

VIRGINIA

Soulforce co-founders the Rev. Mel White and Gary Nixon have leased a home in Lynchburg, right across the street from Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church. The conservative minister, televangelist and Liberty University chancellor is notorious for his condemnation of gay men and lesbians.

"When we met with Falwell and his supporters in 1999, he promised us that he would tone down his rhetoric against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people," White said. "We have been carefully monitoring his untruths, and it has only gotten worse. We cannot let this misinformation go unanswered."

Soulforce, an interfaith movement to end spiritual violence perpetuated by anti-gay religious teachings, announced the move Sept. 12 after White delivered a dinner invitation to Falwell's office, informing him that the couple were now his neighbors "in fact as well as in spirit." They began attending the church Sept. 15.

White, who wrote Falwell's autobiography, and Nixon, his partner of more than 20 years, will be joined in the coming weeks by Soulforce supporters from all across the United States. They intend to help restart a Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays chapter; meet with church members so they can hear real-life stories of tragedy and inspiration; and go door to door in an effort to "take the truth" about sexual minorities to Lynchburg.

"Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people can and do lead happy, healthy and productive lives, we love our families, and we are committed to building lasting relationships with our partners," said Karen Weldin, Soulforce operations director. "Conversely, Falwell's untruths waste lives, destroy families and lead to terrible suffering."

Additionally, hundreds will gather between Oct. 25 and 27 to mark the three-year anniversary of the initial Soulforce event in Lynchburg, when 200 volunteers met with 200 members of the church. Plans include a march for equality; a display of untruths uttered by Falwell answered by truths from mental health professionals, scientists and Bible scholars; and trainings in non-violent civil disobedience.

FLORIDA

Cristina Saralegui of Univision's *El Show de Cristina* and John Quiñones of ABC's *20/20* withdrew as hosts for Hispanic Media 100's awards ceremony after becoming aware of anti-gay attacks by one of the honorees.

Eladio José Armesto, publisher of *El Nuevo Patria*, was a leader of Take Back Miami-Dade, a Christian Coalition-affiliated group that unsuccessfully attempted to overturn the county's anti-discrimination ordinance last month. He went on record in the *Miami Herald* and elsewhere calling gay men and lesbians "multisexual extremists."



The Rev. Mel White (left) and Gary Nixon are Jerry Falwell's new neighbors

El Nuevo Patria continually has printed defamatory statements about the queer community, including claims that "homosexualists aren't interested in adults—they seek to attract boys and youths" and headlines like "Privileges for Perverts?" Hispanic Media 100, which honors 100 reporters, publishers and broadcasters for their work in Spanish-language media, announced in August that it would honor Armesto at its annual awards ceremony Sept. 20 in Miami.

"To honor Armesto, who has used his media experience and skills to defame and oppress others, is a slap in the face to the Miami community," Saralegui said. "He's equated gays and lesbians with child molesters and shown he has no interest in the core tenets of journalism: fairness and accuracy."

Quiñones agreed to serve as host of the event after Saralegui pulled out last month. He also canceled Sept. 17 and, in a letter to event organizer Chris Day, expressed concern that the reasons for his predecessor's withdrawal were concealed from him.

"I've also spent the last 24 hours reading some of the virulent anti-gay comments attributed to him in print—and in his own newspaper," Quiñones wrote. "Mr. Armesto certainly reserves his right to express his opinions. But I, too, want to express my own right not to be a part of any event that will pay tribute to anyone associated with such anti-gay and, by obvious extension, anti-American views."

LOUISIANA

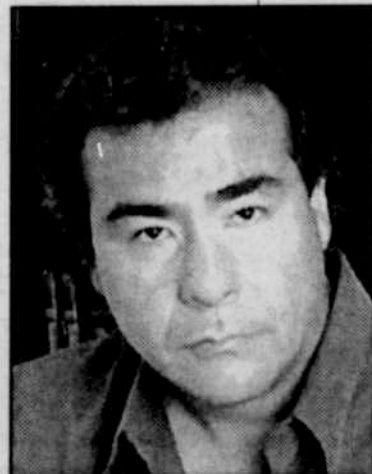
A U.S. District Judge in New Orleans decided Sept. 17 that the federal ban on sex discrimination does not apply to people who are trans. He then dismissed Peter Oiler's case against Winn-Dixie, even though the grocery store chain never claimed his off-the-job cross-dressing interfered with his work in any way.

Almost 15 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court said that laws against sex discrimination prevent employers from firing a person who doesn't act "like a man" or "like a woman." But that is just what Winn-Dixie did, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Oiler had worked for the company for 21 years, during which he showed



Cristina Saralegui and John Quiñones refused to serve as hosts of a Hispanic media awards gala honoring an anti-gay newspaper publisher



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