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**NATIONAL news****NATIONAL**

A new report by the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies outlines the ways that the sexual minorities community can stay healthy during anti-gay campaigns.

A total of 11 states enacted divisive anti-gay referenda in last month's election. In the course of these campaigns to limit the rights of queers, well-publicized stereotypes and hostility became dominant themes that challenged their psychological well-being.

The report, titled *Surviving and Thriving in the Midst of Anti-Gay Politics*, presents three primary strategies: analysis, action and allies. Queers should analyze the homophobia present in the campaign, take action to resist anti-gay efforts and draw on the support of heterosexual allies. Report author Glenda Russell noted that heterosexual allies play a particularly important role in reducing feelings of isolation in addition to the value of their political support.

The United Church of Christ reports that CBS and NBC are refusing to run a 30-second television ad because its all-inclusive welcome is "too controversial."

The ad—part of the denomination's new, broad identity campaign that began airing nationwide Dec. 1—states that, like Jesus, UCC seeks to welcome all people, regardless of ability, age, race, economic circumstance or sexual orientation.

In a written statement, CBS told UCC that, because of scenes touching on "the exclusion of gay couples and other minority groups" by other religious institutions as well as "the fact the executive branch has recently proposed a constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, this spot is unacceptable for broadcast on the [CBS and UPN] networks. NBC also called the ad "too controversial."

The Human Rights Campaign strongly denounced the act and called it "shameful censorship of diversity and understanding."

"It's ironic that after a political season awash in commercials based on fear and deception by both parties seen on all the major networks, an ad with a message of welcome and inclusion would be deemed too controversial," says the Rev. John H. Thomas, UCC's general minister and president.

The commercial features two muscle-bound "bouncers" standing guard outside a symbolic, picturesque church and selecting which people are permitted to attend Sunday services. Written text interrupts the scene, announcing: "Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither do we."

A narrator then proclaims UCC's commitment to the Lord's "extravagant" welcome: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." You can view the ad at www.stillspeaking.com.

Take Action!

Let these networks know that while they refuse to air these nondiscriminatory messages, they still feature popular gay characters whose presence rakes in their profit.

To contact CBS, call 212-975-4321.

To contact NBC, call 212-664-4444.

WYOMING

Responding to the Nov. 26 airing of an ABC News segment on the murder of Matthew Shepard, representatives of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs called it irresponsible, biased, shameful and destructive.

"The fact is that there is nothing significant in the 20/20 program that wasn't raised during the trial," said Clarence Patton, the coalition's acting executive director. "One has to question the motivation of the show's producer in not only attempting to engage in revisionist history,

but in doing so at this point in time, as our nation's lesbian and gay community is fighting for its life to an extent not seen in years."

The segment focused on the role of crystal meth in the behavior of Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, Shepard's killers.

"That drugs may have played a role in a violent crime and in this murder is not news," said Patton. "Had 20/20 actually wanted to do a fair and balanced story on this or any other anti-gay hate murder, they would have reached out to experts on anti-gay hate violence. They didn't. Had they wanted to examine the impact or prevalence of drug use in violent crime or hate crimes, they would have reached out to criminal justice officials or hate violence victim advocates with expertise in those areas. They didn't. And those are only two among many factors in determining that the real goal of this story wasn't to unearth new information or even report additional context, but to malign the victim, mortify his family and inflict pain on the larger LGBT community that came to identify with Matthew, his life and the fear that we all live with as a community under attack."

According to data gathered by the coalition, anti-gay violence increased 26 percent nationally at the end of 2003 and has continued to rise throughout 2004.

These statistics are higher than the FBI's recently released statistics that 16.7 percent of all hate crimes reported in 2003 were motivated by sexual orientation. This is, however, the highest percentage overall since the FBI started reporting the statistics 13 years ago.

According to the FBI, of the 1,479 hate crime victims, 61.5 percent were targeted because they were male homosexuals. Anti-lesbian attacks accounted for 15.6 percent of the total.

California recorded the most violent incidents—337—against people based on their perceived sexuality. New York came in second, and Massachusetts third. About 30 percent of the attacks occurred in people's homes; highways and roads came in second, making up 25 percent; and schools and colleges placed third with about 12 percent.

Take Action!To contact ABC, visit abcnews.go.com/2020.**WISCONSIN**

Leaders from a variety of human and queer rights organizations met at University of Wisconsin, Superior, for a daylong conference Nov. 21 to assess the legislative climates in Wisconsin and Minnesota in the wake of the November election.

Although both states already have laws prohibiting same-sex marriage, statewide referenda are in the works to cement legal barriers against queers and their families. The groups who met comprised communities of faith as well as social justice organizations and worked together to make a plan that includes both lobbying legislators and talking with family, friends and people in other marginalized communities.

MISSOURI

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in federal court Nov. 23 against a high school that twice punished a student for wearing T-shirts bearing Gay Pride messages and that banned him from wearing the shirts to school again. Attorneys for Brad Mathewson also asked for a court order to stop the school from further censoring his speech.

"Because I'm gay, my school is trying to take away my constitutional right as an American to express myself. The school lets other students wear anti-gay T-shirts, and I under-

stand that they have a right to do that. I just want the same right," said Mathewson. "I think tolerating each other's differences is a key part in teaching students how to become good citizens."

Mathewson was disciplined twice in October for wearing T-shirts supporting queers and was suspended after Webb City High School officials refused to meet with his mother without the family's attorney present. Although the 16-year-old had worn one of the T-shirts to school at least six times without incident, Principal Stephen P. Gollhofer now claims he was concerned that the shirts might offend other students. Students with opposing beliefs on the

same issues are allowed to express their views, as anti-gay T-shirts and bumper stickers are common in the school's hallways.

"What's happening to Brad Mathewson is a clear-cut case of censorship under the Constitution," said Dick Kurtenbach, ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri executive director. "We intend to make sure Webb City High School stops breaking the law and treats all of its students equally, regardless of their views."

The complaint in Mathewson's case can be found online at www.aclu.org/lesbiangayrights. For more information about the ACLU's work to protect the rights of queer students, look at www.aclu.org/getequal.

MICHIGAN

The Human Rights Campaign denounced the decision to strip domestic partner benefits from state workers' contracts because of Proposal 2, an amendment to the Michigan Constitution that denies marriage to same-sex couples.

"The people of Michigan did not vote to take health care away from their neighbors," said Seth Kilbourn, national field director. "We're deeply disappointed about this decision. This is a dangerous move for thousands of families who are working just as hard as their co-workers but receiving no health insurance for their families. Michiganders support protections for their neighbors, including same-sex couples. We urge the governor's office to reconsider."

According to The Associated Press, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office will strip the domestic partner benefits for same-sex couples out of the negotiated contracts because voters Nov. 2 approved an amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman and banning "similar unions for any purpose."

ALABAMA

State Rep. Gerald Allen has proposed a bill that would ban books about gay and lesbian people from public libraries.

The American Civil Liberties Union called the legislation bad public policy, unconstitutional and just plain wrong. If passed, Alabama's libraries would be robbed of works by celebrated authors such as Herman Melville, Tennessee Williams, Willa Cather, Carson McCullers, John Cheever, Alice Walker, James Baldwin, Truman Capote and Gore Vidal, to name a few on what will be a very long list.

If this bill becomes law, the ACLU added, it is also likely to entangle Alabama once again in costly litigation that will deprive its residents of money badly needed to improve education and human services. **J**

Compiled by News Editor SARAH DOUGHER, who can be reached at sarah@justout.com.



Gay high school student Brad Mathewson was suspended for wearing Pride shirts to school