

The boy's mother is outraged about the attack. "I feel like no teacher should ever do that to anybody's child," she said. "If my son would have hit that teacher, they would have dragged him out by his heels."



Garnet Coleman

No state law protects students from such discrimination in Texas schools. State Rep. Garnet Coleman, D-Houston, tried to change that during the current legislative session by authoring the Dignity for All Students Act, which would address this type of issue. The bill was referred to the House Committee on Public Education, but chairman Kent Grusendorf refused to give it a hearing.

"The state's leadership obviously thinks issues such as school vouchers and textbook censorship are more important than assuring the safety of all students," said Randall Ellis, Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas executive director. "It is outrageous that it takes an incident such as this before people realize the importance of protecting LGBT youth."

Students have sought relief from harassment under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, as well as Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. However, these laws do not specifically protect them from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"Homophobia runs rampant in Texas," Ellis said. "All session, we have seen lawmakers launch attacks against the LGBT community. The leadership of the Legislature has failed a significant portion of the Texas population, and the consequences are frightening incidents such as the one at Westbury High School."

who took part in the action and promise not to punish others who do so in the future.

"We're appalled at this school's actions against a group of peaceful, law-abiding students," attorney Ken Choe said. "The principal told these students that they were being disruptive, but it's obvious who was really causing problems at school that day."

The school shut down the Amnesty International Club because some of its members had led the protest. They were participating in the Day of Silence Project, an annual nationwide action in which students vow not to speak in order to illustrate the silence in which queers often suffer discrimination and violence.

"We were really careful to make sure that what we were doing was legal and didn't interfere with school," senior Andrea Adame said. "All we were doing was being quiet and wearing stickers that explained what the day was all about, and we made sure students knew they should speak in classes where they have to, like Spanish class."

Andrew Rodriguez, principal of the downtown San Antonio school, previously had warned the club that he would not allow it to sponsor Day of Silence activities, so several students went forward with their plans while acting independently of the group. He spent much of the morning April 9 confronting teens in the hallways and cafeteria, demanding that they remove "I support Day of Silence" stickers from their clothing and removing them himself if they didn't comply immediately, at one point even tearing one girl's shirt. By lunchtime, Rodriguez reportedly was entering classrooms and interrupting instructional time to demand that students take the stickers off their clothing.

**NEW JERSEY**

In a 52-page document citing dozens of New Jersey Supreme Court decisions throughout the past five decades—as well as the text of the New Jersey Constitution itself—Lambda Legal responded May 9 to the state's motion to dismiss a lawsuit seeking to respect the right of same-sex couples to marry.

The national civil rights organization represents seven gay and lesbian couples in the historic case, Lewis et al. v. Harris et al. The case, filed in June 2002, is now before the Superior Court in Mercer County.

In its response Lambda detailed how the state's statutory barrier to marriage for same-sex couples violates the rights to privacy and equal protection in the New Jersey Constitution. Attorneys said state statutes, such as those restricting marriage to the union between a man and a woman, "must comply with the dictates of the New Jersey Constitution, and it is the proper role of the courts to ensure that they do."

Lambda Legal announced May 13 a settlement in its lawsuit accusing a New Jersey dentist of refusing to treat an HIV-positive man, in violation of state disability discrimination law.

The dentist denied any wrongdoing, claiming he did offer to treat the man. The lawsuit was filed last July in state court in Middlesex County.

The dentist, Gary R. Dornfeld, agreed to urge his colleagues nationwide to fulfill their legal and ethical obligations and treat patients with

After its principal forcibly removed stickers from students' clothing during a silent protest to raise awareness of anti-gay violence, the American Civil Liberties Union demanded May 27 that Luther Burbank High School stop censoring teens



From top, Suyin, Sarah and Zenzali Lael are among the plaintiffs seeking marriage equality in New Jersey

Continued on Page 28

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