

Q Notes

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper



Fred Phelps pickets Bank of America. See story on page 16.

Published Every Two Weeks On Recycled Paper • Volume 15, Number 26 • May 12, 2001 • FREE

Sheriff held accountable in Teena death

by Peg Byron
Special to Q-Notes

LINCOLN, NE — In a ruling that strengthens law enforcement's duty to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender crime victims, the Nebraska Supreme Court held a Richardson County sheriff accountable for his failure to protect Brandon Teena, who was raped and later killed by his rapists after law enforcement failed to intervene.

The decision in *Joann Brandon v. County of Richardson* unanimously ruled in favor of the victim's mother on all her claims. The case has been closely watched by civil rights and victims' advocacy groups, all of whom urged the Court to vigorously enforce the government's obligation to protect all people who are victimized by crime, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or other perceived difference.

Brandon's mother said, "Nothing will bring Teena back, but I will sleep better knowing that we have found some justice for my child, and that because of this case, fewer parents will find their children abused and exposed to danger by law enforcement officials."

Brandon Teena was born Teena Brandon and raised as a girl. In 1993, he was living as a man in Falls City, Nebraska. There, two male acquaintances raped Brandon after discovering his physical sex.

Shortly afterward, Brandon reported the rape to Sheriff Charles Laux, who not only notified the rapists of the complaint, but took no steps to protect Brandon, despite strong evidence that his life was in danger. Laux, who had been abusive and accusatory while interviewing Brandon about the rape, even forbade a deputy from arresting the pair, who then tracked Brandon down and shot and killed him. The killers were later arrested and convicted of murder.

The Court sided with Joann Brandon, represented by Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and co-counsel Herbert Friedman, in her claim that the trial court erred in reducing damages for Brandon's pain and suffering where the Sheriff had violated a duty to protect. The court also found that the Sheriff's conduct for the abusive treatment during his interview of Brandon was "extreme and outrageous, beyond all possible bounds of decency, and is to be regarded as atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized community." The Court further found that the value of Brandon's life to his mother should be higher, and that Brandon most certainly bears no fault whatsoever for his murder.

"The Court today sent a strong message to law enforcement that there is a high price to pay for not respecting victims of violence, including victims of bias violence," said David S. Buckel, Senior Staff Attorney for Lambda Legal. Buckel added, "This is a great victory for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, and other communities who suffer abuse and violence because of who they are." ▼



Brandon Teena

The Queen City shows its colors with Pride

Suzanne Westenhofer kept 'em laughing.

John twirls.

Brian & Jody

Jade Estaban Estrada rocked out on center stage.

Fun in the sun.

Scenes from Charlotte Pride. See our next issue for details.

Vendor Fair

AIDS Walk 2001

Gay Latin director appointed to US civil liberties group

by Eric Ferrero
Special to Q-Notes

NEW YORK — Anthony D. Romero, an openly gay man, a Latino, a Ford Foundation director and public interest attorney, was appointed May 1 as the sixth executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. Romero will take the helm of the ACLU from Ira Glasser, who has led the organization since 1978.



Anthony D. Romero

"I hope to begin my tenure as the leader of this vitally important organization by sparking a new dialogue about the bedrock values of American democracy," said the 35-year-old Romero. "My overarching goal is to promote a new generation of committed civil libertarians and civil rights activists."

"Even though we have come so far," Romero said, "our nation faces serious and continuing civil liberties challenges - widespread racial profiling, threats to reproductive freedom, hostility to immigrants, a burgeoning prison population and, most importantly, a generation of young people who do not fully embrace or appreciate the need for constant vigilance and defense of our constitutional freedoms."

Romero also said that he is eager to explore the impact of science and new technologies on freedom of expression, privacy and discrimination. "The ACLU must do as much for the future as it does for the present," he said.

"Leading the ACLU will be a life's dream and aspiration come true," added Romero, who becomes the first Latino and the first openly gay man to head the ACLU.

Nadine Strossen, the ACLU President who led a 14-member committee that recommended Romero, called him "brilliant, dedicated, determined, diligent, resourceful and successful."

"Anthony is an idealist, bold and creative in his vision and strategy, but skeptical and realistic in his tactics," Strossen said. "His career ex-

emplifies the adage that those who prepare for opportunities are the most likely to discover or create them."

Romero has worked at the Ford Foundation for almost a decade. He is currently the Director of Human Rights and International Cooperation, which is the foundation's largest program with \$90 million in grants last year. He joined Ford in 1992 as a program officer in the Rights and Social Justice Program and, after less than four years, was promoted to become one of the youngest Directors in Ford's history.

Before joining the Ford Foundation, Romero worked at the Rockefeller Foundation. He graduated from Stanford Law School and Princeton University.

"The ACLU Executive Director is the conductor of an often-brassy orchestra," said outgoing Executive Director Ira Glasser. "He does not need to play all the instruments, but must be able to envision, organize and lead the performance. I am confident that Anthony Romero is the best person to be the ACLU's next conductor."

See ROMERO on Page 6

The latest Q-Poll results

How often do you go home with someone you just met at a bar?
 Several times a year -18% Every chance I get -16% A few times a month -13%
 Used to do it regularly, don't do it any more - 24% Never have - 27%

To participate in our new Q-Poll, access www.q-notes.com