

In Conclusion: How We Are Treated since 9-11

BY PAT ROBINSON
OITM Staff Writer

November 13, 2001: "Encouraging" said Human Rights Campaign Director David M. Smith regarding the new poll data released by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The information strongly indicates that Americans support federal legislation to battle discrimination and violence against the LGBT community. 73% support hate crime laws, 76% support federal employment protection, while gay, lesbian and bisexual people say they feel more accepted now than in the past.

The new poll also shows 39% of the general public supports gay marriage, up from 36% in 1998, and 29% in 1994.

Two thirds of the general public believe that homosexual behavior is a normal part of some people's sexuality.

Still, an alarming 74% say they have experienced prejudice and discrimination. 32% identified themselves as having been a target of physical violence.

For more information on this new poll, visit www.hrc.org listed under news releases.

November 26, 2001: In a joint letter to Attorney General Ashcroft and the United States Dept. of Justice, six major civil rights organizations ask for fairness in compensation for the victims of Sept. 11. The federal government set up the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund to provide financial support for survivors whose relatives were killed or injured in the attacks.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, the Human Rights Campaign, the Empire State Pride Agenda, and the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund make specific suggestions to evaluate relationships.

Lambda Staff Atty. Jennifer Middleton, who drafted the letter told Atty. General Ashcroft this: "The only fair and humane response is to recognize all victims of this tragedy, including lesbian and gay partners and their children, and to distribute the funds equitably to all those who suffered losses."

Lambda, ESPA, and HRC have been working with lesbian and gay surviving partners to receive benefits from the agencies involved.

In a statement at the time, then HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch noted that, "the American Red Cross and the Sally Mae 911 Education fund have already recognized the domestic partners of victims when dispersing survivor benefits."

December 3, 2001: HRC's David Smith reports that "for the most part, charities have granted gay partners the same level of aid as that provided to spouses."

State aid and Federal compensation has varied.

John Winter lost his partner Tony Karnes in the WTC. "You're never sure whether you're included or not, so you always have to ask, and when you're feeling emotionally stressed like this, it's not easy to push (for aid)."

Winter acknowledged that the American Red Cross and the State of New York both helped. In New York Gov. George Pataki issued

an executive order granting gay partners equal benefits from the state's Crime Victims Board.

In Virginia, gay partners do not have the same standing. Virginia law says that only a surviving spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, adult child or legal dependent may receive compensation.

Peggy Neff lost her partner of 18 years in the attack on the Pentagon. She says, "There has been no cooperation from the State of Virginia."

"Our law is pretty clear on who is eligible, and it does not include domestic partners. Gov. Gilmore can't just rewrite laws with the stroke of a pen. If he could do that, we'd have a kingdom." said Reed Boatright, spokesman for the Gov. James Gilmore of Virginia.

Neff, Winter, and others wait for the guidelines for the Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund. A final draft of eligibility rules are expected on Dec. 22 from the Justice Dept.

December 5, 2001: Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation releases its Year in Review: 2001. National news events on the list: FBI releases 1999 statistics that appear to under count anti-gay hate crimes, backlash for the Boy Scouts after Supreme Court decision, Census reports 601,209 same-sex unmarried partner households counted in 2000, a 314% over 1990, and the Salvation Army's continued public embrace of anti-gay discrimination. To read the entire list covering national and regional news and politics, and a review of the aftermath of Sept. 11, go to www.glaad.org/org/relations/index.html?record=2887.

December 16, 2001: Special to msnbc.com, Jonathan Alter announces the return of Jerry Falwell, pointing out the remarks Rev. Falwell made on Pat Robertson's 700 Club following the tragedy of 9-11 and the shame of ignoring the conservatives have done.

Mr. Alter quotes the newsletter done by L. Brent Bozell, a longtime conservative activist mentioning a list called "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" making note of the failure of the "two major leaders of the religious right" to be counted.

To read Jonathan Alter's entire piece, go to msnbc.com.

December 17, 2001: In the Op-Ed piece, Resolutions For a Changed America, Human Rights Campaign's Elizabeth Birch and Candace Gingrich offer these suggestions learned the hard way after the losses suffered by some gay and lesbian victims. 1. "The power of living outside the closet." 2. "Write a will, power of atty, living wills, and hospital visitation authorizations." 3. "Be a mentor to our young people." For the full piece go to www.hrc.org/familynet.

December 17, 2001: Katie Couric of NBC News Today Show interviews Tim Russert, host of NBC's Meet The Press; and P.J. O'Rourke, writer and humorist; asking the question, "What was the political fax pause of 2001?"

Tim Russert answered with this, "Gore's inventing of the Internet, Bush's failure to disclose his DUI till the day before the election, and if I may add a third, Robertson and Falwell blaming the homosexuals, feminists, and the ACLU for the terror on Sept. 11."

"We Still Got Game" UVM, St. Michael's Fundraiser

BY JADE WOLFE
OITM Staff Writer

Saturday, January 19th from noon to 3:30pm the women alumni of UVM and St. Michael's College will hold a basketball clinic at the Charlotte Central School. The clinic is open to all women 32 years of age and older. All of the proceeds will be used to fund basketball camps for young female athletes. The three co-leaders of 'We Still Got Game' are Betti Lewis, Brookes Cowan and Penny Liebercent. "This is an opportunity for the UVM and St. Michael's female alumni to share their court skills and knowledge of basketball with clinic participants."

Betti Lewis grew up in Charlotte, Vermont. Her involvement in the fundraiser comes out of a true sense of community. The community has an opportunity to contribute financial support for Vermont's young, female athletes. "It was tough getting a gym for this event," said Betti. "This time of year the gyms are being utilized as much as possible by people. When I was able to schedule the clinic in the Charlotte Central School, it felt appropriate. I began playing basketball there as a young girl. It sort of feels as if I have come full circle." The three co-leaders understand how essential it is to give back to the community. "It's all about living life pow-

erfully and a life that you love."

This is the first year the clinic will be offered. They are hopeful it will be a successful project. "Our goals are to foster a sense of community and well being as we raise funds for our community's young, female athletes to attend basketball camps." The project needs a minimum of \$1500. Realistically, \$3000 could better ensure these basketball camps will adequately serve as many young athletes as possible.

When I asked Betti about the kind of clinic activities that will be offered, she assured me that anyone and everyone can benefit and have some fun. "The women who have been sitting up in the bleachers will have a chance to come down onto the floor and personally experience basketball play."

Donations begin at \$25- 'Lay Up and In'
\$50- 'Free Thrower'
\$100- 'Going the Distance, Three Pointer'
\$200- 'Slam, Jam and Dunk'