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Celebrities sign on against radical right

by Rebecca Foster
Editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Whoopi Goldberg and Armistead Maupin topped a list of over 110 famous people and prominent organizations that have joined the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Equality Statement Project. The project collected supporters to form a coalition in its efforts to fight the radical right. The list is available to state and local groups for building coalitions to fight anti-gay ballot questions and is part of the Task Force's Fight the Right Project formed in 1992 to counter the activities of the radical right.

The Equality Statement reads, "We support equality for all Americans. Every American's right to be free from discrimination in jobs, housing and public accommodations must be defended and protected. No person's fundamental civil rights should be denied by a ballot initiative or any other means."

continued on page 5

MLGPA and Dirigo Alliance back candidates

by Terri Jones
Editor

AUGUSTA — The Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance and the Dirigo Alliance have announced their endorsements for candidates in November's voting. The Dirigo Alliance selects candidates based on a progressive slate of concerns including gay rights issues. MLGPA is among its 15 organizational members.

MLGPA's directors have endorsed Tom Andrews for U.S. Senate and Dennis Dutremble and John Baldacci for the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. MLGPA is among its 15 organizational members. MLGPA's directors have endorsed Tom Andrews for U.S. Senate and Dennis Dutremble and John Baldacci for the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. MLGPA is among its 15 organizational members.

MLGPA chose not to endorse a gubernatorial candidate. All four candidates, Joseph Brennan, Angus King, Susan Collins, and Jonathan Carter, have expressed support for gay rights legislation. During recent debates, both Brennan and Carter said they would introduce gay rights legislation, Collins and King have said they will sign legislation if passed by the Maine Legislature.

Colorado high court strikes down Amendment 2

by Terri Jones
Editor

DENVER — In a major victory for the gay rights movement, the Colorado Supreme Court has upheld a lower court's injunction against Amendment 2, the 1992 referendum measure that would have prohibited the state and local governments in Colorado from passing gay rights ordinances or bills and would have repealed existing protections.

The referendum was approved by a 53% majority in November 1992. In a 6-1 ruling, the court said that "the state has failed to establish that Amendment 2 is necessary to serve any compelling governmental interest in a narrowly tailored way."

Despite its passage in 1992, the amendment has never been enforced because a trial court judge had issued a preliminary injunction against its enforcement. The Colorado Supreme Court ruling upheld a permanent injunction against its enforcement. Amendment 2 would have invalidated gay rights ordinances in Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

Anti-Amendment 2 legal efforts were led by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "This ruling is a decisive affirmation of lesbian and gay rights, and a crushing blow to the radical right's efforts to curtail important constitutional protections," said Lambda staff attorney Suzanne Goldberg.

Colorado Attorney General Gale Norton said the state planned to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to hear an appeal but conceded the difficulty of getting the Court to agree to hear cases.

Colorado Governor Roy Romer has said he opposes the amendment but said he was obligated to defend it in court.
Maine Won't Discriminate

Update

Committees, meetings, etc.

Please remember: Like all things, information is subject to change. Call us at 761-7188 for the latest scoop.

Structure Proposal: Now is an especially good time to get involved in MAINE WON'T DISCRIMINATE (formerly Equal Protection Maine). The newly approved STRUCTURE PROPOSAL will make it easier for new groups to find their niche and begin fighting Carolyn Cosby's homophobic referendum. By developing an democratic and integrated committee structure, we hope to:

- Improve communication and decision-making
- Develop a variety of levels for people to get involved
- Coordinate and expand our efforts as we continue to grow

Provide room for diversity
Be more visible
Be more responsive to input from the gay and lesbian community and so on.

Maine Won't Discriminate is poised to accept your support! The structure proposal calls for the creation a committee of fifteen composed of six at-large members, six committee chairs, the two statewide liaisons, and the legal advisor to serve as Steering Committee for Maine Won't Discriminate. We will be electing the six at large members at the November 14 meeting (7:00 PM at St. Luke's Cathedral). If you are interested in being nominated, please attend the meeting, or notify someone who will be attending, or leave a message at 761-7188.

The committee will coordinate the work of the six standing committees: Volunteer, Coalition Building, Media, Fundraising, Budget, and the Speaker's Bureau, and make day-to-day and emergency decisions. The General Membership Committee will continue as an overall policy making body, and provide guidance, direction and oversight from membership at large to the other committees, and to our Statewide Representatives. General Membership meetings will be preceded by a pre-orientation for new (and old) members, so please feel free to drop by.

Our Committee Chairs are: Fundraising: Glen Richards, Volunteer: David Lisher, Coalition Building: David Crespo, Budget: Burt Billideau, Speaker's Bureau: Jane O'Rourke. Media: Eve Raimon.

Signature Challenge: Over 5,000 of the signatures collected by Concerned Maine Families have already been disqualified (see bill by the municipalities, so our chances of keeping the referendum off the ballot altogether are getting better. It seems as though we will be receiving our turn to eliminate signatures in mid-November, so if you haven't signed up yet, please do so. We will be needing lots of volunteers with any, even basic, typing, clerical, or other skills. If you want to help, we'll find a way to use you. Please call Sally Sutton at 774-5444 if you are interested. NOTE: We especially need the loan of computers and Mac-compatible printers for the 3-4 weeks of the challenge. The computers would be insured and safely kept and treated.

House Parties: The good news is our house parties have been a huge success, raising necessary capital right now. The bad news is, we need more of them in the near future. House parties are a great activity for bringing friends together around a good cause, and they are quick and easy to get going. If you'd like to play host in the next few weeks or months, please call Mark MacDonald at 797-9270.

Volunteer Needs: Maine Won't Discriminate is Growing, and one of our first priorities is going to be developing relationships with our volunteer supporters. But, because we're new, what the volunteer committee needs most is volunteers to help us organize the volunteers. If you can help us develop our volunteer database, answer phone inquiries, and update our list of volunteer needs, then call for David Lisher at 761-7188. Call us also if you have any skill, service, or interests you would like to offer, or want to find out what we need.

Fundraising: We need to raise as much money as possible to support our campaign. We need you to take the lead if you can. We will be having a special fundraising event on November 12th, and we need your help in coordinating it. We need you to help us get our turn to eliminate signatures in mid-November, and to help us get the signatures we need to win.

Meeting Dates Upcoming:
Fundraising: Tuesday, November 8th, 7:00 PM at PROP, 510 Cumberland St.
Coalition Building: Friday 10/28 at 6:30 at 414 Danforth St. (the Wallaces).
Third Thursdays of the Month, 11/17, 12/15.
Speaker's Bureau: If your group needs someone to speak to them about how they can help stop this referendum, Jane O'Rourke is the person you need. Get your friends, family, and total strangers to make out those checks.

Wanted: Do you have money-making ideas, expertise or enthusiasm- from bake sales to Begathons - come to our next fundraising meeting.

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HOLLY NEAR
with John Bucchino and special guest Catherine D'Amato
and interpreter Meryl Troop
Saturday, November 5, 1994, 8pm
First Parish Church, 425 Congress St., Portland
$15.00 in advance/$17.00 day of show
General Admission

Tickets available from Amadeus Music, Drop Me A Line and Walkabout in Portland, Macbeans in Brunswick, KS6 Copyprinters in Belfast and Lady Iris in Portsmouth. Mail order tickets available from Wild Iris Productions, P.O. Box 17, West Buxton, ME 04093.
Let's send Cosby defeat no. 1

The vote on November 8 is so important to Maine's lesbian and gay community that it cannot be talked about enough. Readers of this issue will find at page 4 to be devoted to the positions of Maine's House and Senate candidates on gay rights legislation, leaving no room for other Maine news. This is not to say that there isn't important Maine news that isn't election-related. Rather, the distribution of space is intended to accentuate the importance of this election in the battle against the radical right.

The country as a whole faces the potentially devastating effects of a Republican majority in the Senate. If this occurs, politicians like Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond and Orrin Hatch, to name a few, will receive the chairmanships of the most powerful committees. Such an occurrence will place the fate of gay-friendly or necessary legislation in the hands of people who have consistently opposed every piece of gay rights or gay concern legislation.

The Maine House and Senate races are equally important. The election of a legislature that will pass gay rights legislation prior to a referendum vote IS ESSENTIAL. Thus, page 4 is an attempt to identify candidates' positions so that voters will be aware of individuals that do not or have not supported such legislation. Paul Madore, leader of the effort to repeal Lewiston's Human Rights Ordinance is running for the Maine Senate. Let's make sure he and other similar minded individuals stay home in January.

Ostensibly, all four gubernatorial candidates say they support gay rights. In the category of most lost, Susan Collins has taken huge amounts of criticism from the party's radical right wing including a laughable suit by Mark Finks. She has displayed genuine courage and told 100% that she simply felt that it was the right stand regardless of the number of Conservative votes she lost because of it.

In the category of fading courage, rumors have and continue to circulate about Angus King. In the case of gay rights, King has been rumored to have promised Conservative voters that he will not sign gay rights legislation until after the referendum. When contacted by 100%, his son, Angus King, Jr. categorically denied the allegations. Political observers from several quarters have commented on King's apparent tendency to provide each audience with the words they wish to hear. In the waning weeks of the campaign, it is vital that the gay community gets continued assurances from the King campaign that if elected, he will support and sign gay rights legislation prior to the referendum. Both Brennan and Carter have said they will introduce gay rights legislation.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if, on the morning of November 9th, the gay and lesbian community of Maine and Maine's independent and conscience citizens handed Carol Cosby and Concerned Maine Families their first loss? After her frequent pronouncements of how "out of touch" the politicians are, wouldn't it be nice to show her that Maine citizens have a voice?

If you find these possibilities as interesting as we do, study the chart on page 4 carefully and help send the radical right a message from Maine. Check out MLGPA's endorsements and send Washington a message about tolerance and the Maine tradition. If you can, volunteer to get out the vote and if possible, send money to candidates that support and validate your views to live and love as you choose.

But most important, VOTE!!!

Referendum impacts more than sexual orientation

Contrary to publicity by Concerned Maine Families, there are several other legal protections that would be repealed or could be repealed by the referendum to limit the Maine Human Rights Act. The following are other possible casualties of their efforts:

1. The Maine Human Rights Act would no longer prohibit discrimination in housing based on the source of one's income (e.g. general assistance).

2. The Act would no longer prohibit employment discrimination against whistleblowers who report illegal activity of employers or against any worker who has ever filed a workers' compensation claim.

Five other areas may be repealed if the referendum is approved:

3. Health insurance guarantees for people who have pre-existing medical conditions.

4. Rules that bar banks from denying mortgages based on property location.

5. Prohibitions against unreasonable local restrictions on mobile manufactured housing.

6. Maine State Housing Authority and municipal low income housing programs.

7. Laws that prevent employment discrimination against people who smoke, and

8. The Maine Hate Crimes (which was supported by Jasper Wyman and the Christian Civic League).

It is important that these potential effects are communicated to voters and legislators.

Dykes To Watch Out For
ELECTION UPDATE

Maine News
continued from page 1
Among those joining Goldberg and Maupin are Nora Ephron, John Landis and Sweet Honey in the Rock's Bernice Johnson-Reagan, Senators Paul Simon and John Chafee, Representa­tives Patricia Schroeder, Barney Frank and Gerry Studds, elected officials from Austin, Texas, Broward Cty., Florida, San Francisco and Los Ange­les, California, Seattle and New York, the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, United Auto Workers and other unions, the Ameri­can Library Association, the National Lawyers Guild, PEN, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Canadien bookstore brings legal challenge
VANCOUVER, BC - The Little Sisters Book and Art Emporium is being joined by the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association in a suit challenging the power of Canadien customs agency power to seize imported books it deems obscene.
Canada Customs has seized hun­dreds of imported books under a policy that allows seizure of materi­als that violate Canada's pornogra­phy laws. Little Sisters contends that the seizure is a violation of civil rights and represents discrimination against lesbians and gays. Recent seizures have included a biography of Noel Coward and a collection of letters between Romantic poets Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley.
"They're not seizing kiddie porn...They're seizing literature," said John Dixon, a representative for the civil rights association.
Canadian officials have said that homosexual books are not being unfairly targeted but the bookstore is expected to present evidence that customs officers seized books ordered by Little Sisters but let through the same titles when ordered by general bookstores.

UN suspends ILGA
WASHINGTON DC - The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is con­demning the recent suspension of the International Lesbian and Gay Asso­ciation (ILGA) by the United Na­tions. The unanimous suspension of ILGA resulted from an amendment to the U.S. Foreign Relations authorization, submitted by Senator Jesse Helms (R­NC), which pressured the U.N. to ex­clude groups perceived to support pedophilia, despite the ILGA position that pedophilia is inconsistent with the ILGA's aims which were the only group representing gay, lesbian and bisexual civil rights concerns at the United Nations.
The Economic and Social Council, a U.N. committee responsible for rec­ommendations on human rights, sus­pended the group because of its al­leged connection with pedophile groups. ILGA recently issued a formal denouncement of pedophilia and expelled several pedophile groups including the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) in June.
"Once again, our community has been betrayed by those unwilling or too afraid to stand up to bullying, and the tactics of Jesse Helms," said Peri Jude Radecic, NGFL Executive Director. "This fear has crippled the U.N., and allowed them to commit an unspeakable injustice against lesbi­ans, gays and bisexuals around the world."
ILGA's valuable function as a con­sultant to the U.N. was to promote basic human rights and understand­ing for the international gay, lesbian and bisexual community," Radecic said. "I am disappointed to see the United Nations fall into old stereo­types and misinformation perpetrated by Senator Helms and other homophobes."

Anti-gay language removed from education bill
WASHINGTON, DC - The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have voted to pass the $12.7 billion Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) without the anti-gay provisions introduced by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Rep. Mel Hancock (R-MAO). The language, which passed in its respective houses was removed by a House-Senate conference committee. The compro­mise version was approved by both the House and the Senate.
The original provisions introduced would have denied federal funding to any program, curricula or activity that would "promote or have the effect of promoting" homosexuality. If the language had remained in the bill it could have affected programs from sex and AIDS education to diversity curricula to counseling for gay and lesbian youth.
Prior to passage of the new language, the Senate voted 75-24 to deny Helms the floor, thus avoiding his threatened filibuster and allowing the bill to go forward for a vote.
The Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) which mobilized an extensive lobbying campaign to defeat the Helms/Hancock language expressed happiness over the result.
The nation's schools have been spared an unprecedented intrusion by the federal government," said Daniel Zingale, HRCF's public policy director. "The federal government has no business dictating how local schools address issues in the classroom. The Congress has reaffirmed local control over education and rebuffed Helms' discriminatory and intrusive language."

Crime bill passes with hate crime protections
WASHINGTON, DC - The federal crime bill has passed with two important protections that were sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force – the Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act and the Violence Against Women Act.
The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act increases penalties for those crimes in which the perpetrator intentionally selects a victim because of his or her "actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation." Federal sentences are increased three offense levels under this measure.
This act sends a dramatic signal to those who seek to victimize gay people, and others," said Tanya Domi, Legislative Director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "The federal government declares that hate crimes will be taken seriously by the federal courts and will be punished."
The Act was introduced by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and is modeled after the state hate crime statute in Wisconsin, a measure upheld by the Supreme Court last year.
Passage of the measure is especially timely, with several anti-gay incidents garnering media attention. Gay and lesbian activists in Salt Lake City staged a rally earlier this month after a district court judge reduced the sentence in a case involving the killing of a gay man. While the case proved the victim had been targeted because he was gay, the perpetrator was charged with manslaughter only and received a sentence of only six years. In a Houston incident, four teens were charged with the vicious murder of a gay man. According to the police, the teens hunted down the victim because they had heard that gay men often had lots of money and were "easy targets."
The Violence Against Women Act doubles the federal penalty for repeat sex offenders and requires that federal laws treat acquaintance rape and stranger rape the same. The act also mandates restitution for the victims of sex crimes.
The measure includes money for a variety of police training, counseling services, data collection systems and educational programs.

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P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) in Maine?
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Bangor/Brewer: 989-5180
Waldoboro: 832-5859
Lewiston/Auburn: 783-7879
Portland: 766-5158
Waldoboro: 832-5859
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### Musical Happenings

**Monica Grant and the Lesbian Lounge Lizards**

Monica Grant, right, and Zoe and Julie, aka the Lesbian Lounge Lizards, above, entertained an enthusiastic crowd at a recent Wild Iris Productions' concert.

**Katrina Curtiss**

Katrina Curtiss performs an acoustic set at Sisters.

*Photos by Rebecca Foster*
Androscoggin Valley AIDS Coalition meets every Tuesday from 7:30-9pm at Lafayette St, Lewiston. Drop in any Tuesday or call 786-4097.

Circle of Hope, an inclusive Christian worship group following a model developed by the Metropolitan Community Churches, meets Saturdays at 4pm at Immanuel Baptist Church, 156 High St, Portland. E-mail: write MCC, P.O. Box 1671, Portland, ME 04104.

"Discrimination on the Job: Could It Happen to You?", A film and discussion of issues facing sexual minorities in the workplace. A Matlovich discussion on Dec. 8 at 7:30pm at the Holiday-Inn-by-the-Bay. Free parking and wheelchair accessible.

Maine Gay Visual Artist League will meet on the third Wednesday of every month. The League is a non-profit, supportive and creative network for Maine's gay and lesbian artists. For meeting place, call 775-3420.

Maine Won't Discriminate meets in Portland every other Monday at 7:30pm at St. Luke's Cathedral, State St, Portland. See page 2 for complete details of MWD activities.

Friday Night Church meets every Friday at 7pm, State St Church, 139 State St, Portland. All-inclusive and affirming service offering a guide to Christian spiritual journey. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call 774-6396.

Gay Veteran's Day Celebration, November 11 at the UU Church, Pleasant and Ell Sts, Auburn, 8:30 - 12pm, with special guest Chris Ricciotti from Laver­nder Country and Folk Dances, featuring New England Contra Dances and Square Dancing. Admission Sliding scale, $3-6.

Lesbian Support Group meets every first and third Wed. at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. Women-only, lesbian-only space: 6:30-8pm, 334 Harlow St, Bangor. For more information, call 947-5537.

"Let's Do Brunch!" Potluck social gathering, 11am-2pm, third Sunday of the month at York County locations. Call 985-2784 for more information.

"Love in 3-D: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Orientation", discussion led by Bobbi Keppel, LCSW and coordinator of the Maine People's Bisexual Network, Nov. 18, 7:30pm Lewiston Multi-Purpose Ctr, 161 Birch St, Lewiston. Sponsored by Building Inclusive Community.

Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance meets on Nov. 16 from 6 to 9pm at the Winthrop St. Unitarian Church, Woodfords St, Portland.

Mothers and Kids Group meets the 1st and 3rd Wed. at the Mabel Wadsworth Women's Health Center. Lesbian-only, gay-only space: 6:30-8pm, 334 Harlow St, Bangor. For more information, call 947-5537.

Northern Lambda Nord Monthly Meeting, Nov. 15, 1-3pm at the Gay-Lesbian Services Community Center, 398

Are you listed? Send your non-profit calendar listings to: 10% Enterprises P.O. Box 11265 Portland, ME 04104 Include location, contact no., date and time. Submissions are due by the 20th of the month.
Building Inclusive Community

is a Lewiston-Auburn based group of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people working to build an inclusive and safe community in Lewiston-Auburn and outreach areas. We are exploring ways to achieve this goal through social gatherings, educational events, support groups, topic meetings and forums open to sexual minorities, friends and supporters.

For more information, contact
Building Inclusive Community,
P.O. Box 3184
Auburn, ME 04212-3184

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Workplace News

Harassment

A Colorado gay man was permitted disability benefits for psychological injuries he received while at work due to anti-gay harassment by a co-worker. The employee, Rendon, was taunted by the co-worker and others and later assaulted in the company parking lot. When Rendon complained to a supervisor about a derogatory comment made by a co-worker, the co-worker made a false charge of sexual harassment against him. An Rendon's disciplinary hearing was allowed on a union representative, the same person who had led the attack against him in the parking lot. The employee, United Airlines, argued that this was a private conflict between the two co-workers which they had brought into the workplace. They argued that the airline, therefore, should not be liable for psychological injuries caused by that conflict. The Colorado Court of Appeals disagreed, saying that no evidence had been shown that the co-workers had any contact outside of work. The court stated that while the conflict may have grown from private biases, it was transformed by the forced proximity of the workplace. Rendon v. United Airlines, 1994 WL 607948 (Aug. 23).

Domestic Partnership

New York State prison guards and university professors will be provided with domestic partnership health insurance coverage for their same-sex or opposite-sex unmarried partners, following an agreement reached by the state and the unions. New York is, in effect, the only the second state to provide such health coverage to state employees. The unions involved represent more than 100,000 employees.

SAS Institute, a large software company and major employer in North Carolina, has extended benefits to domestic partners of employees. Another employer, SONY Entertainment, has announced that it will extend health insurance benefits to same-sex partners of employees on an equal basis with opposite-sex spouses, beginning in January.

In a case in front of one member of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, the Chapel Hill Chauncey Hall School was found not to have violated a state law forbidding employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The school refused to allow a lesbian employee, Christine Huff, to live with her life partner on campus. Huff’s position, as a student life counselor, required her to live in the dorm, which she did for two years. When she requested that her life partner be allowed to live with her, the school decided that it was not willing to waive its rule against unmarried partners living together. Although the state has an anti-discrimination law, the law provides specifically that nothing in the act shall be construed to “tort legitimize or validate a ‘homosexual marriage.’” The commissioner stated that as long as the state did not recognize same-sex marriage, this type of discrimination could occur, because to rule otherwise would require the school to treat the relationship as a marriage. The commissioner did not discuss whether the case could be viewed as a housing case, in which discrimination is prohibited. The Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), representing Huff, has said it will appeal the case to the full board of commissioners. Huff v. Chapel Hill Chauncey Hall School (Sept. 1994).

Washington

When Megan Lucas learned that the child she had given up for adoption had been placed in a foster home with a gay couple who planned adoption, she attempted to rescind her consent and began litigation to adopt the child herself. In State v. Lucas, the Washington Supreme Court refused to review a lower court’s denial of Ms. Tucker’s request to adopt after relinquishing her parental rights. 870 P.2d 1057 (1994).

Virginia

Sharon Bottoms’s son is still with his grandmother, as the Virginia Supreme Court refused either to grant an expedited appeal in her custody case or to permit her custody of Tyler pending the appeal. Even though the Court of Appeals ruled in June that the trial court had erred in granting custody of the boy to Sharon’s mother simply because Sharon lived with her lesbian partner, Sharon’s mother’s immediate appeal preserved her custody of Tyler.

Source: Lesbian/Gay Law Notes, Oct. 1994

Lise R. Wagner is a sole practitioner in Portland.
Holidays....

by Maggie Fournier
Contributor

For many lesbians and gay men, the approaching holiday season is met with a certain degree of ambivalence. Indeed, for some, it is a time which brings up feelings of sadness and loss. They cope with a mixed bag of past memories, estrangement from families of origin, and general disgust with the commercialism of it all. Others experience profound loneliness. So, it is with a certain degree of trepidation that I begin to write this column.

One of the most painful periods in my life was the Christmas I was pregnant with our daughter. I recall one photograph of me standing next to our Christmas tree looking at a porcelain ornament of two baby shoes. It is such a sad picture that I wonder why I ever kept it. I was the product of so many Norman Rockwell-type Thanksgivings and Christmases. Big family, lots of turkey, presents and liveness. So, it is with a certain degree of ambivalence that I start to write this column.

Eight years later, I see that our daughter has played an important role in developing new traditions for our holidays. We were alone for the first time that Christmas and I thought that I'd never be truly happy again. It was an exquisitely painful time for both of us. But in most heterosexual families, there are wonderful celebrations around the anticipated birth of a child, particularly at the holidays. Yet, this holiday passed with not so much as a card or a phone call from the people whom I called family.

I am a true believer in the old adage that time is a great healer. That and significant emotional work. Eight years later, I see that our daughter has played an important role in developing new traditions for our holidays.

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I've even been known to wrap gifts in September. Once again, I love the season because it's so special to see it through my daughter's eyes. I love it, too, because it reminds me of the importance of giving thanks and reaching out to others. Finally, I'm at peace with myself as a lesbian and I feel blessed because Cheryl and Emily are in my life.

We have traditions in our family that have come about rather serendipitously. I have a colleague and friend from the university who joins us on most Thanksgivings. When marketing for the big dinner, I reached for whole nuts in the shell only to be reminded by my daughter that my friend brings those. "Mom, it's tradition.

The simple supper of fondue after decorating the tree has been elevated to tradition. Gathering friends or the Wayside Kitchen. We set aside our Christmas tree looking at a porcelain ornament of two baby shoes. It is such a sad picture that I wonder why I ever kept it. I was the product of so many Norman Rockwell-type Thanksgivings and Christmases. Big family, lots of turkey, presents and laughter were the custom. That was my tradition...my inherited legacy.

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WASHINGTON DC - The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has requested action from the U.S. Department of Justice in a murder investigation of two gay men in Mississippi. The murders follow ten months of escalating hate violence and increasing criticism of the local authorities in Jones County.

The bodies were discovered near Laurel, Miss., a town located 15 miles from Camp Sister Spirit, site of anti-gay harassment since its establishment in 1993. Both men, identified as gay, had been shot in the head at close range and their bodies dumped. Law enforcement officers in the county have refused to acknowledge the hate-related nature of the crime.

NGLTF has sent a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno requesting immediate assistance in ending the violence in Jones County. The letter calls for the authorization of Community Relations Service mediation between the gay and lesbian community and local law enforcement, oversight of the murder investigation by FBI, investigate the murders as civil rights violations of the victims, issue a report as to why no arrests have been made and monitor the actions of Jones County Sheriff Maurice Hooks.

Other acts of harassment and violence against gay and lesbian people including abduction, sexual assault, beatings, stabbings have gone unreported to local authorities, according to G I L Friendly, Inc., a gay and lesbian community service organization in Mississippi. "The lack of responsiveness from local authorities to the Camp Sister Spirit situation and also to a series of unsolved racially motivated murders in the same area have left people frightened and faithless that justice will be served in Jones County," said NGLTF Executive Director Radecic. "By their inactivity, the Sheriffs department has created an atmosphere of open season on gay men and lesbians."
Concerned about hate crimes? 

so is the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General’s office

For more information about a new effort to eliminate violence around our bars contact: Dick at PJ’s, Roland at Sportsman’s Athletic Club or Sue or Marianne at Sisters

These bar owners are willing to organize local meetings with the AG’s office to let patrons know about the effort to stop violence.

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report hate crimes by calling 626-8844

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For more information:
MCC, P.O. Box 1671
Portland, ME 04104

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