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Survey mines depth of harassment in public schools

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

NEW YORK—A new survey indicates that 69 percent of GLBT youth are the recipients of verbal, physical or sexual harassment at school. The study was conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the largest national organization working to end anti-gay bias in K-12 schools.

The school climate survey was compiled from the responses of 496 students attending schools in 32 states. It was administered by various youth service providers affiliated with the National Youth Advocacy Coalition.

According to the survey, 61 percent of respondents have experienced verbal harassment, 47 percent have been subjected to sexual harassment, 28 percent have been the target of physical harassment, and 14 percent have been physically assaulted in school.

"Harassment leveled against [GLBT] students can no longer be considered an aberration or an exception to the rule. Verbal, sexual and physical harassment is the rule," said GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings. "In



"Schools owe all of their students a safe, harassment-free learning environment," declared Kevin Jennings (above).

post-Columbine America, we've heard a lot of talk about making schools safe places for all. We strongly urge [education leaders] to do the right thing and walk that talk."

In addition to direct experience with victimization, 90 percent of respondents report having heard anti-gay epithets "sometimes" or "frequently" at school. Sadly, more than one-third report having heard such comments from faculty or school staff. Nearly 40 percent of respondents said that when anti-gay comments were made in the presence of others, no one intervened.

"[GLBT] students are required by law to attend school — an environment these students say is incredibly hostile," continued Jennings. "At the very least...schools owe all of their students a safe, harassment-free learning environment."

For more information on GLSEN or the school survey, call (212) 727-0135 or access their web site at www.glsen.org. For more information on the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, access their web site at www.nyayouth.org.

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Leaders work to increase people of color presence

by Jason Riggs
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—How does racism operate in the work of national GLBT organizations and the GLBT justice movement as a whole?

That question framed the discussions among 31 representatives of GLBT groups at the fifth National Policy Roundtable, convened September 24-25 in the nation's capital by the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). The discussion concluded with an affirmation that racial justice was an issue of central concern and priority to the GLBT groups represented at the meeting.

The National Policy Roundtable convenes the executive directors of policy-oriented national GLBT and HIV/AIDS organizations and the national co-chairs of policy-oriented national associations of local organizations. It meets semi-annually to provide a forum for discussion, strategic thinking and information sharing.

Executive directors and co-chairs attending the Roundtable spent two days discussing how and why race and racism shape organizational

structure and affect the agenda, direction and face of GLBT politics and organizing.

"Many national GLBT organizations have closed the gender gap in leadership positions but very few have crossed the color line in leadership positions," observed Urvashi Vaid, Director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"Talented people of color leaders abound, running many local and national non-profits in the HIV/AIDS movement, leading the gay and lesbian people of color movement, serving as elected and appointed officials, working in non-GLBT social change organizations, and in the corporate sector. But our mainstream movement remains largely untouched by the racial diversity that is American society."

Three presenters offered their perspectives on racial and GLBT politics: Barbara Garcia, former executive director of Salud Para La Gente and current Deputy Director of the San Francisco Department of Health; Phill Wilson, executive director of AIDS Social Policy Archive at the University of Southern California and the co-founder of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum; and John D'Emilio,

Professor of History at the University of Illinois, Chicago and Senior Fellow at the Policy Institute.

Roundtable participants broke into small groups to delve into the problem of racial barriers to leadership in institutions and to brainstorm concrete strategies. Four aspects of the challenge facing GLBT organizations interested in doing anti-racist work were discussed. These included: 1) specific strategies for diversifying the racial composition of national GLBT organizations; 2) ideas on how to integrate racial justice commitments into the missions and programs of non-people of color GLBT organizations; 3) securing resources and financial support for leaders of color, for autonomous people of color organizations and for doing anti-racist work; and 4) defining GLBT agendas to internalize a commitment to racial justice.

Extensive discussion centered around why some issues are seen as "gay" and others as not appropriately belonging to the GLBT movement. Significant acknowledgement was made of the GLBT movement's political diversity and how it always results in debate on what the most

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Pvt. faces court-martial for hate crime murder

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

FORT CAMPBELL, KY—Pvt. Calvin Glover, 18, accused of killing a fellow infantryman in part because he was gay, will be court-martialed on a charge of premeditated murder. He faces a maximum of life in prison if convicted of killing Pfc. Barry Winchell, 21, who was beaten with a baseball bat in his barracks on July 5. He died the next day.

Fort Campbell's commanding general referred the case to court-martial after receiving recommendations from the investigating officer, a brigade commander and the staff judge advocate. No date has been set for the court-martial, the military equivalent of a civilian criminal trial.

According to testimony at Glover's preliminary hearing, soldiers harassed Winchell about his sexual orientation, but no one, including his commanders, did anything to stop it. One sergeant testified that he even approached Winchell and asked if he was gay — an apparent violation of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Pvt. Justin Fisher, 25, Winchell's roommate, has been charged as an accomplice and is accused of encouraging Glover to strike Winchell. He is also charged with lying to Army investigators and obstructing the investigation, among other things. A decision on whether Fisher will face a court-martial has not been made.

According to Army prosecutors, Winchell and Glover fought two days before the killing. Winchell had beaten Glover and Glover vowed revenge, telling fellow soldiers that he would not be beaten by a "faggot," prosecutors said.

According to testimony at the hearing, Glover confessed to the crime while in a detention cell at Fort Campbell after his arrest. He told another soldier that he killed Winchell because Winchell had made a pass at him. However, there has been no evidence to substantiate that claim.

Glover's court-martial will be open to the public.

Spurred by Winchell's murder, on October 7, President Clinton signed an Executive Order allowing for stiffer sentences against servicemembers who commit anti-gay hate crimes and asserting limited privilege between military psychotherapists and servicemembers in their care. See page 4 for details.

MMOW board hires director; co-producer quits

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

NEW ORLEANS—During a two-day meeting convened the last week in September, the Board of the Millennium March on Washington for Equality (MMOW) voted to create a new staff position — executive director — ostensibly to enhance preparations for the event.

In the short term, the announcement had precisely the opposite effect. Ginny Foat, one of the March's co-producers, resigned in protest while Robin Tyler, the other co-producer, was still weighing her options at press time.

The flap stems from the board's decision to transfer control over several aspects of the March from Foat and Tyler to the new executive director. Included in the restructuring are matters such as fundraising, sponsorships and endorsements, publicity and administration.

During a lengthy closed executive session that ran deep into the first night, board member Malcolm Lazin was tapped to temporarily fill the executive director's position. When the board re-convened in open session the next morning, the surprising changes were announced. Lazin then surrendered his board position and officially accepted the job.

According to March co-chair Ann DeGroot, "Malcolm was the unanimous choice of the board."

That was of little comfort to the co-producers who labeled the board's move "unethical and illegal" based on the contract it had with Robin Tyler Productions. Foat resigned pending implementation of the new staff position. Tyler, declaring that she would not work under the executive director, announced plans to consult an attorney, but she did not step down.

The co-producers labeled the board's move "unethical and illegal."

The board closed discussion on the subject after agreeing to revisit it in executive session at the next appointed meeting.

Despite the upheaval in New Orleans, March leaders painted a rosy picture of the move in their post-meeting press release.

Donna Red Wing, another of the four March co-chairs, lauded Lazin's hiring and his past work. "Malcolm brings extraordinary expertise to the position of executive director of the March. He is the founder and executive director of PrideFest America, the nation's largest annual gay and lesbian symposium and festival. He is also an attorney, having served in the US Department of Justice, where he earned the Department's highest honor."

Co-chair Nicole Murray-Ramirez offered the board's rationale for hiring an executive director — without explaining why the change was made so far into the process and in a closed meeting. "The MMOW is similar to a performing arts organization. One arm produces the show and the other runs the important day-to-day." See BOARD on page 14