Stephens 7 pm

Friday, January 9 Miss Brown To You UCO Jazz Lab 100 E 5th St in Edmond 8 to 11 pm \$7

Monday January 12 OGLPC Monthly Meeting 1236 NW 36 7 pm

Saturday January 17 Miss Brown To You Gypsy Cafe Night at First Unitarian Church OKC 7 - 10 pm \$5, \$10, or \$50 at the door

Monday January 19 OKC PRIDE General Meeting Neighborhood Alliance 1236 NW 36 7pm

Sunday January 26 Mary Reynolds Emily Kaitz Louise Goldberg at The Performing Arts Studio 200 S Jones Ave in Norman 7 pm \$10 (at the door or online)

Female Majority to Control N.H. Senate

By Jane Costello - *WomenseNews* correspondent

New Hampshire's state Senate will carve history for the Granite State in January when the legislative body convenes with women in 13 of the 24 seats forming the country's first female majority.

Women will also factor in key positions of leadership: the Senate is presided over by its president, Sylvia Larson, and president pro-tem, Maggie Hassan, while Martha Fuller Clark continues her role as majority whip.

"We are setting a great example for young women: that they can get involved and run for office," says Sharon Carson, a newly elected Republican senator who formerly served as state representative from Londonderry and works as an adjunct professor at Nashua Community College.

Elizabeth Ossoff, research coordinator for the Center for the Study of American Democracy and Citizenship at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, says the gender milestone has been coming closer for years. After the last election in 2006, women comprised 30.4 percent of the combined Senate and House. When the new session convenes in January, that number will increase to 37.7 percent.

Public reaction in New Hampshire has been low-key and matter of fact. News articles have noted the development but no media hoopla has been evident and, when the new session starts, some legislators have said it will be business as usual.

"It wasn't like it was intentional," says Donna Sytek, former speaker of the state House and former chair of the New Hampshire Republican Party. "Women have gradually risen to the top here because they are capable and they do their homework."

Outside the state, those who track the progress of women in elected positions are elated, although also not surprised by New Hampshire's new Senate majority.

"I think it's very exciting," says Katie Ziegler, a policy specialist for the Denver-based National Conference of State Legislatures. "But it's not surprising; New Hampshire has consistently ranked high in terms of the percentage of women in its Legislature. But they are the only state to have two female officers (Larson and Hassan). That's impressive."

Two major explanations for women's newfound majority are the state's high number of legislators and their low--practically nonexistent--pay.

New Hampshire's Legislature has 424 members: 400 in the House and 24 in the Senate, making it the largest legislature

in the United States and the fourth-largest English-speaking governing body in the world.

The New Hampshire General Court--as the state Legislature has called itself since its inception in 1784--is in session for six months, between January and June, and elected officials are paid only \$100 per year, plus gas mileage, to serve.

Until November, women comprised one-third of the state Senate in neighboring Vermont, making it the current leader. It will lose that title to New Hampshire in January, although Vermont will continue to outrank New Hampshire--just barely--in terms of the overall percentage of women serving in the Legislature: Vermont will have 37.8 percent while New Hampshire's figure will stand at 37.7 percent. The Colorado Legislature will remain 38 percent female, the highest in the country, but it does not have a female majority in either the House or the Senate.

The Voice is published monthly by Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 NW 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112. 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. Herland reserves the right to edit or not publish any article. Subscriptions to The Voice are free upon request although a donation is requested to meet publication and distribution costs.

The National Conference on LGBT Equality



Creating Change

Creating Change Conference 2009
January 28-February 1

Just one week after the inauguration of a new administration, thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists will converge in Denver for the 21st National Conference on LGBT Equality: Creating Change, Jan. 28--Feb. 1. Activists will strategize on how to advance LGBT equality in this new political climate, share lessons from the 2008 election, and acquire the skills needed to build the political power of the LGBT community in 2009 and beyond.

Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey will present the annual State of the Movement address at the conference, in which she will lay out a vision and plan for the year ahead in the struggle for LGBT equality. Says Carey: "We are clearly entering a new time and there are tremendous opportunities to influence social change."

Critical legislative issues specifically affecting the LGBT community include passing a strengthened and expanded federal hate crimes law, passage of an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act and repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Other broader areas of focus will include the need for affordable housing, access to quality/affordable health care, and racial and economic justice-related issues.

The passage of Proposition 8 in California has galvanized community activists across the country. Some of those activists will be featured at Creating Change on panels and in workshops, as attendees discuss regaining the freedom to marry in California and gaining it elsewhere.

For example, Join the Impact co-founder Willow Witte, one of the key organizers of the Nov. 15 national grassroots protests against the passage of Prop. 8, will lead a session about mobilizing the LGBT movement at this critical moment. Participants will learn how to use the Internet to organize on a worldwide level and how to make an impact in local communities. Also, at a daylong pre-conference institute, attendees will discuss the marriage equality landscape and strategize on how to make gains.

Conference attendees will also participate in sessions to learn how to defeat future attacks against LGBT people on statewide and local ballots on issues such as nondiscrimination and adoption.

For more information about the conference program and registration, visit www.CreatingChange.org or call 202-639-6333.

National Religious Leadership Roundtable responds to selection of Rick Warren to give invocation at inauguration

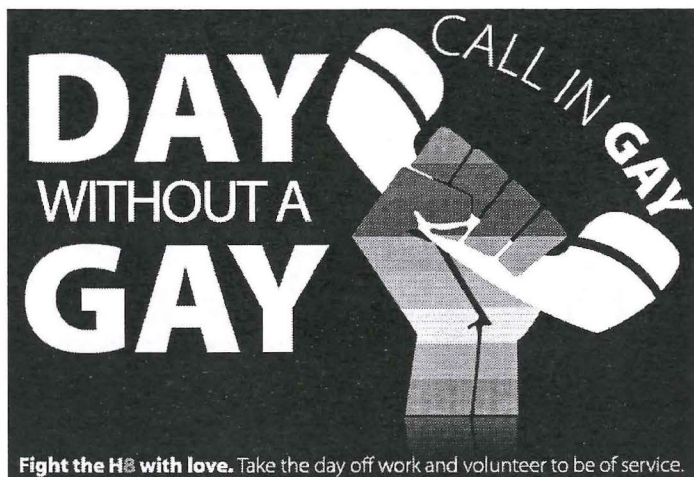
A statement by the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable, convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, responded to the selection of Rick Warren to deliver the invocation at the Jan. 20 inauguration.

"As a Christian pastor and a lesbian, I am deeply troubled by President-elect Obama's choice of Pastor Rick Warren to pray at his inauguration. Pastor Warren was one of the leaders in smearing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in the recent Proposition 8 campaign in California. His words and actions have solidified the impression that Christian equals bigot when it comes to the LGBT community. And his leadership was one of the factors in Prop. 8's passage.

"But Pastor Warren and the Saddleback Church, whose membership counts in the 20,000 mark, have also taken a leadership role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. And through this work they are coming to know many LGBT persons and our real lives — as opposed to the lies they have painted us with.

"My prayer is that Pastor Warren allow himself to repent of his hatred and harm to the LGBT community. If he is going to purport to acknowledge God's presence at the inauguration, he must recognize the power and blessing in all our lives — especially LGBT people."

Task Force Executive Director Rea Carey has also issued a statement saying in part, "President-elect Obama campaigned on a theme of inclusivity, yet the selection of Rick Warren to give the invocation is a direct affront to that very principle."



By Associated Press SAN FRANCISCO—A daylong work stoppage for which people were encouraged to call in "gay" to express support for same-sex marriage drew spotty participation Wednesday, December 10, with some gay rights activists praising the event and others questioning its value.

People who opted to take the day off from their jobs as part of the national "Day Without a Gay" were encouraged to perform community service, and charitable organizations across the country said they had volunteers showing up.

The protest, which a gay couple from West Hollywood organized through the Internet, was designed to demonstrate the economic clout of same-sex marriage supporters following the passage of voter-approved gay marriage bans in California, Arizona and Florida last month.

Participants also were asked to refrain from spending money or at least to patronize gay-friendly businesses for the day.

In San Francisco's gay Castro district, several residents and merchants said they endorsed the cause but did not think a work stoppage or spending boycott was practical, given the poor economy and how quickly the strike was organized.

David Lang, 44, a San Francisco gymnastics coach who said he conceived of a similar idea right after the election, said he thinks a coordinated job action would have been more successful if organizers had enlisted support from sympathetic employers, labor groups and industries.

Out and Equal Workplace Advocates, a San Francisco-based nonprofit group that promotes equality for gay and lesbian employees, suggested that gay marriage supporters could send an effective message beyond Wednesday by openly discussing the issue at their workplaces.

The organization was encouraging gay people who could not miss work to be open about their sexual orientation with co-workers and urging straight employees to speak up when they hear colleagues making homophobic jokes.

Berry noted that only 20 states have laws to protect workers from being fired for being gay, making lesbians and gays reluctant to reveal themselves to co-workers in most jurisdictions.

Backers of "Day Without a Gay" organized evening rallies in San Francisco, Austin, Tex., Logan, Utah, and other cities so supporters could gather to discuss the next steps. Rallies also were held earlier Wednesday in Chicago and on several college campuses in California.

"The movement that fought for equality and succeeded in electing Obama president is really looking to make progressive gains now," said Mark Airgood, who used a personal day to take off from his job as a middle school teacher in Berkeley. "I think we really can, and I think this is an important day for that."

Were you an activist in the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment in Oklahoma?

If so, the Women's Studies Program at the University of Oklahoma wants you. The program is initiating a project of video/oral history interviews with Oklahoma's ERA activists in order to save their stories. The interviews will be transcribed, indexed, and archived in OU's Western History Collection and the Women's Studies Library to be available to researchers and the public.

As part of the modern American women's movement, Oklahoma's fight for the ERA is a valuable piece of history. Activists in Oklahoma, as in the rest of the country, fought for women's rights, and these interviews will contribute to the ability of scholars to write a complete history of the struggle.

If you were active in the ERA campaign in Oklahoma, or if you can identify others who were, please send names and contact information to:

Dr. Martha Skeeters, Women's Studies Program
PHSC 528, 601 Elm
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019

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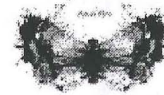
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Sandy Ingraham, J.D., M.S.W.
Attorney-at-Law
Ingraham & Associates, PLLC

Estate Planning, Wills, Trusts, Probate, Adoption, Contracts

Route 2, Box 369-B
McLoud, OK 74851

Tel. (405) 964-2072
Ingraham@mcloudteleco.com

Dr. Dawn Singleton, Ph.D.



Licensed Professional Counselor
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5005 N. Pennsylvania #204 OKC, OK
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