

PTOWNWEST

No Place Like Home



P TOWNWEST

*The mission of Ptownwest is to reconnect,
promote and create gay community*

May 2021
Volume 20

An LGBT Refugee's Journey: Escape is Only the Beginning – Starting Over is Harder

[Veer Mudambi](#)
Worcester Magazine

LGBTQ asylum seekers go through a lot to escape their home countries - but then they have to rebuild their lives from the ground up in a new country

Like many stories, it started with a kiss. Except for one 15-year-old girl, it wasn't the start of a typical teenage first romance story, but the end of her life as she knew it. That one innocent act would see her expelled from school, shamed by a public caning, abandoned by her family and made a pariah in her community.

Her crime? Kissing a girl.

Forced out of school, Alice, whose name has been changed for safety reasons, underwent threats of assault, rigorous prayer sessions to banish her "demons" and complete social isolation. In the east African country of Uganda,

Christianity dominates cultural and social attitudes. "In such a faith-based country, anything that the Bible says is wrong is wrong," said Alice. "They called me evil."

At the time, the punishment for homosexuality in Uganda was life imprisonment. As of 2014, it's the death penalty.

"About 60 to 70% of asylum seekers we get are from [Uganda and Jamaica]," said Al Green, LGBT Asylum Task Force Director in Worcester, himself an asylum seeker from Jamaica. A ministry of Hadwen Park Church, it supports LGBTQI individuals who are fleeing such persecution in their home countries. Others come from other African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Morocco as well as the South American nations of Brazil, Colombia and Honduras, along with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

READ THE REST HERE:

<https://www.worcestermag.com/story/lifestyle/2021/04/28/lgbt-refugees-journey-escape-only-beginning-starting-over-harder/7235352002/>

LGBT Activists Not Excited by Jenner's Campaign for Governor

by: **DAVID CRARY**, Associated Press
Posted: Apr 23, 2021 / 08:34 PM
CDT / Updated: Apr 23, 2021 / 09:34 PM CDT

Though Caitlyn Jenner is one of the most famous transgender people in America, the announcement of her candidacy for California governor was greeted hostilely by one of the state's largest LGBTQ-rights groups and by many trans activists around the country.

"Make no mistake: we can't wait to elect a #trans governor of California," tweeted the group, Equality California. "But @Caitlyn_Jenner spent years telling the #LGBTQ+ community to trust Donald Trump. We saw how that turned out. Now she wants us to trust her? Hard pass."

<https://www.conchovalleyhomepage.com/news/lgbt-activists-not-excited-by-jenners-campaign-for-governor/>

Arkansas Endangers LGBTQ

Earlier this month, Arkansas became the first state in the country to [ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth](#). The so-called "Save Adolescents from Experimentation Act" (HB 1570) bans doctors from providing puberty blockers or performing hormone therapy. Other bills passed this legislative session include one that allows medical providers to refuse to treat members of the LGBTQ community and another that [bans transgender girls](#) from competing on women's sports teams in school.

GLAAD Responds to a Wave of Anti-Trans Legislation Across the Country

As of today, five states (Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, South Dakota, and Tennessee) have passed laws that restrict trans student athletes from participating in school sports, while Arkansas has also banned affirming healthcare for trans youth. Last week, the North Dakota Senate and Texas Senate also passed anti-LGBTQ sports bills. And the slate of legislation across the country to restrict transgender rights doesn't end there. More than 100 anti-trans bills are being considered across the country that ban affirming healthcare for trans youth, prohibit gender changes to birth certificates, and restrict transgender students from participating in school-sponsored sports. GLAAD released "**Guide for Journalists: Reporting On Anti-Trans State Legislation**" to provide journalists with information on what the anti-trans bills entail, their factual inaccuracies, who is behind the bills, medical associations and other groups that have spoken out against the bills, and other updates.

<https://www.glaad.org/blog/guide-journalists-reporting-anti-trans-state-legislation>

GLAAD's Statement on Tuesday's Verdict

We know that there is no justice without intersectional justice. We must meet this week's verdict convicting Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd with a commitment to ensuring true safety for Black people, people of color, and LGBTQ people, specifically transgender people and youth who are disproportionately at risk of harassment, discrimination and violence, including violence by police.

Every American from a vulnerable community has a right to demand equality and necessary change by protest, and the media must be free to cover these critically important social justice movements. The deaths of George Floyd, Daunte Wright, Breonna Taylor, Adam Toledo and far too

many others must motivate urgent change to address racial bias and prevent deadly force for all Black and Brown people.

Our hearts are with George Floyd's family and all who grieve his loss throughout the traumatizing trial and beyond.

Lea DeLaria Wins Award

Lea DeLaria Wins Award
(We love her jazz, just sayin')

The OUTshine LGBT Film Festival will honor actor, comedian, and jazz singer Lea DeLaria with the Vanguard Award at its opening night ceremony, Friday, April 23 at 7 p.m. at Dezerland Drive-In in North Miami.

The award recognizes entertainment industry performers and professionals for their contributions and leadership to the LGBT community and support of equality, representation and education, according to Executive Director Victor Gimenez.

“Lea DeLaria was the first openly gay comic on television in America and has enjoyed a multi-faceted, decades-long career as an actor, comedian and musician,” Gimenez said in the announcement. “We’re thrilled to honor and embrace her talent and support for the LGBTQ community with this Vanguard Award, which we hope will inspire others to excel and achieve their dreams.”

<https://southfloridagaynews.com/Film/lgbt-film-festival-honors-lea-delaria.html>

New Jersey Enacts Legislation to Assist LGBT Veterans Dishonorably Discharged

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed a bill which directs the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs in the Garden State to assist former Armed Forces service members who were denied an honorable discharge due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. DMAVA will assist veterans with completing and submitting the appropriate forms to petition the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs to change their discharge designation to instead reflect an honorable discharge.

<https://outinjersey.net/new-jersey-enacts-legislation-to-assist-lgbt-veterans-dishonorably-discharged/>

Millions Will Gain Nondiscrimination Protections Under the Equality Act

The current patchwork of legal protections in states across the country and the existing gaps in federal civil rights laws leave millions of LGBTQ people without protection from [discrimination](#), harming their lives and well-being.

Discrimination is a serious, pervasive problem that affects the everyday lives of LGBTQ people and their families and communities. For example, according to the latest nationally representative [survey data](#) from the Center for American Progress, more than 1 in 3 LGBTQ adults faced discrimination of some kind in the past year, including 2 in 5 LGBTQ people of color.

The [Equality Act](#) offers a national solution by strengthening and expanding the nation's civil rights laws to ensure clear, consistent, and comprehensive nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people. The legislation prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the [areas of](#) employment, housing, credit, jury service, and federally funded programs, such as those for health and education, as well as public accommodations. In addition to adding

protections for LGBTQ people, the bill [advances fair treatment](#) by filling gaps in nondiscrimination protections in public accommodations and by protecting against sex discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs—provisions that also benefit women, people of color, and foreign-born individuals.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/news/2021/04/20/498164/millions-will-gain-nondiscrimination-protections-equality-act/>

About SAGE Maine

SAGE Maine is an affiliate of SAGE USA, a national services and advocacy organization for older LGBTQ+ adults. As of November 2019, SAGE Maine has become a program of EqualityMaine, to ensure the longevity and sustainability of our programs.

SAGE Maine's primary focus is to support and advocate on behalf of the older adults in our community. In the past, SAGE Maine's wonderful volunteers have run monthly dinners, movie nights, ukulele groups, and more! They also provided resources for older adults across the state in need of support and community. To help support the goals and mission of our SAGE Maine program, an additional team member was added to the EqualityMaine staff through AmeriCorps VISTA to better support our SAGE programs and communication.

All SAGE Maine programming is currently virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A list of regularly occurring programs includes:

<https://equalitymaine.org/sagemaine?emci=47c68bc7-229e-eb11-85aa-0050f237abef&emdi=c9fab9d-19a2-eb11-85aa-0050f237abef&ceid=799234>

<https://equalitymaine.org/events-sage>

Corporations Ask Legislature to Drop Bills Targeting LGBT Texans

Chuck Lindell

Austin American-Statesman

Raising concerns about legislation targeting LGBTQ people, a group of leading corporations is urging Texas lawmakers to focus instead on urgent issues involving the pandemic, electric grid and education.

"We are concerned to see a resurgence of efforts to exclude transgender youth from full participation in their communities, to criminalize or ban best-practice medical care that is proven to save lives, or to exclude LGBTQ people in a variety of other settings," [the corporations said in a statement](#) issued Monday.

"Such legislation would send a message that is at odds with the Texas we know, and with our own efforts to attract and retain the best talent and to compete for business," said the statement, signed by 41 corporations based or doing business in Texas.

<https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2021/04/19/corporations-warn-legislature-against-bills-targeting-lgbt-texans/7292957002/>

The Struggle of LGBTQ+ Students in Lockdown

By Alice Clarke, Second Year History

After 12 months in and out of lockdown, many students will be thinking back to a time just a year ago when the night could be spent in the club rather than in bed by 8pm. Needless to say, the past year has had an immeasurable impact on everyone - much of which we are yet to see. However, certain groups have felt the impact of the pandemic disproportionately.

The queer community feel negativity and push-back specific to their lived experience; this perhaps has only been heightened during the pandemic. How have LGBTQ+ students been

impacted by lockdown? Is this specific to the queer community and what needs to change ?

<https://epigram.org.uk/2021/04/17/the-struggles-of-lgbtq-students-in-lockdown/>

LGBT People Fleeing Harassment in Iran Find Life no Easier in Turkey

By Ezel Sahinkaya , Arif Aslan
April 16, 2021 07:34 PM

WASHINGTON / VAN, TURKEY - For hundreds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Iranians who fled their homeland because of persecution for who they are, moving to Turkey was not a significant improvement.

Sexual and gender minorities say constant harassment and discrimination experienced in the host nation is forcing many of them to seek relocation to a third country.

A.R. is a 41-year-old transgender man who crossed into Turkey last year because of abuse from his community and Iranian authorities. Now residing in eastern Turkey's Van province, he asked VOA to conceal his full name to avoid harassment by transphobic people in the host region.

"I really wished to find a peaceful life in Iran, but my goal was not fulfilled," said A.R., who was born and raised in Tehran.

<https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/lgbt-people-fleeing-harassment-iran-find-life-no-easier-turkey>

National LGBT Media Association Bans Meetings in Georgia

By Matt Tracy

The National LGBT Media Association (NGMA), which includes Gay City News and 11 other LGBTQ publications nationwide, approved a resolution banning any meetings in the state of Georgia in response to the state's voter suppression law.

The law, pushed forward by Georgia's Republican-led State Legislature, imposes a mail-in ballot deadline 11 days ahead of a primary election, limits the timeframe during which voters can drop off absentee ballots, and reduces the amount of drop boxes available for voters in each county, among other rules that are expected to limit voter access – especially in communities of color.

In response to the new law, widespread outrage has ensued among corporations and sports leagues such as Major League Baseball, which abandoned its plans to host the annual All-Star festivities in Atlanta.

Described by President Joe Biden as "Jim Crow in the 21st Century," the law comes just months after voters in Georgia played a pivotal role in ousting President Donald Trump and carrying Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff to victory over their Republican counterparts in two Senate races that helped the Democrats narrowly regain control of the upper chamber.

"With these laws, it is now easier to get a gun in Georgia than to vote." NGMA co-chair Leo Cusimano said in a written statement. The NGMA will not hold any meetings in the state until fair election laws are created to ensure equal and fair voting access.

The NGMA consists of the 12 largest LGBTQ publications in the country, including Gay City News, the Bay Area Reporter in San Francisco, the Philadelphia Gay News, the Los Angeles Blade, Washington Blade, South Florida Gay News, Windy City Times, Watermark, Georgia Voice, Dallas Voice, Between the Lines in Detroit, and Bay Windows in Boston.

Documentary About Father Martin's LGBT Ministry Selected for Tribeca Film Festival

A Martin Scorsese-produced documentary about James Martin, S.J., and his ministry to L.G.B.T. Catholics has been selected to be part of the [Tribeca Film Festival in June, the organization announced Tuesday.](#)

The documentary, "[Building a Bridge](#)," is based on Father Martin's 2018 book of the same name.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2021/04/20/building-bridge-documentary-film-james-martin-lgbt-catholic-priest-tribeca>

The Biden Administration Has Given Blanket Authorization to Fly LGBT Pride Flags at U.S. Embassies and Consulates Around the World

Paul Sacca

The Biden administration has given blanket authorization to fly LGBT pride flags at U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. The rainbow flag – a symbol of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pride – will be permitted to fly on the same official flagpoles that fly the American flag.

The new policy was announced by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, which repeals the [decision by his predecessor Mike Pompeo](#) during former President Donald Trump's tenure at the White House.

U.S. diplomatic outposts are given "blanket written authorization ... to display the Pride flag on the external-facing flagpole, for the duration

of the 2021 Pride season," the cable said, according to [ABC News](#). The cable was reportedly sent out this week, a little more than a month before Pride Month is celebrated in June and only weeks before International Day

EU Lawmakers Seek to Declare Bloc an LGBT 'Freedom Zone'

WARSAW, Poland – Lawmakers within the European Parliament overwhelmingly spoke out in favor of a decision that will declare the complete 27-member European Union a "freedom zone" for LGBT folks throughout a debate held on Wednesday.

The decision comes largely in response to developments over the previous two years in Poland, the place many native communities have adopted largely symbolic resolutions declaring themselves freed from what conservative authorities have been calling "LGBT ideology.

"<https://gruntstuff.com/eu-lawmakers-seek-to-declare-bloc-an-lgbt-freedom-zone/167627/>

Emily Estefan with the IT GETS BETTER PROJECT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQiwXLVktg>

