

**NEWSBRIEFS**

**HUD sets policies to end LGBT discrimination in housing**

WASHINGTON, D.C. —

Housing and Urban Development is proposing changes to housing regulations to deter discrimination against sexual orientation or gender identity. The move comes after state and local studies have shown a bias against people in the LGBT community.

Among other safeguards, the initiatives announced Oct. 21 will clarify that the term "family" as used to describe eligible beneficiaries of our public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs include otherwise eligible lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender (LGBT) individuals and couples.

In addition to issuance of proposed rule, HUD will commission the first-ever national study of discrimination against members of the LGBT community in the rental and sale of housing.

HUD expects to begin the regulatory process immediately. HUD undertook research in 1977, 1989 and 2000 to study the impact of housing discrimination on the basis of race and color. It is believed that LGBT individuals and families may remain silent because in many local jurisdictions, they may have little or no legal recourse.

In one such statewide study, Michigan's Fair Housing Centers found that nearly 30 percent of same-sex couples were treated differently when attempting to buy or rent a home.

**CORRECTIONS**

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org.

**Soldiers accuse Fort Lewis of abuse**

BY CYDNEY GILLIS  
 STREET NEWS SERVICE

Seattle, Wash. —

Leo Church abandoned his Army post twice without permission, but his lawyer says he had no choice: When he got a phone call alerting him that his two little girls and their mother had become homeless, he dropped everything.

The 25-year-old private left Fort Hood, Texas, and went to Arlington, Va., where he found the three living in a van and infested with lice. He brought the girls home with him, but his home was the barracks at Fort Hood. His captain essentially told him to stow the girls and failed to file paperwork that Church needed to get family housing.

So he went AWOL again, taking his 4-year-old and toddler to stay with his mother in Amarillo, where he worked from dawn until well after dusk at any job he could get to support the girls, from making burritos at Taco Bell to clearing brush from the highway.

Last December, Church was picked up and later court martialled for desertion, receiving an eight-month sentence that he is now serving in the brig at Fort Lewis, Wash. But the punishment that he and other soldiers are receiving there, his lawyer says, far exceeds the crime — the subject of a complaint the attorney plans to file.

Since Church and Sgt. Travis Bishop arrived at the brig in September, says their civilian attorney, James Branum, they have been subjected to strip searches with a camera in the room. Female guards have monitored the searches and watched the men in the restroom and showers. Guards at the brig also have refused an attorney visit and continue to monitor the two soldiers' phone conversations with counsel.

All of it, Branum says, is unconstitutional. The Eighth Amendment, he says, guarantees freedom from cruel and unusual punishment — a category, he argues, that includes the type of sexual humiliation used

on prisoners at Iraq's Abu Graib prison. The Sixth Amendment, he says, guarantees the right to an attorney and that, he says, requires confidential communication.

Branum, who is based in Oklahoma, and local co-counsel LeGrand Jones first became aware of the problems shortly after Church and Bishop arrived at Fort Lewis and Jones went to see them. Jones was denied access and was later told it was because he was on a list of anti-war protesters — not a legal reason, Branum says, to keep someone off a military base.

When Branum tried to get his clients on the phone — something he says he's had little trouble with at other briggs across the nation — it wasn't easy to arrange. He says guards first told him that Bishop, a conscientious objector who is serving a one-year sentence after refusing to ship out to Afghanistan, couldn't speak on the phone because he was on a "medical hold."

When he finally got Church on the phone, he told Branum there was a guard with him in the room listening. The attorney told Church to hand the phone to the guard and asked why he was there. The guard told him that he couldn't leave because the attorney rooms at the new brig, which opened in August, hadn't been set up yet — and he couldn't say when they would be.

Attorney rooms should have glass windows through which a guard can watch without listening, Branum says, and include a non-monitored phone line. The Army can listen in to all other phone lines on a base, he says. "It's on a recorded line," Branum says. "That's unconstitutional. You can't do that."

Female guards are not allowed to search male prisoners, however, and none have, he says. Some strip searches made by male guards may have been captured by motion-sensor cameras located throughout the facility, but, since discovering this, Piek says, the searches are now conducted in areas out of camera range.

As for the attorneys not getting to see or speak by phone with their clients, he says the lawyers had not yet filed the proper paperwork identifying themselves as the soldiers' attorney of record, so no confidentiality was required. "Travis Bishop and Leo Church are being afforded all the privileges of other prisoners," Piek says, "including phone calls, access to mail and visitors."

Amanda Laughter, Church's current girlfriend of two years, says she has written five letters to Church, however, and it is clear from his letters that he's never gotten hers — and he's been at Fort Lewis five weeks.

"In one of his letters, he said it was like Guantanamo Bay, that they're treating them like criminals," Laughter says.

The court-martial, she says, put the couple through an incredible ordeal. Church was taken away just before Christmas last year, just after the two learned that she was pregnant. She got a room near Fort Hood to be close to him, but with Army officials threatening to put Church away for 15 to 20 years, the couple decided before their son was born on June 4 that it would be best to give him up for adoption.

Branum says he will start by sending an informal cease-and-desist letter to the brig's commander. If he does not respond within 15 days, the attorney says he will file a formal complaint under Section 138 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and keep pursuing it up the chain of command.

If that doesn't work, Branum says, he'll file a lawsuit in federal court. But, "We're giving Fort Lewis every possible way to resolve this," he says, "before going to court."

Reprinted from Real Change, Seattle, Wash.  
 © Street News Service: www.street-papers.org

**Coffee**  
 THE WORLD IN YOUR CUP

Special exhibit on view through January 10

WORLD FORESTRY CENTER  
 Washington Park  
 Portland Oregon  
 www.worldforestry.org

Discovery Museum

Sponsored in part by:  
 PORTLAND ROASTING Co. Inc. BROWN COFFEE Lab The Oregonian

**Street Roots Online Auction!**  
 Oct. 30 - Nov. 8

See page 7 for auction items and how to bid

**WWW.STREETROOTSAUCTION.ORG**

**Sisters Of The Road**  
 Please join Sisters in celebrating our 30th Birthday!

**Celebrating 30 Years**

The party will be **Saturday, Nov. 7 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Sisters' Cafe, 133 NW 6th Ave.**

Come help us commemorate 30 years of history created in an atmosphere of nonviolence and gentle personalism. There will be door prizes, scrap books and birthday cake. All are welcome!

www.sistersoftheroad.org 133 NW 6th Ave., Portland, OR 97209 503-222-5694

**PDC is proud to help preserve the historic Hung Far Low sign — a symbol of the rich cultural heritage in Old Town/Chinatown.**

PDC assisted the project with a Signage and Lighting Improvement Program (SLIP) grant. The program provides property owners and tenants with funds to upgrade signage and awnings, and improve window and facade lighting. This in turn helps create a positive retail and pedestrian environment in our city.

PDC urges citizens to help restore Portland's iconic sign by purchasing a commemorative Hung Far Low t-shirt available at Ping restaurant in Old Town/Chinatown.

Investing in Portland's Future

**PDC**  
 PORTLAND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

www.pdc.us/business