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Gender Identity in Prison

BOSTON – A man jailed for killing his wife wants the state to pay for a sex change operation.

Robert Kosilek, who uses the name Michelle, asked a federal judge to order the state Department of Corrections to cover the cost of the treatment.

He claims in a lawsuit that the corrections department is violating his civil rights and subjecting him to cruel and unusual punishment by refusing to provide treatment for his gender identity disorder. He said he suffers continuous depression, anxiety and a high level of stress as a result of being denied treatment.

"The universal prescribed treatment involves psychotherapy, hormone therapy, and surgical correction of the offending genitalia," he said in court documents.

Advocates say there have been several cases across the country of transgender inmates successfully suing to get treatment, including psychotherapy and hormone therapy, but none has succeeded in getting surgery.

Kosilek, 52, says he began asking the state for treatment in 1990, after he was arrested in the killing of his 36-year-old wife, Cheryl. During his murder trial, Kosilek wore shoulder-length hair and long fingernails to court. His lawyer called him Michelle.

NEA to Help Teachers with GLT Issues

WASHINGTON – The largest labor union in the nation representing teachers is advocating that its membership be on the lookout for discrimination.

Under a plan adopted by the National Education Association's board of directors, schools also will be encouraged to develop factual materials for classroom discussions on homosexuality. All staff and students will be encouraged to speak up when they see or experience discrimination based on sexual orientation.

I think it's a pretty clear signal that the organization recognizes there are some pretty serious needs for gay and lesbian children in school – and employees," said Penny Kotterman, president of the Arizona Education Association. She chairs the NEA's Task Force on Sexual Orientation, which was created last fall to develop the plan.

Kotterman, a middle school special education teacher in the Kyrene School District in suburban Phoenix, said the plan will help schools with difficult issues of student sexuality.

"Staff do need help," she said. "They need professional development, they need good, factual data that helps them deal with these issues."

The union said it could provide "accurate, objective and up-to-date information" on the needs and problems of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students and staff.

Lesbians Burned Out of Home

MISSOULA, Mont. – A lesbian couple

involved in an anti-discrimination lawsuit were the victims of arson.

Carla Grayson and Adrienne Neff escaped the early morning blaze through a window with their infant child. They were not seriously injured.

Police Capt. Bob Reid said it appeared the intruder broke into the home and poured flammable liquid through much of its interior, then set it on fire. The house was gutted.

The American Civil Liberties Union said the women, along with other plaintiffs, received death threats by mail after the suit was filed.

"Whoever set this fire did not intend to simply frighten or intimidate this family. They meant to kill them," said Matt Coles, director of the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project.

The ACLU filed the lawsuit on behalf of gay and lesbian employees who claim the state university system violates their rights by denying their partners health insurance and other benefits.

Grayson is a psychology professor at the University of Montana in Missoula. Her name, as well as Neff's, had appeared in newspaper articles about the lawsuit.

"We just really hope that the campus and the Missoula community respond and say this kind of thing is unacceptable," said Rita Munzenrider, a spokeswoman for the university.

Gay Studies Okayed

COLLEGE PARK, MD – According to a report in the Washington Blade, the University of Maryland's University Senate has approved a proposal to offer a "certificate" of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Studies to students who complete the requirements. The proposal was passed overwhelmingly, with a single negative vote.

The University has been considering offering the certificate since 1990. A "certificate" is less than a degree, but more than a "minor" concentration. The first certificate could be given out this year if the program is approved by the university administration.

Frank Boycotts Egypt

WASHINGTON – Rep. Barney Frank says he's not about to accept any hospitality from Egypt.

The openly gay congressman from Massachusetts denounced Egypt's treatment of gays in declining an invitation to an Egyptian government-sponsored forum on improving cross-cultural understanding.

Frank released a letter that he sent to Abderahman S. Abderahman, minister for political and congressional affairs at the Embassy of Egypt.

"Enjoying the hospitality of those who have so harshly mistreated people because of a basic characteristic of personality which they share with me is not something I wish to do," wrote Frank.

"Indeed, I would feel it a betrayal of men very much like me who have recently been brutally arrested and imprisoned by your gov-

ernment for no reason other than the way in which they chose to express affection to other human beings in a mutually consenting relationship." Homosexuality is not explicitly referred to in the Egyptian legal system, but a wide range of laws cover obscenity, prostitution and public morality. Offenders may be punished with jail terms.

Last year in Cairo, 52 men were tried on charges of immoral behavior and contempt of religion after police raided a restaurant and accused them of taking part in a gay sex party. Of the group, 23 men were sentenced to jail terms of one to five years. Twenty-nine were acquitted

Equality in Child Support

WILMINGTON, Del. – A lesbian being sued by her former partner for child support should be considered a parent even though she and the boy have no biological connection, a court commissioner has ruled.

Both women should be considered mothers to the 4-year-old boy they chose to have through in-vitro fertilization, Family Court Commissioner John Carrow said. He ordered both women to attend a child support hearing at a later date.

The decision, if it is upheld on appeal, it will set a precedent in Delaware by expanding who can be held legally responsible for caring for a child, experts said.

"It's definitely a leap," said attorney Joel Tenenbaum, chairman-elect of the American Bar Association's family law section. "It absolutely expands the definition of a parent."

There have been at least four similar cases fought in California, Pennsylvania and Washington state.

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights in San Francisco, said that a key issue is whether both parents consented to the creation of the child. When a married couple uses artificial insemination, there is an automatic presumption that the husband is the father, he said.

Parental Rights Lost

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – Custody of three teen-agers was awarded to their father by the Alabama Supreme Court because their mother is gay.

The nine-judge panel ruled unanimously in favor of a Birmingham man and against his ex-wife, who now lives with her lesbian partner in southern California.

The parents weren't named in court documents to protect the identity of the children, ages 15, 17 and 18.

Chief Justice Roy Moore wrote that the mother's relationship made her an unfit parent and that homosexuality is "abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature."

Moore also quoted scripture, historical documents and previous state court rulings that he said backed his view. Moore is known for his decision to place washing machine-sized monuments of the Ten Commandments in the state judicial

building after he became chief justice last year. He also fought to keep a Ten Commandments plaque in his courtroom when he was a district judge.

David White, state coordinator for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Alabama, said Moore's opinion reflected outdated thinking.

"It's unfortunate Alabama is going to be embarrassed once again by a religious fanatic in a position of power in Alabama," White said. "It's obvious he cannot judge a gay person fairly and he should be removed from office."

Racing Away From the Christian Coalition

WASHINGTON – In December, Pat Robertson resigned as president of the Christian Coalition, citing a "renewed call to ministry." But *Washington City Paper* columnist Dave McKenna suggests another reason for the departure: horse racing.

A longtime racing aficionado, Robertson recently paid \$520,000 for a Kentucky-bred colt he has named "Mr. Pat," and is currently training for his racing debut. Robertson's other horse, Tappat, has won more than \$235,000 and a couple of stakes in his career. While Robertson has scored big at the tracks, his daily double of horses and heaven has run afoul of the Christian Coalition's campaign against gambling.

McKenna reports that the Christian Right had supported Rep. Bob Goodlatte's (R-Va.) proposed ban on Internet gambling until discovering that his bill included a special exemption for horse racing. Robertson continued to support the pro-racing anti-gambling bill, angering his fellow believers, who may not have minded when God asked Robertson to resign as Christian Coalition president.

African-American Lesbian Health Study

WASHINGTON – A two year study of African-American lesbian health issues is being funded to the tune of over a quarter million dollars by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation through the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer. The study will focus on general health and breast cancer. The study is being initiated because African-American lesbians may face double jeopardy with regard to specific health issues and they have never been well represented in other health studies. The project is looking for community partners to recruit 500 study participants nationwide.

Plea Agreement in Transgender Murder

CORTEZ, CO – The killer of a Navajo youth who identified as gay and transgender has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder. Shaun Murphy, a teenager himself, was charged with chasing Fred Martinez, bludgeoning him, and then leaving him to die of exposure and blood loss. Martinez's body was discovered a week after the attack. A witness is reported to have claimed that Murphy

bragged he "beat up a fag."

Members of 4-Corners GLAD reported mixed feelings about the plea agreement, which precludes a full trial. The facts of the case may be revealed at the sentencing hearing, scheduled for mid-May, and meanwhile, Fred Martinez's mother, Pauline Mitchell, is spared weeks of listening to brutal trial testimony and defense maneuvering.

Members of 4cGLAD are supporting passage of the Colorado Bias-Motivated Crimes Bill. This bill, currently in the Colorado Senate, amends the state's existing Ethnic Intimidation Act to include sexual orientation, gender identity, age and disability. It also promotes the use of restorative justice and law enforcement training. Whether the crime will be classified as a hate crime remains an open question.

Transgender MP Greeted Queen

WELLINGTON, NZ - The Queen has been greeted by the world's first transgender member of parliament on her arrival in New Zealand for a five-day visit, according to a report from Reuters.

The Queen arrived in Wellington from Jamaica on Friday and was met by an official party including Governor General Dame Silvia Cartwright, Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderton and transgender Labour Party MP Georgina Beyer.

Beyer, a former prostitute who had a sex change operation in 1984 and was elected to the single-chamber parliament about two years ago, shook hands with the Queen and told Reuters she was one of three people representing indigenous Maori.

"I thought the Queen looked remarkably well and it was really a privilege to meet her and greet her to New Zealand," Beyer said.

VT CU No Help in Georgia Custody Case

ATLANTA, Ga. - Susan Freer (nee Burns), has lost her appeal in the Georgia Courts regarding her right to see her children while she is cohabiting with someone to whom she is not related or married. However, the Georgia ACLU lawyers still see the possibility of further opportunity to address the issue.

Beth Littrell, of the Georgia ACLU, reported that the Georgia Court of Appeals refused to accept the argument that a civil union is a marriage, but did not address several other arguments that were put forth.

Specifically, the Georgia ACLU argued that the civil union created a legal relationship which would fall within the ambit of "related within the second degree."

Significantly, Littrell reported, since the court did not address this argument it leaves the possibility that a civil union creates a legally binding familial relationship that courts outside Vermont should come to recognize. ▼

Euan Bear and Pat Robinson contributed news items to this page.