

NATIONAL news

four out of five queer students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment in school.

The board took action after several months of study by a broad-based internal task force. It also approved a recommendation to expand "sexual orientation" policies to include "gender identification"—a recognition that trans students and staff face pervasive abuse in schools.

Mary Kate Cullen of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network cited a recently released poll of U.S. parents showing more than 80 percent support protections for queer students as well as teacher trainings on tolerance. "The NEA has shown tremendous leadership, and we look forward to the full implementation of these lifesaving recommendations," she said.

ALABAMA

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a formal complaint Feb. 20 with the state Judicial Inquiry Commission and called for a full investigation of the Alabama Supreme Court's chief justice, saying he is unfit because of his shockingly prejudiced statements against gay people in a recent opinion.

In awarding custody of three teen-agers to their father over their lesbian mother, Roy Moore wrote that her relationship made her an unfit parent and that homosexuality is "abhorrent, immoral, detestable...and a violation of the laws of nature." He assailed gay partners as "inherently destructive to the natural order of society," citing biblical references and "direct revelation found in the Holy Scriptures."

"The State carries the power of the sword, that is, the power to prohibit conduct with physical penalties, such as confinement and even execution," Moore wrote. "It must use that power to prevent the subversion of children toward this lifestyle, to not encourage a criminal lifestyle."

The "statements make it abundantly clear that he is incapable of giving any lesbian or gay person in Alabama their fair day in court," said Hector Vargas, Lambda's Southern Regional Office director. "Rather than displaying a fair and open mind when addressing legal claims regardless of anyone's sexual orientation, the judge blindly condemns gay people and explicitly refuses to rule based on the actual evidence in a case."

Moore focused exclusively on sexual orientation in his 14-page concurring opinion, which was attached to an opinion from the full court that was less than four pages long and that virtually ignored the fact that the mother is a lesbian. Ken Baker, Equality Begins at Home chairman, demanded his immediate resignation in a letter.

"The inflammatory language...is very irresponsible and will incite even more violence against gays and lesbians in Alabama," he wrote. "Feb. 19 marks the third anniversary of the brutal murder of Billy Jack Gaither in Sylacauga by two men who believed, as you do, that homosexuality is 'an inherent evil and shouldn't be tolerated.'"

Moore has a history of imposing his theocratic opinions on all of Alabama's citizens. He once defied a fellow judge's order to remove a plaque of the Ten Commandments from his courtroom, which turned him into a hero for the religious right wing.

In 1999, Moore received the Family, Faith and Freedom Citation presented by the anti-gay Family Research Council. He also appeared on Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club*, D. James Kennedy's *Coral Ridge Hour* and James Dobson's *Focus on the Family*.



Chief Justice Roy Moore looks at the Ten Commandments monument he commissioned and placed in the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Court building in August 2001

CALIFORNIA

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, on behalf of several hepatitis C associations, is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to reject an employer's argument that, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, it can fire a healthy worker with signs of liver disease because it considers chemical exposure on the job dangerous to his future health. Argument was heard Feb. 27 in the case.

Mario Echazabal had worked for a contractor in Chevron's El Segundo oil refinery for about 20 years. When he applied to work directly for Chevron, it offered him a job—but withdrew it when his pre-employment tests showed elevated liver enzymes even though he had worked with his condition without incident for years.

"The ADA says that a person with a disability who is qualified for a job and doesn't pose a threat to anybody else has the right to work," said Catherine Hanssens, Lambda AIDS Project director. "Chevron claims they denied Mr. Echazabal work for his own good, but the experts unanimously agreed that any threat of liver disease to Echazabal from chemicals in the refinery would be a danger to all employees."

NEW YORK

Noted trans activist Sylvia Rivera, a pioneer of the gay liberation movement and one of the original Stonewall protesters, died of liver cancer Feb. 19 at St. Vincent's Manhattan Hospital. She was 50.

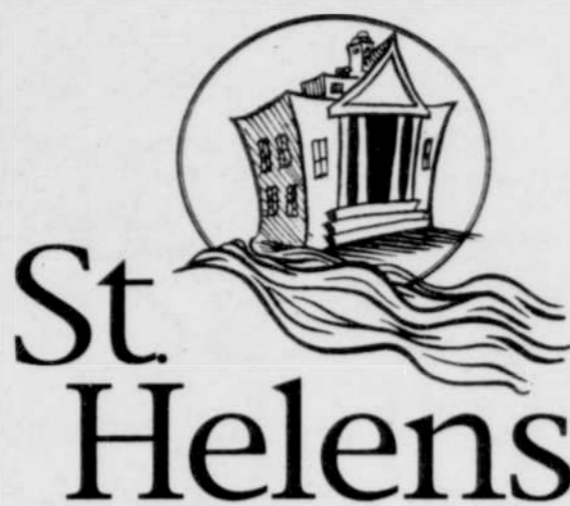
A Brooklyn resident, Rivera worked at Metropolitan Community Church, where she coordinated the food pantry. Her partner, Julia Murray, was with her at her death.

According to Martin Duberman's *Stonewall*, Rivera played a pivotal role in the confrontation that is credited with kicking off the modern sexual minorities movement. "I'm not missing a minute of this—it's the revolution!" she shouted to her partner on the morning of June 28, 1969, the day Stonewall Inn patrons fended off police during a raid. **JM**

Compiled by News Editor JIM RADOSTA, who can be reached at jim@justout.com.



Sylvia Rivera



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