

IMPACT

FALL 2018

 **Lambda Legal**
making the case for equality

“You’re gay?”

*Fighting back after
a rescinded job offer*

Taxpayer funds
can’t be used to
discriminate
**ONE COUPLE’S
FIGHT**

BEYOND KAVANAUGH

*Why all federal court
seats are crucial*

THE FACES OF NIKKO

We ♥ LGBT seniors:

Lambda Legal and AARP
working together

TAKING DOWN HIV STIGMA PAGE 8

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THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING

Dear Lambda Legal family,

As we wish our outgoing CEO Rachel B. Tiven well on her new endeavors, our eyes are focused on the future. The threats we currently face are meant to strike fear in the hearts of the LGBTQ community and everyone living with HIV. Forces opposed to our equality unabashedly seek to drive us back into the shadows. But we draw strength from the fact that we have lived through dark times before, and we have never given up. Remember, Lambda Legal had to fight for our very existence in 1973—and we have not stopped fighting for our community since.

While the forces of bigotry and hatred that have been unleashed by this administration may feel unprecedented and horrifying, the challenges and obstacles we face now are not really all that new. The team here at Lambda Legal knows what to do. We will keep bringing cases to move the law forward. We will keep fighting harmful policies wherever they are proposed and working with allies to advance the ball wherever we can. We will lift up the beauty of our stories and stand shoulder to shoulder with the broader civil rights

community to fight for the kind of country that we want ours to be.

We approach this task with resolve but also with humility, as we know that we cannot succeed without the support and assistance of all of you. As Lambda Legal writes this next chapter of our history, we thank you for believing in this organization as much as we do.



CHARLES FIELDS
Co-Interim CEO and Chief Operating Officer

SHARON MCGOWAN
Co-Interim CEO, Chief Strategy Officer and
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Mark Horton lost a great job offer after he revealed he was gay. With Lambda Legal's help, he's fighting back.

BY TIM MURPHY

NOT HORSE AROUND

These days, Mark Horton and his husband, Alton Greenough, are finding themselves forced to sell—even give away, because they're expensive to keep—more and more of the beloved miniature horses that graze on their farm in Edwardsville, Illinois, just north of St. Louis.

"They're more like our children," says Horton. But the couple is in rough times financially. It all goes back to an email Horton sent to his employer-to-be in 2016 casually outing himself as gay by mentioning Greenough.

Before that fateful email, Horton, 62, was employed as vice president of sales for a home health and hospice company based in Pittsburgh. But he had to travel extensively for that job and wanted to be closer to home to care for both his mother, who was suffering from pancreatic cancer (and has since died), and Greenough, who had sustained serious injuries in a riding accident.

So when a headhunter contacted him to let him know that a local eldercare company, Midwest Geriatric Management (MGM), was looking for a new VP, Horton applied. Thus began a three-month process during which he says he met everyone at MGM and ultimately was given a written job offer by MGM CEO Judah Bienstock

and his wife, Faye. Once Horton accepted, Faye emailed, “Wonderful! Congratulations! We are so excited!”

Horton gave notice to his employer in Pittsburgh. All that was pending was confirmation of Horton’s educational background, which Horton said would take a few weeks because of administrative changes at one of his schools. The Bienstocks did not indicate that this was a problem. In a casual email conversation about the degree, Horton wrote, “My partner has been on me about [my MBA] since he completed his Ph.D. a while back.”

Three days later, Faye Bienstock wrote to Horton. “Are you able to come this afternoon?,” she asked. “We would like to discuss the status of your employment.” Horton wrote that he was out of town that day but could come on a different date. Two days later, Bienstock wrote again: “Mark—I regret to inform you that due to the incompleteness of the background check of supportive documentation—we have to withdraw our offer letter for employment at MGM.”

A month later, having obtained the necessary educational documentation and upon learning that the job had not yet been filled, Horton emailed the Bienstocks to express his continued interest. The Bienstocks replied that they were considering other candidates.

Horton says it was immediately clear to him that the Bienstocks rescinded the offer upon learning that he was gay—why else would they have offered the job and initially not have been concerned when he mentioned a delay in his educational documentation? A local lawyer, Mark Schuver, agreed with him and filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. But the court dismissed the case, saying it did not see enough evidence of discrimination.



Mark Horton and Alton Greenough with two of their many pets.

“This was going to be a final career move for Mark that he was very excited about, but it all went south after he casually mentioned his husband.”

—Greg Nevins, Lambda Legal counsel and Employment Fairness Project director

Now Lambda Legal, which has since joined the case, is appealing that dismissal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. It’ll be tough; the conservative-leaning court has previously suggested that sexual-orientation discrimination is not covered under the sex-discrimination protections afforded in the Civil Rights Act’s Title VII, even as other appeals courts in recent years have ruled the opposite. If the Eighth Circuit refuses to hear the case or rules against Horton, it would be among other similar cases that ultimately could go before the U.S. Supreme Court to determine whether sexual orientation is a protected status.

Meanwhile, the job-offer reversal has had a serious financial impact on Horton and Greenough. Horton’s prior employer quickly filled the position that he left and has been unable to hire him back. The couple has health insurance through Greenough, a military veteran, but Horton says he has applied unsuccessfully for about 100 positions.

He suspects that’s because many employers consider him overqualified for some of the positions and because a simple Google search reveals the lawsuit is still pending.

“This was going to be a final career move for Mark that he was very excited about, but it all went south after he casually mentioned his husband,” says Lambda Legal counsel and Employment Fairness Project Director Greg Nevins, who is on Horton’s legal team. “The paper trail strongly suggests that this is discrimination, so Mark’s becomes yet another case demonstrating the urgency of understanding sex discrimination under Title VII to encompass sexual-orientation discrimination.” (Lambda has also successfully argued that Title VII covers gender identity as a form of sex discrimination.)

Meanwhile, says Horton, staying home and taking care of his and Greenough’s remaining animals—which also include cats, dogs, donkeys and llamas—has been therapeutic. “It’s like Noah’s Arc meets St. Francis around here,” he laughs. He and Greenough also get to spend time with their four grandkids, children of Greenough’s son.

Still, “I haven’t resolved any of my anger over the case,” Horton says. “I gave up a good job for that offer, and Alton and I will never live like we did.” The company has still not yet filled the position, he believes, based on online postings.

Yet he says he takes comfort knowing he’s doing the right thing by fighting against anti-LGBT workplace discrimination. “Friends have said to me,” he says, “you have never hidden in the closet and were always happy, so if this can happen to you it can happen to anybody. So thanks for getting out there and working for all of us.” **LI**

BANNED FROM GIVING LOVE

This lesbian couple is taking on a federally funded organization that uses religion to prevent LGBT people from fostering and adopting children

BY TIM MURPHY



Fatma Marouf and Bryn Esplin are not letting discrimination slide.

The sleeping and play areas were what bothered Fatma Marouf most. She's a professor at Texas A&M University's School of Law in Fort Worth and director of its Immigrant Rights Clinic. In the winter of 2017, she was invited to tour the federally funded facility that housed unaccompanied refugee children and placed them in foster homes.

"It was clear that the kids there would be better off in a home, a warmer place," Marouf, 42, says of her visit.

That night, she talked about the possibility of fostering one or more children with her wife, Bryn Esplin, 34,

a bioethics professor at Texas A&M. "We'd talked generally about adopting or fostering in the past, so I felt this could be the perfect way, fostering kids from a population we know and care about," Marouf says. Marouf and Esplin were open to taking in any child in need, including often hard-to-place sibling sets or teens. In addition to working with immigrants, Marouf is the daughter of parents from the Middle East, where many of the kids at the facility were from.

Esplin agreed. "I was really excited," she says. "We thought, 'Gosh, now's the time to start our family.'" They'd been married for two years. Marouf emailed the Catholic organization

that runs the facility to tell them that she and Esplin, whom she called her "spouse," were open to fostering.

Soon they were on an informational conference call with a staff member from the organization who ran down the requirements for foster parents. Bryn and Fatma listened. They needed so many square feet in their home. Check. A fire extinguisher. Check. Straight down the line, Marouf and Esplin were shaping up to be ideal foster parents.

Then this: The organization required their foster families to "mirror the holy family."

On their end of the line, Marouf and Esplin looked at each other,

startled. They then let the woman know that they were a same-sex couple. The staffer then told them that they were ineligible to even apply to be foster parents.

“What do you do with the LGBT children in your care?” Marouf asked. The staffer told her that the organization had no LGBT kids. Marouf and Esplin were, of course, skeptical. The couple’s concern for the children grew.

“We were both very upset” after the call, says Marouf. “Our jobs, backgrounds and home were perfect. But when they found out we were two women, it was over.”

She emailed the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, notifying the agency of what happened. ORR provides millions of dollars of grant money (using federal taxpayer dollars) to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and its sub-grantees to administer child welfare services on the government’s behalf. After initially asking for and receiving the name of the organization’s staffer that the couple spoke with, the federal agency never followed up.

Marouf and Esplin weren’t prepared to let discrimination slide. A few calls led them to Lambda Legal, which filed a discrimination suit early this year in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. ORR and USCCB, which never denied the discrimination claims, filed motions to dismiss. The motions are pending.

Currey Cook, Lambda Legal counsel and director of the Youth in Out-of-Home Care Project, works on these issues. “The principle at stake here is the fact that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—which oversees ORR—is allowing federal funds to flow to a religious organization that discriminates on the basis of its own religious beliefs.”

“Government funding of federal programs that discriminate against LGBT people on religious grounds is unconstitutional and hurtful to members of our community. What’s particularly disturbing in this case is that the discrimination occurs at the cost of the children in federal care.”

—Jamie Gliksberg,
Lambda Legal staff attorney

The issue is pending in Congress as well as being fought in court. In July, the House Appropriations Committee approved a federal spending bill that includes an amendment introduced by Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.). It would explicitly allow taxpayer-funded, faith-based adoption agencies to turn away LGBT families. (Ten states already have such laws.) The bill would also withhold 15 percent of federal funds allocated for child welfare services from states like New York and California that tried to enforce its nondiscrimination protections against nonprofits that discriminate on religious grounds.

Lambda Legal is among the many groups fighting the amendment. “We played a role in getting 41 senators to sign a letter saying that they’ll oppose any bill with such an amendment attached,” says Cook. “That’s a poison pill in the House, because it’s a deal-killer in the Senate. We’re hopeful it won’t move forward. But it’s important for people to know that there are members of Congress who want to pass laws allowing people to discriminate against LGBT foster and adoptive parents.”

As for Marouf and Esplin’s case, “government funding of federal programs that discriminate against LGBT people on religious grounds is unconstitutional and hurtful to members of our community,” says Lambda Legal’s Jamie Gliksberg, one of the lead attorneys on the case. “What’s particularly disturbing in this case is that the discrimination occurs at the cost of the children in federal care.”

Lambda Legal is fighting for those children. “We’re directly challenging HHS’s use of taxpayer dollars to fund organizations that use their own religious criteria to turn down loving and qualified parents when we know that there are far more children in need of homes than there are parents to care for them,” she says.

According to a recent study from UCLA School of Law’s Williams Institute, 2 million LGBT people are ready and willing to foster or adopt children, far more than the number of children in foster systems in the United States.

Marouf and Esplin remain among them. “We’ve looked into doing this through the regular state foster system, but Texas has a law explicitly allowing foster agencies to discriminate,” she says. “If our case works out for us, we’d still love to foster a refugee child or children. We just don’t know how long that could take.”

Esplin says it infuriates her that organizations use religion to block LGBT people from providing loving homes to children even as they plead for parents to take children in.

“I was raised Mormon, and Fatma was raised Muslim,” she says. “Those religions inform our values—and I don’t think that shame and discrimination are family values. So standing up against that in court means a lot to us.” **LI**

YOUR HELP IS CRUCIAL.

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Please stand with us today.

WE WILL NOT GO BACK!

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With an Android:

1. Download the free QR Code Reader app.
2. Launch the app and hold your device over the QR Code so that it's clearly visible within the screen.

GOOD SCIENCE, BAD STIGMA

Discrimination against people living with HIV persists despite advances that make HIV easy to treat and easy to prevent. Lambda Legal takes on two key cases.

BUSTING BIAS

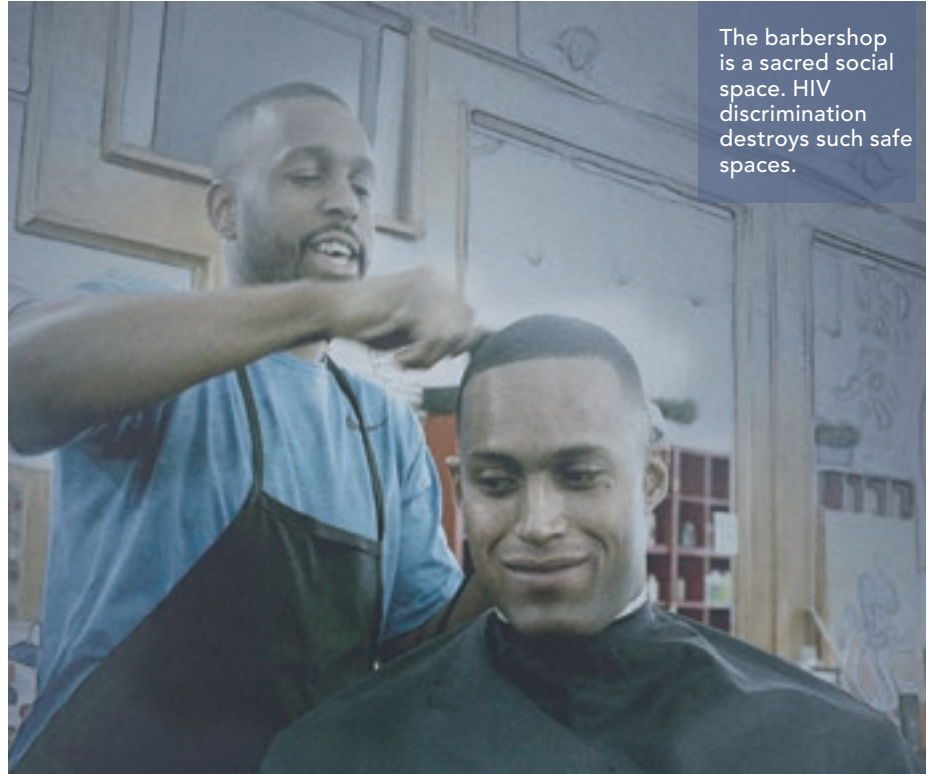
Nikko Briteramos was featured in the last issue of *Impact*. He contacted Lambda Legal last fall after he was turned away from an L.A. barber-shop, King of Kuts, because a barber there identified him as HIV-positive to the proprietor, who then refused to buzz his hair. The media had made Briteramos' HIV status public in 2002 after it emerged that he had not disclosed his newly diagnosed status to another college student before having sex.

"I want people to understand that this was discrimination and that you can't get HIV from giving someone a haircut," Briteramos, 34, an aspiring personal trainer, told *Impact*.

And now he's following through: In July, Lambda Legal filed a complaint on his behalf in U.S. District Court against the owner of King of Kuts. "The facts of this case, as well as the legal claims, are pretty straightforward: the owner of King of Kuts refused to cut Nikko's hair because he is living with HIV, in clear violation of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the California Unruh Civil Rights Act," said Lambda Legal counsel and HIV Project director Scott Schoettes.

In addition to damages for Briteramos, the litigation seeks a public apology from the shop owner and asks him "to stand next to us as we educate about these issues," says Schoettes.

That's not all: In conjunction with the suit, Lambda Legal has joined forces with the Black AIDS Institute to produce an educational video and send Briteramos on a "Cut the Stigma"



The barbershop is a sacred social space. HIV discrimination destroys such safe spaces.

tour of historically black colleges and universities to help get out the word that HIV today is not only easily treatable but also untransmittable when people living with HIV are on treatment or when HIV-negative people take the daily preventive pill Truvada, also known as PrEP. The campaign hopes to reduce HIV stigma and discrimination in majority black settings such as the barbershop where Briteramos was turned away.

"It was important for us to get involved in Nikko's case because there's no way to end the AIDS epidemic if we're not fighting bigotry, discrimination and bias," says Phill Wilson, BAI's founder and CEO. "In addition, as a black organization, we have to be ever vigilant in confronting injustice. It is a part of our survival."

He added: "We are well aware that

HIV discrimination does not only occur in the black community. But Nikko's experience highlights how black people living with HIV are often confronted with discrimination connected to stigma and misinformation in public places of importance within our community. The barbershop is a sacred social space, where black Americans debate social, cultural and political ideas. HIV discrimination destroys such safe spaces."

Briteramos says that the incident was especially hurtful because he had previously patronized King of Kuts several times. "My experience there was not the first I have had with HIV discrimination," he says. "I am speaking out because I would like it to be my last."

Watch #CutTheStigma: Nikko's Story" on Lambda Legal's Youtube channel.

ANOTHER BAD MILITARY BAN

Lambda Legal and National Guardsman Nick Harrison, who is living with HIV, are taking the military to court over its policy of generally not letting people with HIV serve overseas or as officers, thus curtailing their career advancement, as we reported in the previous issue of *Impact*.

Neither the Civil Rights Act nor the Americans with Disabilities Act apply to the military, so Lambda Legal will argue the case as a constitutional equal-protection challenge. “Service members with HIV are currently able to take on any role and be deployed anywhere,” says Schoettes. “The military is way behind the science.”

To be clear, says Schoettes, these are longstanding policies against the military’s approximately 1,200 service members living with HIV. But in a new wrinkle, in February the Department



National Guardsman Nick Harrison and Lambda Legal are fighting outdated policies in the military.

of Defense issued a policy saying that if service members of any sort were non-deployable for 12 consecutive months, the military was required to discharge them.

“They say this is to make the force more militarily ready and lethal,” says Schoettes. “But there are lots of non-deployable people in the military doing important jobs. You don’t need

everyone to deploy.”

In court this September, Lambda Legal, which has already heard from service members living with HIV who have been discharged under the new policy, will not directly challenge this policy shift. Instead, the focus will be on the older policy that makes service members with HIV undeployable.

“That would protect them from the new policy,” says Schoettes. “We’re asking the court to hold the status quo, because we need to keep people living with HIV in the military and doing their jobs until we can fix these outdated policies. There’s no job today that they can’t do and no reason why they can’t be serving anywhere in the world.” [L](#)

A large graphic at the bottom of the page featuring a background of diagonal, overlapping stripes in various colors including green, yellow, orange, red, pink, and purple. The stripes create a sense of movement and depth.

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COURT FIGHT

From the Supreme Court down, Lambda Legal is working to stop Trump from stacking federal courts with right-wing judges in lifetime jobs

Judicially speaking, these are not good times. The Trump administration is moving ahead with uncharacteristic efficiency to fill the federal courts with right-wing judges, thus far having successfully appointed more judges to the U.S. Court of Appeals than Barack Obama and George W. Bush combined at the same point in their presidencies.

By mid-July, according to an analysis by the Pew Research Center, President Donald Trump had appointed 22 appeals court judges, compared to nine each for Obama and Bush. Overall, Trump has appointed 43 judges, including one Supreme Court justice. Dozens more nominees are waiting for Senate consideration.

Still, Lambda Legal, in conjunction with other LGBTQ and civil rights groups, has had some success in pushing back on Trump's picks.

In mid-July, the White House withdrew its nomination of Ryan Bounds for the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit because Republicans could not muster enough votes after Lambda Legal and other groups highlighted articles Bounds wrote as a Stanford undergraduate ridiculing multiculturalism and groups devoted to racial and LGBTQ concerns.

"Bounds started crying during his hearing about going to a bar with gay friends and finding out later they had been bashed," says Sasha Buchert, Lambda Legal staff attorney. "But he doesn't make the connection between his statements in college and violence against LGBTQ and other vulnerable people."

As Buchert sees it, the current judicial scorecard is "Bounds down,



one to go." She is referring to Trump's nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

She notes that the anti-LGBT Family Research Council has advocated strongly for Kavanaugh's previous judicial nominations. "I can promise that if they're supporting him, they clearly believe he will be hostile toward LGBT protections," she says. "He has expressed deep skepticism about fundamental rights within the Constitution that have led to decisions like *Lawrence v. Texas*," the Lambda Legal victory that decriminalized LGBT lives when it struck down sodomy laws nationwide.

And on abortion, she notes, Kavanaugh "agrees with his mentor, former U.S. Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who dissented in *Roe v. Wade*," the 1973 decision that legalized abortion.

There are yet more reasons to fear Kavanaugh, Buchert says. "He's clearly come down on the side of an imperial presidency," she says. "He believes the president does not need to follow the law if he thinks the law is unconstitutional and says the president should be

able to fire a special counsel if he feels the special counsel is out to get him. If ever there were a time when we need someone to stand up to Trump, it's now."

As of press time, Kavanaugh's Senate hearings have been scheduled for the week of September 4. "It's essential," Buchert says, "that everyone call

their senators, especially if you're represented by a moderate Republican or Democrat whose vote is uncertain." Potentially persuadable senators include Republicans Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rob Portman of Ohio, and Democrats Joe Donnelly of Indiana, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Jon Tester of Montana.

"WE CAN'T AFFORD 40 MORE YEARS OF TRUMP VALUES ON THE BENCH. THAT WILL TURN OUR MARRIAGES INTO 'SKIM MILK MARRIAGES,' UPHOLD SO-CALLED RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AGAINST LGBT RIGHTS AND PROBABLY SUPPORT THE BAN ON TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN THE MILITARY."

—Sasha Buchert,
Lambda Legal staff
attorney

"Tell them to please oppose this nomination because there's too much at stake," says Buchert. "We can't afford 40 more years of Trump values on the bench. That will turn our marriages into 'skim milk marriages,' uphold so-called religious freedom against LGBT rights and probably support the ban on transgender people in the military." **LL**

TRANS MILITARY JUSTICE

So far, so good on blocking Trump's ban on transgender service members.

Lambda Legal and other groups keep notching victories in the effort to fight the proposed ban on transgender service members, a policy President Donald Trump launched with a trio of surprise tweets the summer of 2017. So far, every federal court that has heard cases brought by Lambda Legal and others (including the ACLU, GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders, known as GLAD, and National Center for Lesbian Rights), has ruled against moving forward with the ban.

The latest setback for the government came in July, when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said no to the government's request to stay an earlier injunction stopping the ban. (That is, the court said no to an effort to allow the ban to be implemented while the appeal proceeds.) The larger issues raised by the government's appeal are still pending in the Ninth Circuit. As of press time, a hearing in the appeal had been scheduled for October 10.

"At every turn, Lambda and other groups have fought the government's attempts to implement this discrimina-



tory policy," says Lambda Legal Senior Attorney Peter Renn. "So far, the government has not been able to persuade a single federal judge in the country that the government should be allowed to implement this. So there's a lot of momentum on our side—and and we need it with the changing composition of the Supreme Court," with the nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to replace retir-

"THERE'S A LOT OF MOMENTUM ON OUR SIDE—AND WE'RE GOING TO NEED IT BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLY CHANGING COMPOSITION OF THE SUPREME COURT."

—Peter Renn, Lambda Legal senior attorney

ing Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Among the four cases filed against the ban, Lambda Legal's is *Karnoski v. Trump*, which includes plaintiff Ryan Karnoski, a transgender Seattle social worker who wants to join the military and was on this magazine's Winter 2018 cover.

This summer, The New York Times reported that, despite several injunctions blocking the ban, it appeared that few transgender people who had applied for the military had been accepted. Says Renn: "There's an injunction in place and the government can't just flout it."

He also notes that the injunction exists because federal judges ruled against the administration. "This is an example of why these federal bench seats are so crucial," he says—and why Lambda Legal and other groups are fighting so hard against Trump's right-wing court nominees. [LL](#)

Jenner & Block Stands with Lambda Legal in Pursuit of Equality

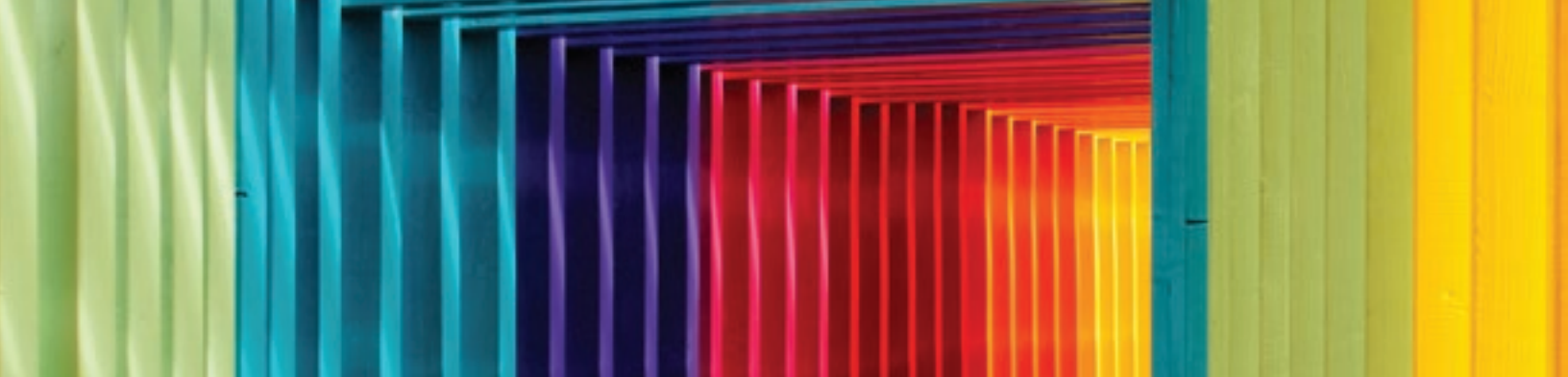
We are proud to support Lambda Legal for its unparalleled record in defending the civil rights of LGBT persons and persons with HIV / AIDS.

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Kramer Levin is proud of its long-standing partnership with **Lambda Legal** and our firm's involvement in over two decades of pro bono work in support of the freedom to marry, youth and family rights, and transgender equality.



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SLS Beverly Hills, CA, June 7, 2018



The iconic **Deborah Cox** welcomed guests as the official host of the evening. Cox performed her greatest hits to close out the program and kickoff the after party.



40TH ANNIVERSARY BRUNCH AND POOL PARTY
Fire Island Pines, NY, July 21, 2018



Event host and Lambda Legal board member **Todd Sears** with **Rick Bingham** and Pines co-chair **David Aldea**.



Lambda Legal major gifts officers **Brian Derrick** and **Matthew Zaccagni** sport commemorative Pines 40th Anniversary tees, flanking Liberty Circle members and event sponsors **Ed Jablonsky** and **Ron Amruso**.

SEATTLE GARDEN PARTY

August 2, 2018



Former Lambda Legal plaintiff Col. **Margarethe Cammermeyer** introduced guest of honor and current plaintiff in *Karnoski v. Trump*, Staff Sergeant **Katie Schmid**.

LANDMARK DINNER, ADOLPHUS HOTEL

Dallas, TX, August 11, 2018



At the VIP cocktail reception prior to dinner, left to right: Lambda Legal plaintiff **Bryn Marouf**, board member **Carol Meyer**, plaintiff **Fatma Marouf**, board member **Lauren Mutti**, her guest **Beth Meyers** and National Leadership Council member **Michelle Peak**.



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**STRENGTH IN
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WALK WITH THE ONES YOU LOVE

ELLIOTT CHERRY AND CHRIS CHENARD MET EACH OTHER AT ELLIOTT'S MASSAGE PRACTICE IN THE FALL OF 1991. They quickly realized that they had a connection, and that not exploring it would be a mistake. They met for coffee in Portland, Me., where they lived. "I told him he'd have to stop being my client, and that means he'd lose a massage therapist and I'd lose a client, but we both looked at each other and smiled," Elliott says, "We've together ever since, and ten years later, in 2001, we had our Vermont civil union—on the anniversary of when we first got coffee."

Years into their relationship Elliott and Chris visited Provincetown, Mass., where it was relatively safe to be out during 1990s. "We held hands and walked down the streets and it was perfectly normal," Elliott says. "We felt completely alive and I couldn't believe that I had never felt that way before."

In their own hometown, they felt afraid to hold hands because it wasn't safe at times. "That juxtaposition of feeling alive and then coming back to feel the loss of that made us realize how we internalized this," Elliott says. "We realized we couldn't live our lives this way."

Soon after, they got involved with the Maine Speakout Project and initiated an annual event called "Walk with the Ones You Love," in which LGBT couples would hold hands with each other and walk with their allies. This galvanized the community, and eventually walks start happening in more than ten towns in Maine.

Elliott and Chris were together for 16 years. Chris was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer. Elliott was by his side, caring for him at home. Chris died in 2007. In honor of Chris, his courage and work with the Maine Speakout Project, the governor of Maine and mayor of Portland, issued proclamations that June 10, 2007 was "Christian Chenard Walk with the Ones You Love" Day.

Months after Chris died, Elliott wrote poetry that expressed his



Chris and Elliott on vacation in Maine.

devotion to Chris and his experience of grief. Elliott wanted to tell the story of Chris dying young and his experience caring for him, and to share with the world the inspiring conversations he and Chris had during this time. Elliott combined these dialogues and poetry with music to create his one-man show, *A Finished Heart*, which he has performed 42 times since 2009.

"It's been used for education in departments of nursing and social work," Elliott says. "I want to reach out to medical schools to perform this piece, where LGBT students still feel they must hide their identities in order to succeed. *A Finished Heart* is about building empathy with two men in love, which relates to

increasing acceptance of LGBTQ lives."

Having fought for marriage equality in Maine, New Jersey and Oregon, Elliott believes that fighting for our rights in the courts and by storytelling are some of the best ways to combat homophobia and to achieve full equality for the LGBT community.

"Lambda Legal's involvement in marriage equality has been crucial to where we are today, but we can't take our progress for granted," Elliott says. "We can get married, but we can also still get fired, and the suffering of transgender people hasn't even come to the surface. I choose to support Lambda Legal because their works speaks to me." **LI**

Stand strong with Elliott and make a planned gift to Lambda Legal. Leaving a legacy gift to Lambda Legal could be one of the most important decisions you make toward protecting yourself, your family and our community. An investment in equality ensures that Lambda Legal will always be there to safeguard the rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people, and everyone living with HIV, while solidifying our future together.

To learn more about Elliott's one-man show, visit finishedheart.com.

Join Lambda Legal's Justice Fund with a monthly gift starting at \$10. lambdalegal.org/donate



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