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CAMEROON

Alim Mongoche Dies After Release from Prison

A 30-year-old clothing designer who had been jailed for having sex with other men died in June after being released to a hospital, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission reported.

Alim Mongoche, who was convicted and jailed with six other men in June and sentenced to ten months in prison, died of AIDS-related complications, the report said. Mongoche was one of 11 Cameroonian men who awaited trial in prison for more than a year, in the "notorious" Kondegui Prison in Yaounde, "where conditions are harsh and medical treatment nonexistent, particularly for HIV-related illness," the IGLHRC said.

ALABAMA

Lesbian Wins Historic Race

Patricia Todd made history last month when voters in Alabama's 54th legislative district voted to send the Democrat to the State House, marking the first time ever that legislature will include an openly gay representative, *U.S. Newswire* reported. The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, the nation's largest gay and lesbian political action committee, endorsed Todd and helped raise tens of thousands of dollars from its national network of donors to help fund her campaign. Todd has no Republican opponent in the general election in November.

In other July elections, Victory-endorsed candidate Rep. Karla Drenner won her Democratic primary to advance to the general election in November. Drenner is Georgia's only openly gay state legislator. Also, Allen Thornell, a Victory endorsee who is seeking election to the Georgia state House, advanced to a runoff in his Democratic primary election, the report said.

HOUSTON, TX

Transgenders Claim Scandal Fabricated

Last month, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified before a House Homeland Security subcommittee to spotlight \$1.4 billion fraudulent waste of Emergency Assistance Funds (EAF) to Hurricane Katrina victims. The unprecedented level of Federal Emergency Management Agency fraud was blared

over television newscasts and emblazoned on newspaper headlines: "FEMA funds paid for a sex change."

However, the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC) is now publicly calling the media and authorities on this claim, demanding proof that this occurred and calling the press on this claim "fabricated" and "fraudulent." In reviewing both House subcommittee testimony and the GAO report that uncovered the fraud there was no reference of a sex change, nor any surgery of any type being paid for by FEMA funds.

MEXICO CITY

Candidates Urged to Stop Violence Against Women

The candidates in Mexico's July 2 presidential race should pledge to prevent and punish the mutilation and murder of women in Mexico, said more than 65 Mexican and U.S. civil rights groups in a letter published in June.

"Women are still being abducted, tortured and killed in Mexico despite some government efforts to investigate these brutal murders," said Jose Miguel Vivanco, director of the Americas division at Human Rights Watch (HRW). "Before going to the polls, the Mexican people should know which, if any, of the presidential candidates will commit to do something to stop these horrendous crimes."

Over the past 13 years, more than 400 women have been murdered or "disappeared" in Ciudad Juarez, HRW said.

CHICAGO, IL

City Protests Executions of Gays

Chicago joined more than two dozen cities around the world last month in protesting against the executions of gays in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, according to a report from the Gay Liberation Network (GLN).

On July 19, 2005 the government of Iran executed teenagers Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni in Iran (aged 15 and 16-years-old, respectively, at the time of their arrests), apparently for the "crime" of having gay sex, the report said. Shortly after their executions, pictures of their hangings drew protests around the world.

"Over 4,000 lesbians and gay men have been executed since the Ayatollahs seized power in 1979," said Britain's long-time gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell. "Altogether, an estimated 100,000 Iranians have been put to death over the last 26 years of clerical rule." ▼

vermont news

COMMUNITY

SafeSpace Moves to R.U.1.2?

BURLINGTON – SafeSpace, Vermont's only anti-violence organization devoted to working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) people is moving to the R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center, 34 Elmwood Avenue, in Burlington. This move at the end of August is part of the organizations' work to join forces, a transition that will be completed on October 1st, 2006. In October, SafeSpace will become a program of the R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center, with all services remaining free and confidential.

The SafeSpace Executive Director, Kara DeLeonardis will become the new Executive Director of R.U.1.2?. The newly hired SafeSpace Program Director, Ann Atkins, formerly of Voices Against Violence in St. Albans, along with interns and volun-

teers, will provide advocacy and support over the support line and provide in-person advocacy at the center or in off-site confidential locations. In addition, SafeSpace will continue to provide training and awareness-raising activities for the community about issues of violence in the LGBTQQ community. SafeSpace will continue to be available at the same phone number (802) 863-0003 or toll-free (866) 869-7341. Information about SafeSpace can also be found at www.SafeSpaceVt.org.

The R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center is looking for a new name to match the internal changes the organization is undergoing with the addition of SafeSpace. Name suggestions are welcome, as is feedback about the transition. Please visit the transition blog at queercommunitycenter-transition.blogspot.com.



Ann Atkins is the new Program Director for SafeSpace
PHOTO: LYNN MCNICOL

R.U.1.2? will host a fall open house for the community to visit the newly expanded community center, and to meet the new staff members. Please call (802) 860-7812 or visit the website at www.RU12.org. ▼

Press release from SafeSpace

NEWS / VERMONT

Windham County Sheriff Admits Guilt, Resigns

BY LYNN MCNICOL

BRATTLEBORO — Sheriff Sheila Prue has resigned from her post, following charges she embezzled sheriff's department funds and after being asked to resign by a state legislator, the *Brattleboro Reformer* reported in June. Prue, who admitted guilt to the charges, must repay \$36,000 of department money, the report said.

The Vermont Attorney General's office filed the charges following an audit by state Auditor Randy Brock in April. Rep. Richard Marek, D-Newfane, requested that Prue step down upon hearing of the charges, the newspaper said.

Prue also pled guilty to a felony and two misdemeanors, the *Reformer* said. Prue had previously refused to step down, and maintained she had done nothing wrong.

In late June, however, she pled guilty to the charges. While Prue could have received a jail sentence of up to 10 years, she was given five years' probation to give her the opportunity to pay back the money, plus 80 hours of community service, the *Reformer* said.

Following the charges, Prue received an anonymous check for \$26,000 to help pay the money owed, the *Reformer* said. She had already

paid back \$10,000. The felony could be struck from her record since she has repaid the \$36,000 owed, according to reports.

Prue's attorney, Bettina Buehler, maintained that her client was following the same procedures used by prior sheriffs, and she questioned why the "white male heterosexual sheriffs" accused of similar misdeeds in the past were not charged. Buehler had said that she believed the charges were politically motivated by Brock, who is a Republican. Prue is a Democrat, and openly lesbian.

Brock denied the accusation. "I certainly have seen no past audit that has reflected this level of widespread corruption that we have seen here," the *Reformer* quoted Brock.

Brock also said that sheriffs are "unique" in that they are "part state employee, part county employee, part entrepreneur," the *Reformer* reported. Sheriffs must solicit contracts to help support their departments, such as the contracts Windham County previously had serving Stratton Mountain and Vermont Yankee. News reports have indicated that there may be a lack of sufficient training in place for Vermont sheriffs.

Brattleboro Police Chief Richard Guthrie has been named as interim sheriff for Windham County, a post he will likely hold for the rest of Prue's term at the end of the year. The sheriff's post will be on the ballot in November. ▼

OITM Recruits Two New Board Members



Out in the Mountains boasts two new board members: Kim Howard (left) and Kate Kinney (right), bringing our grand total to six - a long way from the two members we had just a few months ago. Thanks, Kate and Kim, for joining up and helping out. ▼