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THIS obedience: the battle for religious rites

Film chronicles Lutheran clergy's painful path to becoming a pastor

This is a documentary of one woman's battle with the third largest Christian denomination the United States, the ELCA, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Anita C. Hill is determined to become a pastor in spite of Church rules against "non-celibate" gays and lesbians in the clergy.

In an act of "ecclesiastical disobedience" a small Midwestern congregation ordains Anita Hill.

In the following months, Anita's life is turned upside down as "good Church folk" and the Lutheran hierarchy rejects her ordination and her Congregation. Interwoven with Anita's personal reflections, her close friend Emily Eastwood struggles with the Church's power to reject her own call to ministry.

By defying Church rules, Rev. Anita C. Hill emerges from relative anonymity to become a national icon in the fight for spiritual equality.

Given unprecedented access to Rev. Hill and the ELCA's National Assembly, *THIS obedience* reveals the emotional epicenter of



The Ordination

Rev. Anita Carol Hill

The Recognition

debate over the ordination of gay clergy.

"*THIS obedience* has captured the struggle for justice for God's GLBT children in just 90 powerful minutes. I felt despair and wept bitterly. But I felt hope, joy and certainty again as well," said Rev. Mel White, co-founder of Soulforce and author of *Stranger at the Gate*.

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employment, union membership and housing, among other acts.

The Hate Crimes Bill authored by State Sen. Cisco McSorley, added penalties for bias-related crimes of vandalism and acts of violence (save for non-capital murders) against various categories including sexual orientation and gender identity.

"With the passage of a hate crimes bill in New Mexico to protect, among others, sexual orientation and gender identity; may this serve to speed all states to have such protections," said Stephenson of NMGIN, "and serve notice on our culture that all persons are deserving of respect and freedom."

The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition paid high tribute to the Coalition for Equality in New Mexico, and to New Mexico

Gender Advocacy Information Network for an outstanding year.

"Theirs was not only a tremendous victory, but a wonderful blueprint for success," said NTAC chair, Vanessa Edwards Foster. "New Mexico GAIN only formed four years ago, and they've made fantastic strides," added Foster, also executive director of TGAIN in neighboring Texas. "I'm very proud of Virginia and the New Mexico group!"

Only Minnesota and Rhode Island previously had transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination protections before the New Mexico vote. With the governor's signature, New Mexico will also join Minnesota, California, Vermont, Missouri and Pennsylvania with Hate Crimes legislation that covers gender identity.

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