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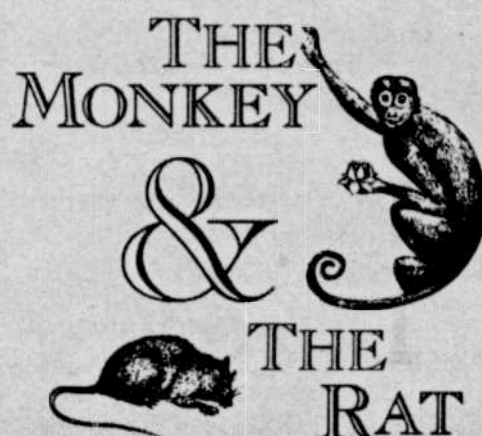
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NATIONAL news

Continued from Page 19

up for work on time, did a good job and followed all the rules, but in January 2000 he was fired because he cross-dresses off-duty. He and his wife, Shirley, lost their health insurance and nearly lost their home. The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit on his behalf, charging that Winn-Dixie violated state and federal bias laws.

"Discrimination based on gender identity is just as foolish and wrongheaded as all the other practices that deny people jobs and homes on account of something that has no bearing on ability or work ethic," said Joe Cook, Louisiana ACLU executive director. "Sooner or later, courts will recognize that people who do their jobs well should not lose their jobs simply because they are transgendered. But people like Peter Oiler will suffer until that day comes."

NEVADA

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals said a gay man who was harassed mercilessly by his supervisor and co-workers can sue under a federal sex discrimination law. Lambda Legal called the Sept. 24 decision a "solid victory" for equality that will have broad implications.

Medina Rene, a butler who served high-profile guests at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, was subjected to offensive comments and physically harassed by members of the all-male workforce—who grabbed his crotch and poked their fingers in his anus through his clothing on numerous occasions. The trial court and a panel of the federal appeals court earlier ruled that he could not sue under federal law because he had said he was targeted for harassment based on his sexual orientation.

"Today's ruling will impact lesbians and gay men—and others—who face harassment and discrimination because they don't fit what their co-workers or bosses think a man or a woman should be," attorney Jon Davidson said. "A significant amount of anti-gay harassment is sexual in nature and is rooted in gender stereotypes."

The ruling says Title VII of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from sexual harassment regardless of their sexual orientation. The opinion notes that Rene's co-workers routinely referred to him as "she" and "her" and that they mocked him for being "like a woman."

NATIONAL

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has called on Howard University to pursue justice in a physical and verbal assault on two gay people on the campus in Washington, D.C.

According to the *Washington Post*, student Darryl Payton, 18, was beaten and taunted by several members of the school's marching band Sept. 3. He was treated at the university's hospital for injuries that included a swollen jaw and bruises—one with the imprint of a trumpet valve.

When professor Luqman Salim tried to be a peacemaker, he was punched in the face even after he identified himself as a staff member. He and Payton complained that campus police officers did not make immediate arrests.

"Howard University, in its complete failure to properly record and pursue an investigation in this mat-



A sex discrimination lawsuit filed by a butler at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas will have broad national impact, attorneys say

ter, has through its actions become complicit in the crime itself," said Lorri L. Jean, NGLTF executive director. "Unfortunately, colleges and universities are all too often delinquent in their pursuit of hate-motivated crimes that occur on campus, particularly when they are based on actual or perceived sexual orientation."

KENTUCKY

After two denials of an application to form a Gay Straight Alliance, the American Civil Liberties Union has demanded that officials at Boyd County High in Ashland approve creation of the club. The federal Equal Access Act requires schools to treat GSAs as they would any other group, according to a letter sent Sept. 19.

The GSA first applied for official recognition last March, but the Site Based Decision Making Council denied its application, telling the adviser it was too late in the school year to start a new student organization. But when the GSA tried again last month, the denial came with no official explanation, although one member of the council was quoted in a local newspaper as saying the club was unnecessary because of the prior existence of the Human Rights Club, an organization with a broader focus.

"Denying the GSA's right to exist with the excuse that the school already has a Human Rights Club is simply bogus," said James Esseks, ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project litigation director. "According to federal law, the school doesn't get to make that decision for its students, and if the students want to start a GSA at a public school, they have every legal right to do so."

Federal courts repeatedly have ruled in favor of GSAs where schools tried to block them, upholding students' right to form the groups in Salt Lake City, Orange, Calif., and just two months ago in Franklin Township, Ind.

MASSACHUSETTS

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network called on Boston University chancellor John Silber to resign Sept. 30 in the face of mounting criticism surrounding his promotion of discrimination leveled at sexual minority students, faculty and the community at large.

"Mr. Silber should do the



John Silber