

# Q Notes

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Did you attend the Millennium March on Washington this past April?

Yes, I had a good time	No, I didn't support it	I wanted to, but couldn't make it
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## State gay youth agency secures new director

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

DURHAM—After searching for more than two months, representatives of NC's only statewide organization focused on GLB and allied youth has announced the hiring of Paula Austin as the group's new executive director.

Austin, originally from New York, made a name for herself in the Tarheel state through her extensive involvement in literacy work. Her efforts included active participation in SCALE, the Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education.

Hez Norton, the previous executive director, worked with her successor at NCLYN for two weeks to ensure a smooth transition. Following that, she completed a permanent move to Boston.

During Norton's tenure, NCLYN stressed leadership, communication skills and networking to its members — all between the ages of 13 and 24. Austin plans to hold to the same course while broadening the scope even wider. She wants NCLYN to be instrumental in grooming a generation of leaders who are able to effectively tackle a multitude of social issues.

"I plan to provide this safe space [NCLYN] to more lesbian, gay, bisexual and allied youth and get our name and voices out there," Austin asserted. "As an Afro-Caribbean femme lesbian, I think NCLYN's future lies in increasing our multi-issue organizing efforts."

In addition to filling its highest post, NCLYN also tapped Brandon Lacey Campos to assume the newly-created position of statewide coordinator.

His mission is to strengthen the organization's statewide presence and extend more of its resources to rural communities.

Campos has been dedicated to youth organizing since his college years in both North

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Carolina and his native Minnesota.

"To be part of this is purely and simply a celebration of my identity and the work I've done so far. I bring with me a commitment to youth empowerment and positive social change," he said.

Denisse Andrade, NCLYN's communications coordinator, praised both hirings in a press release announcing them. "Having these two wonderful people brings a new energy to the organization that will allow us to continue our work in creating more progressive communities that understand and connect different forms of oppressions."

In other news, NCLYN was also the recent recipient of two generous donations — one from a rather unusual benefactor.

The group received a \$25,000 grant from the Diana Princess of Wales Fund.

The 12-month grant will support further development of an initiative to revise the state's controversial Teach Abstinence Until Marriage Law which forces teachers — among other things — to state that some homosexual sex acts are illegal under NC law whenever the topic comes up in the classroom.

The other grant comes from the Gill Foundation, the charitable organization founded by Colorado entrepreneur Tim Gill that funds GLBT programs across the nation. The Foundation awarded NCLYN \$15,000 for general operating support.

For more information on NCLYN, call (919) 683-3037. ▼

## Gender activists lobby Congress

by Alan Klein  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC — National Gender Lobby Days took place in the nation's capital May 21-23. More than 150 activists from across the US converged on Capitol Hill to educate Congressmembers about the prevalence of gender-based violence and the need to end gender-based discrimination in the workplace.

Sponsored by GenderPAC, a national organization working to guarantee every American's right to express their gender free of stereotypes, discrimination and violence, Lobby Days were used to kick off the group's groundbreaking Congressional Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Project.

The Project asks Congressmembers to sign a diversity statement publicly affirming that their office will not discriminate based on an employee's gender orientation. Gender activists visited over 100 congressional offices and obtained signatures from 28 representatives and 2 senators with more pending.

GenderPAC also announced plans to open a Beltway office this summer to better manage the project and pursue its educational and public advocacy objectives.

GenderPAC convened an all-day gender policy institute on May 21 that was attended by 75 activists. The event featured in-depth coverage of employment discrimination, hate crimes, the Employment Non-Discrimination

Act (ENDA), judicial strategies and an in-depth presentation on effective lobbying and advocacy techniques by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).

"GenderPAC's Congressional EEO Project marks our first true litmus test for congressional support of gender civil rights," said Riki Anne Wilchins, GenderPAC executive director. "We thank the gender activists from around the country who attended this event, our board, donors and members for making the kickoff of this project such a huge success."

On May 22, GenderPAC held a Congressional Gala honoring Rep. Janet Schakowsky (D-IL) and Chicago gender activist Miranda Stevens-Miller. Schakowsky was the first Congressmember to expand her office's EEO statement to include gender. Attending the gala were Congressmembers Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Carolyn Maloney (R-NY) and staff members from Reps. William Delahunt (D-MA), Michael Forbes (D-NY), Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Lynn Rivers (D-MI).

GenderPAC revealed that next year's National Gender Lobby Days will be preceded by a three-day National Conference on Gender.

The first National Gender Lobby Days took place in 1996 following the tragic murder of Brandon Teena.

For more information on GenderPAC, visit their web site at <http://www.gpac.org>. ▼

## Black GLBT survey is underway

by David Elliot  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—The most extensive survey ever conducted of black GLBT people in the US is currently underway.

"Black Pride Survey 2000" is a comprehensive research project designed to document the policy priorities, basic demographics and unmet needs of thousands of black gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

Washington, DC's black GLBT community had the chance to participate at "D.C. Black Pride 2000" during the Memorial weekend. The gathering was the third of 10 such celebrations around the country at which the survey will be distributed.

The survey has already been conducted at Philadelphia Black Pride and at Houston

Splash. In the next few months, it will be available at Oakland Black Pride (June 16-18); Chicago Black Pride (June 29-July 3); At the Beach in Los Angeles (June 30-July 4); Hotter than July in Detroit (July 18-25); New York Black Pride (August 2-6); New York Caribbean Pride; and In the Life in Atlanta (September 3-7).

"Black Pride Survey 2000" was launched by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) Policy Institute in collaboration with several leading gay and lesbian African-American scholars, the participating Black Pride celebrations, and the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum.

The survey will provide invaluable information about family structure, age, occupation, income, political affiliation, policy concerns, experiences of discrimination, access to health care, and a host of other subjects. Because sexual orientation and gender identity are rarely included in surveys, there is a dearth of solid, statistical information specifically about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the

US. "Black Pride Survey 2000" is a step toward closing this wide demographic gulf for black GLBT people.

"Legacies of invisibility, bias and inattention have created huge gaps in knowledge about the basic demographic realities, unmet needs and concerns of African-American same-gender-loving and GLBT people," said Dr. Cathy Cohen, Professor of Political Science and African American Studies at Yale University and lead researcher for the project. "This survey is a step toward gathering such critical information."

"Black Pride Survey 2000" is a project of the NGLTF Policy Institute's Racial and Economic Justice Initiative, a long-term program to increase meaningful advocacy by mainstream GLBT organizations on issues of racism and poverty and to support those organizations that

already engage in this work. The NGLTF initiative is a multi-year commitment to research, policy development and advocacy that also examines racism within the GLBT community and works to increase advocacy on issues of sexual orientation and gender

identity by mainstream non-GLBT organizations working on issues of race and poverty. "The goal of the survey and the Racial and Economic Justice Initiative is a cultural shift within the GLBT movement to a new paradigm that identifies racism and poverty as intrinsic threats to the dignity and well-being of all GLBT people," said Urvasi Vaid, NGLTF Policy Institute Director.

"We seek to engender a stronger, more determined and self-confident GLBT movement that explicitly links with other movements to challenge America to understand the critical need to eradicate the social pathologies of homophobia, racism and poverty from our culture," she added.

In addition to Dr. Cohen, the remaining

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## Lesbian mother regains custody

by Travis Tu  
Special to Q-Notes

ST. PETERSBURG, FL—Sending a strong message that the best interests of children are not served by baseless assumptions and anti-gay stereotypes, a Florida appellate court has rejected a custody decision because it allowed prejudice to keep a lesbian mother from her two young children.

Ruling 2-1, the District Court of Appeal of Florida for the Second District reversed a trial court ruling granting sole custody of the kids to their father, writing that the lower court had inappropriately "succumbed to the father's attacks on the mother's sexual orientation."

The appellate decision in *Jacoby v. Jacoby*, written by Judge Stevan T. Northcutt, was released May 26.

"The court sent a forceful reminder that the best interests of children, not irrational fears and prejudices, should be paramount in all custody decisions," said Staff Attorney Stephen R. Scarborough of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund's Southern Regional Office in Atlanta.

Scarborough authored a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of the mother, Julie Jacoby, arguing that society's irrational prejudices should not be held against parents.

Jacoby filed for divorce in 1997, and later moved her two children, ages 7 and 10, into the home she shared with her female partner in St. Petersburg, Florida.

In 1998, the Pinellas County Circuit Court granted sole custody to her ex-husband, agreeing with his argument that granting custody to Jacoby would have made the children vulnerable to teasing and harassment from classmates at their private, religious school.

The appeals court said that the decision to grant custody to the father "penalized the mother for her sexual orientation without evidence that it harmed the children."

The appeals court also admonished the lower court for favoring the household of the father, who has remarried, over the home provided by the children's mother, ordering it to reconsider custody without relying on anti-gay prejudices.

Lambda's brief had urged the appeals court to overturn the circuit court decision because it ignored the 16-year-old US Supreme Court ruling in *Palmore v. Sidoti*, in which the High Court held that "private biases may be outside the reach of the law, but the law cannot, directly or indirectly, give them effect."

Added Scarborough, "The circuit court wrongly thought it could and should insulate these kids from possible knee-jerk biases against lesbian and gay parents."

Lambda Legal Director Beatrice Dohrn said, "Just like the communities we live in, the courts are waking up to the truth about lesbian and gay parents and our families. Decisions like this give us hope that the law will catch up to reality and do away with the discriminatory barriers that divide us and harm our children." ▼