

Harassment Victims Win Huge Settlements

Two recent court cases, one in Wisconsin and the other in Michigan, awarded major monetary settlements to victims of gay-bashing.

The case of Jamie Nabozny, a former student in the Ashland WI School District, drew national attention to the perils and traumas which often face gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered teens in the schools. With representation from the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Nabozny challenged school administrators who had failed to intervene on his behalf when classmates harassed him on the basis of his sexual orientation (see Legal Briefs, page 9).

Nabozny had suffered both physically and emotionally at the hands of his multiple assailants. He had been pushed and shoved throughout his stay at high school, had been urinated on, and had even endured a mock "gay rape" in front of his classmates. One attack was so brutal that it sent Nabozny to the hospital with internal injuries.

School officials responded to the incidents by suggesting that Nabozny himself was at fault for the harassment. They told him that he had made the decision to be an openly gay student at the school and that "boys will be boys." Obviously distraught by such treatment and unwilling to withstand the torment any longer, Nabozny made several unsuccessful suicide attempts. When it became clear to Nabozny and his parents that the youth would not be able to perform to his full potential in the high school environment, he dropped out.

Nabozny originally sought \$350,000 in damages against the school officials, but the case was thrown out of court by a trial judge on the grounds of insufficient evidence. A federal appellate court later forced the judge to hear the trial. Following a determination that Nabozny had indeed suffered greatly on account of the school officials' "intentional discrimination," representatives for the guilty parties agreed to an out-of-court settlement of \$900,000 in damages plus a possible \$62,000 for medical costs.

"Bringing the lawsuit was my way of fighting back," said Nabozny. "I feel like I have justice, and that this means justice for all the other kids out there who aren't sure if they should stay in school or stay alive." Nabozny has since obtained his Graduate Equivalency Degree and hopes to use the settlement to attend college. He plans to master in social work and commit himself to helping other gay and lesbian teens. "I can now go on with my life," Nabozny said, "and have the normal educational experience that I waited a long time for."

In Detroit, Michigan, a \$10,000,000 settlement was awarded to a Sean McBride, a gay man who had filed suit against Pinkerton's Security & Investigation, Inc. McBride claimed that a security guard had stood by and even laughed as three men verbally abused him for being gay. Later the same night, the three men followed McBride and ambushed him, beating him and shooting him six times. As a result, McBride is now paraplegic.

The events took place in and around McBride's apartment building, which contracts with Pinkerton's for the protection of its residents. The company claimed that their security guard acted appropriately and would have been unable to prevent the attack.

Jurors in the case awarded McBride \$6,000,000 for his paralysis and \$4,000,000 in other damages. Only two of his three assailants have been apprehended and convicted. One will serve up to four years for assault and weapons charges; the other, a juvenile, will be released from custody next July upon turning 21. ▼

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Outright Vermont Searches for New Director

BURLINGTON -- Karin Eade, who has served Outright Vermont for three years as Executive Director, has announced that she will be leaving her position at Outright at the end of March, 1997.

Eade informed the Outright Vermont Board of Directors at its October meeting in order to give the organization as much time as possible to find a suitable new Executive Director. Outright is currently advertising this position through various organizations and in the local press. Ken Wolvington, the Board Secretary, has been named Chair of the Search Committee.

In a letter addressed to the Board of Directors, Eade outlined the many accomplishments that Outright has achieved since its inception and under her tenure. She praised the excellent facilitators as well as other volunteers, the solid Board membership and participation, the hours of work the Speakers' Bureau has provided, and the work of staff member Tage Lilja.

Eade also wrote, "We have not developed to this point easily, and we are in no way 'out of the woods' in terms of struggles, particularly financially. Homophobia, heterosexism, and oppression in general make our jobs harder than they need to be. However, I feel that with the right leadership and strategic planning, programmatically and financially, we will overcome these barriers."

Eade went on to write, "It is so simple to say that this agency would not exist if it were not for the efforts of its many volunteers. This simple fact makes me the most proud to have been a small part of the wonderful life of Outright. I remember Howdy Russell speaking once of timing and how Outright has always seemed to go through exactly what is

needed with exactly the right people, and the thought excites me to meet the next Executive Director, to watch, offer help when I can, and to celebrate everything they will offer to Outright. Hats off to the future!"

Outright Board Chair Stan Baker stated, "We are sorry to be losing Karin Eade as Executive Director. Her long service to Outright has brought our agency to its current ability to offer a broad array of services to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning youth. She has provided needed vision, knowledge, and enthusiasm. I am grateful that she has given us plenty of time for a smooth transition, and that she will be present to help the new Executive Director begin his or her job. I know that Karin will remain available to Outright for consultation and support and that she will hold us close to her heart as she begins new endeavors. We all wish her well, and are immensely appreciative for all she has done, for who she is, and especially for her gift of caring given so freely to all the youth of Outright Vermont."

Outright Vermont serves gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. The organization provides support groups, a chat line, an information line, and one-to-one support for youth. The organization also provides education, outreach, and support to schools and other agencies in Vermont about the needs of queer youth.

Outright Vermont asks that resumes and references be submitted by January 15, 1997, to the Search Committee, c/o Outright Vermont, PO Box 5235, Burlington VT 05401-5235. Outright will continue to issue press releases to keep the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community apprised of the search process.

Out in the Mountains to Increase Outreach, Accessibility

BURLINGTON -- *Out in the Mountains* recently received a substantial grant from the Vermont chapter of the Haymarket People's Fund to increase its interaction with a number of minority and disadvantaged populations with the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities.

The newspaper has already begun to develop a strategy for further outreach to African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American communities in the hopes of bringing increased visibility and sensitivity to issues affecting those groups. "These are vital and vibrant members of our statewide community," said Hugh Coyle, Editor of *OITM*. "It is our goal to both honor and incorporate a wide range of backgrounds and traditions, particular as the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities continue to develop their own."

Out in the Mountains will also investigate alternative production formats. "Our Web Site has already opened doorways to a number of people who couldn't otherwise read the paper," said Kathie Sawyer, who manages the site ([http://members.aol.com/](http://members.aol.com/oitm/)

oitm/) with her daughter, Tracy Buttles. "With the proper tools, readers who are visually impaired can now have computers read the paper aloud. We're also redesigning the site to make it more accessible to those working with assistive technologies."

In coming months, *OITM* hopes to provide further information about those tools and how its readers might gain access to them. It also plans to work with its advertisers and contributors toward including accessibility information whenever possible, from TTY phone line numbers to wheelchair accessibility at a site.

The newspaper welcomes the efforts of any and all who would like to work toward making these projects a reality. "The goal," says Coyle, "is not simply communication. It's involvement. We don't just want to find out what we have to do out there; we want to get out there and do it."

For more information about this new initiative, contact *Out in the Mountains* by mail at PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402; by e-mail at oitm@aol.com; or by phone at (802) 388-6503. ▼

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**Robert S. Elliott
CPA, PC**

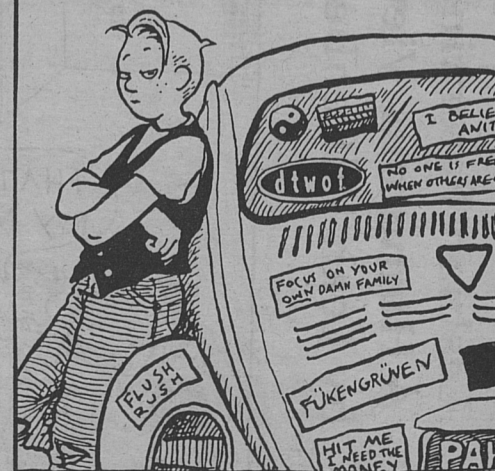
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