

# P TOWNWEST™

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



## LGBT Rights Yield to Religious Interests at US Supreme Court

By John Kruzel

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - In its decision permitting an evangelical Christian web designer to refuse service for same-sex weddings, the U.S. Supreme Court again embraced an expansive view of religious interests at the expense of protections for LGBT people.

In a 6-3 ruling on Friday powered by its conservative majority, the court backed Lorie Smith, who owns a Denver-area web design business called 303 Creative. She sued Colorado's civil rights commission in 2016 because she said she feared being punished for refusing to serve gay weddings under a state law that bars businesses open to the public from denying goods or services to people because of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and certain other characteristics.

The ruling, citing the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment protections for free speech, stated that Colorado cannot force Smith to create speech she opposes.

Although presented to the court as a free speech claim, Smith's case shares features with other recent clashes between religiously motivated activity and civil rights laws.

"We've seen a dramatic expansion of rights for conservative religious communities that has had a detrimental impact on equality rights, certainly for LGBTQ people," said Elizabeth Platt, director of the Law, Rights and Religion Project at Columbia Law School

Colorado is one of 22 U.S. states with measures explicitly barring discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public accommodations.

Smith, who said she opposes gay marriage based on her Christian beliefs, was represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative religious rights group.

"The court reiterated that it's unconstitutional for the state to eliminate from the public square ideas it dislikes, including the belief that marriage is the union of husband and wife," said Kristen Waggoner, the group's president who argued the case before the court.

"Disagreement isn't discrimination, and the government can't mislabel speech as discrimination to censor it," Waggoner added.

Alliance Defending Freedom has represented other high-profile litigants before the justices including Colorado baker Jack Phillips, who refused based on his Christian beliefs to make a wedding cake for a gay couple.

In its 7-2 ruling in 2018 in the case *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, the court decided that the commission had shown impermissible hostility toward religion when it found that Phillips violated the state anti-discrimination law by rebuffing two men who were getting married.

The justices in that case stopped short of issuing a definitive ruling on the circumstances under which people can seek exemptions from anti-discrimination laws based on religion. Still, the ruling illustrated a disparity in how the court views protections for LGBT people in contrast to the competing conservative Christian interests, Platt said.

"The court treated Jack Phillips' claim of discrimination with extreme deference and sensitivity, while entirely glossing over the discrimination against the same-sex couples in that case," Platt said.

#### FOSTER CARE RULING

The court in 2021 decided another dispute involving tensions between equality protections and religious freedom.

In *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*, the court in a 9-0 ruling embraced religious rights over LGBT rights, siding with a Catholic Church-affiliated agency that sued after Philadelphia refused to place children for foster care with the organization because

it barred same-sex couples from applying to become foster parents.

The court's composition shifted with the 2018 retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy, who was succeeded by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, one of Republican former President Trump's three conservative appointees, along with Justices Neil Gorsuch - the author of Friday's ruling - and Amy Coney Barrett.

Kennedy was the swing vote on what then was a 5-4 conservative-majority court. He stood out among conservatives in his espousal of sympathy both for conservative Christian causes and for what is sometimes called the "dignity interests" of marginalized groups including LGBT people.

Kennedy's emphasized the dignity of gay couples in his landmark 5-4 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015.

Platt said that "if *Obergefell* had been litigated under this Supreme Court, I don't think it would come out the same way."

The court underwent another dramatic change to its ideological composition in 2020 when Trump named Barrett to succeed the late liberal justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Barrett's addition gave it a 6-3 conservative margin and recalibrated how it weighed conservative Christian causes against the dignity interests of people protected by civil rights laws.

"This court continues to advance the agenda of religious extremists who are trying to force all of us to live by their narrow beliefs," said Rachel Laser, president of the secular group Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Following Friday's ruling, Smith said, "I hope that, regardless of what people think of me or my beliefs, everyone will celebrate that the court upheld the right for each of us to speak freely."

### **LGBT in America: We Are Never Going Back to the Closet Darkness**

**July 30, 2023**To the Editor:

Re "[The Number of L.G.B.T.Q. People Is Rising. So?](#)," by Jane Coaston (Opinion, July 24):

Ms. Coaston's report reveals both a fearsome and an exciting new world for the L.G.B.T. community. A world where we are seen and, mostly, accepted. This world could not be more different than most older gay Americans' experience growing up.

I recall the very day and hour, at age 6, that I knew I was gay, although I wouldn't know what that meant for many years. On my first day of kindergarten, at recess, as I was running around the schoolyard with all the other students in my class, I stopped suddenly and said: "Wow! Boys are cool!"

Seeing another gay person, or hearing any speck of validation for gay people, would seemingly never come to me in my more-conservative-than-Mississippi community in South Jersey.

But we are a community now with many, many straight allies, and no matter what the [Marjorie Taylor Greenes of the world have to say about it](#), we are never going back to the closet darkness.

### **Five Rainbow Plaques will be Installed Across London to Celebrate Significant People, Places and Moments in the LGBTQI+ History**

The new plaques will be placed at sites in Greenwich, Peckham, Westminster, Ladbroke Grove and Haringey.

There are currently two LGBTQI+ plaques in the capital.

"This project goes some way in reminding people that we have always been here, in good times and bad," David Robson of the London LGBT+ Forums' Network said.



## Pope Makes Comments About LGBT

The Church teaches that same-sex attraction is not sinful but same-sex acts are.

While he supports legislation that gives same-sex couples rights in areas like pensions, he has stopped short of changing teachings that urge chastity for those with same-sex attraction.

Francis' comments came as he took questions during his customary freewheeling post-trip press conference, as he flew back to Rome from the youth festival in Portugal.

[https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/pope-says-church-open-lgbt-071921300.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlMmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAKM\\_zNDNZ4JHMzjMuELjiOVZP2mjT1rFKCUT5yiFFaief8keFHAUIF42VX66iAu90TuAU7vvjW64wUHUJRIUqdrY7\\_ULmq8SCaZdaryldtZEamUMp-TGxp0dVurUoZqjSjCUf5IV0LKJ\\_Q3kCL3g4LONLKVNcJuQt8a6xX3cC206](https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/pope-says-church-open-lgbt-071921300.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlMmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAKM_zNDNZ4JHMzjMuELjiOVZP2mjT1rFKCUT5yiFFaief8keFHAUIF42VX66iAu90TuAU7vvjW64wUHUJRIUqdrY7_ULmq8SCaZdaryldtZEamUMp-TGxp0dVurUoZqjSjCUf5IV0LKJ_Q3kCL3g4LONLKVNcJuQt8a6xX3cC206)

## LGBTQ Research Hub Aims to Counter Gender-Based Discrimination Through Scholarship

[Cristina Chi - Philstar.com](#)  
August 10, 2023 | 12:37pm

AP / Bullit Marquez

MANILA, Philippines — A first-of-its-kind research hub focusing on LGBTQ scholarship has opened at the University of the Philippines Diliman with

the goal of challenging gender biases and prejudices with evidence and data.

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/08/10/2287642/lgbtq-research-hub-aims-counter-gender-based-discrimination-through-scholarship>  
<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/education/indiana-governor-signs-education-bill-targeting-lgbt-students>



## Uganda President Defiant After World Bank Suspends Funding Over LGBT Law

By [Elias Biryabarema](#)  
August 10, 2023 8:33 AM EDT Updated 5 days ago  
<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-president-defiant-after-world-bank-funding-suspended-over-lgbt-law-2023-08-10/>

**Iraq Bans Media from Using Term  
“homosexuality,” says they must use  
‘Sexual Deviance’**

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/09/middle-east/iraq-bans-homosexuality-media-scli-intl/index.html>

**Massachusetts Denies Catholic Couple  
Right to Foster Kids Because Their “Faith  
Not Supportive” of LGBT Beliefs: Lawsuit**

By [Carson Choate, Western Journal](#) August 12, 2023 at 12:47pm

A Catholic Massachusetts couple has filed a lawsuit against officials in the state’s Department of Children and Families, alleging their request to foster children was denied because of their religious beliefs on gender identity and sexual orientation.

The [federal lawsuit](#) was filed this week by Michael ” Mike” Burke, an Iraq war veteran, and his wife, Catherine “Kitty” Burke, a former paraprofessional for special needs children.

<https://ijr.com/massachusetts-denies-catholic-couple-right-foster-kids-faith-not-supportive-lgbt-beliefs-lawsuit/>

**Give us Teachers More Time to Teach  
about LGBTQ+ lives - It Could Make all  
the Difference**

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/08/14/rse-relationships-sex-education-teachers-lgbt/>

**Red, White & Royal Blue Crowned as  
Prime Video’s Number One Movie**

[Petir Garda Bhwana](#)

By [Maca Reynolds](#)  
Published 2 days ago

LGBT romantic comedy Red, White & Royal Blue enjoys record-breaking debut

- *Red, White & Royal Blue* is a popular LGBT rom-com on Prime Video, surpassing other titles in viewership numbers during its debut weekend.
- Despite being caught in the SAG-AFTRA strike and lacking promotion, the film has received positive reviews and fans are hoping for a sequel.
- The story follows Prince Henry and Alex Claremont-Diaz, who start off as enemies but develop a secret romance, forcing them to choose between love and their public roles.

<https://movieweb.com/red-white-royal-blue-crowned-prime-video-one-movie/>

**The Tryst Beachfront Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico Joins NGLCC as a Certified LGBT Business Enterprise**

August 14, 2023 08:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--[The Tryst](#), the iconic boutique hotel, restaurant, and bar on the world-famous Condado Beach in San Juan, Puerto Rico, has been certified as an LGBT Business Enterprise® by the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, the national business voice of the LGBT community. Tristan Schukraft, seasoned entrepreneur and founder/CEO of MISTR, recently acquired The Tryst and started a \$6 million renovation that will transform Condado Beach into the center of LGBTQ life on the Isle of Enchantment.

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230814268764/en/The-Tryst-Beachfront-Hotel-in-San-Juan-Puerto-Rico-Joins-NGLCC-as-a-Certified-LGBT-Business-Enterprise%C2%AE>

