

**NATIONAL news**

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promise of asylum is in question when an immigration judge recognizes that a man is being persecuted and sends him back to the country telling him to disguise the very characteristic that leads to persecution and makes him eligible for asylum. This is a deeply disturbing case, and we intend to help secure asylum for Jorge Soto Vega."

A 24-year-old trans woman who immigrated two years ago from Acapulco, Mexico, was murdered Sept. 30 in San Pablo.

Officers reported finding Ricardo "Sindy" Cuarda bleeding heavily from several gunshot wounds and lying in the driveway of a business. She died shortly thereafter at Doctors Medical Center.

The suspects are at large. "Heartless brutality such as this only underscores the grim reality that transphobia is lethal," said Tina D'Elia of the Community United Against Violence.

**NEW YORK**

The killer of a gay man whose body was found in his van Oct. 13 in Ridgewood, Queens, claims he stabbed the victim with a screwdriver in response to an unwanted sexual advance.

Eric Hornedo apparently met the suspect, Walter Drayton, through a phone service widely used for sexual encounters.

According to Drayton, after Hornedo came on to him Oct. 11, he tried to escape the van, but the doors and windows were locked.

Drayton was arrested Oct. 28 and charged with second-degree murder, robbery, criminal possession of stolen property and criminal possession of an illegal weapon. Before his arrest, he had allegedly ordered two cell phones and pornographic movies with the stolen credit card.

"From what we know so far, this could be a classic case of an anti-gay predator," said Richard Haymes of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. "The sus-



A man claims he had no choice but to kill Eric Hornedo because of an unwanted sexual advance

pect seems to be offering the standard 'gay panic' excuse for killing Mr. Hornedo—he made a pass at me, so I had to kill him."

A judge has freed the way for the Hispanic AIDS Forum, the state's largest Latino AIDS service provider, to proceed to trial in a case against its former landlord for trans discrimination, the American Civil Liberties Union announced Oct. 15. The agency brought suit against its former landlord for illegal eviction after the landlord complained that its trans clients were using the "wrong" bathrooms and banished all trans people from the common areas of the building.

"It is unfortunate that the bathroom has once again become a battleground in the fight for equal rights," attorney James Esseks said. "The landlord's decision to exclude transgender people from the bathrooms and common areas was just as wrong today as it was 50 years ago when business owners in the South tried to force African Americans to use separate bathrooms."

The trial court's ruling was in response to a motion by the landlord, who claimed trans people are not protected by the state's civil rights laws. It joined other New York courts in interpreting the state's civil rights law to include protections for trans people.

This is the first lawsuit under New York's civil rights law that has dealt with the issue of which bathrooms are appropriate for trans people to use. After this lawsuit was filed, New York City amended its civil rights law to provide explicit coverage for trans people.

**WYOMING**

The Casper City Council unanimously rejected Oct. 28 a request from the Rev. Fred Phelps to erect a "monument" to the death of Matthew Shepard. The bronze plaque would have featured the student's image and the words "Matthew Shepard entered hell Oct. 12, 1998, at age 21 in defiance of God's solemn warning."

Citing a ruling last year by the 10th Circuit Court in Denver, Phelps says the city has no choice but to display the intolerant and bigoted message in Shepard's hometown or remove another statue in the park displaying the Ten Commandments. A disbarred lawyer, he told *The Salt Lake Tribune* he would buy private property to display the monument or sue the city.

Shepard was the victim of an anti-gay hate crime in Laramie. At his funeral, Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka,



U.S. Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., condemned the Rev. Fred Phelps' proposed "monument" to Matthew Shepard

Kan., screamed "God Hates Fags" and held signs that read "No Fags in Heaven."

"This ignorant hatred represents the worst in humanity," said U.S. Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., who is running for president. "I am disgusted by it."

**TEXAS**

An off-duty Austin police officer was attacked Oct. 25 in an apparent anti-gay hate crime.

The victim, his partner and a friend were at a stop sign in a car with a rainbow sticker on the license plate when two pedestrians in the crosswalk blocked the vehicle while six to eight other men began pounding it. Witnesses say one man struck the victim in the face and pulled him from the passenger seat while yelling, "Faggot."

The officer fell to the ground, and the attackers picked him up only to beat him again. He suffered broken teeth and puncture wounds on his lower lip.



Randall Ellis

Four men were arrested and released on bail. "I fear that, in time, we will see an escalating violent backlash to accompany the far right's war against LGBT equality," said Randall Ellis of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

**ARIZONA**

The LGBTQ Coalition at Arizona State University in Tempe is calling on administrators to address the needs of the queer campus community in response to an apparent increase in homophobic sentiment and harassment.

The students expect officials to amend their nondiscrimination policy to include gender identity and expression; to approve and implement a proposed gay and lesbian studies certificate academic program; to increase funding to initiate more diversity and awareness programming; and to provide a larger space to serve as a drop-in and resource center for queer students. This call for action comes from an increase in reports of bias-related incidents on and around campus:

- A gay student working security at an apartment complex Oct. 16 was told "Fuck you, faggot" by a student on the men's basketball team after responding to a noise complaint.

- While waiting to be seated at a restaurant Oct. 16, a group of pledge members of the gay-straight Sigma Phi Beta fraternity were taunted by two men who made derogatory statements and threatened to assault them.

- A student found these words written on the walls of a bathroom Oct. 15: "Get AIDS here," "Kill the fags" and "Faggots should die."

- A straight ally wearing a National Coming Out Day T-shirt was called a "faggot" Oct. 9 in her classroom.

- A gay student found the words "Suck my cock, faggot" written on his car and that his rainbow stickers had been torn off the bumper Oct. 2.

The Arizona Supreme Court refused Oct. 29 to hear a challenge to Gov. Janet Napolitano's executive order prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation against state employees.

She issued the executive order in June, adding Arizona to nearly two dozen other states with similar policies. Six state legislators asked the Supreme Court to overturn Napolitano's order, claiming the governor lacked the authority to set such a policy. [7]

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