



The Outreach News

The Monthly Newsletter of the CT Outreach Society

November 2001

Making Things Better

by Judith

Take a quick look at the column to the right. Nice news, eh? Yet another state is better defining existing civil rights laws to include Transgendered persons. Such protections extend the civil rights in housing, employment, credit, and hate-crime, to our population. We have a long way to go, but there is progress being made.

But that's not the whole story.

The article at right leaves out one small tidbit that I discovered in a more in-depth article in the GLBT paper "Innewsweekly". Apparently, the MCAD rulings were precipitated by two specific transgender related cases.....

"In the second case, Charlegne M_____ alleged that she was harassed by her supervisor for being transsexual and that she was threatened with dismissal when she complained. In that case, the MCAD said sex discrimination could apply because M_____ claims she was harassed 'because of the kind of man she is – one who wanted to be a woman.'"

- Innewsweekly, October 31. 2001

"Transgendered Covered by Mass. Anti-Bias Laws, State Agency Rules" by Tony Giampetruzzi

Remember Charlegne? For a number of years, Charlegne was an active COS member – coming to board meetings, events, outreach activities. As time progressed, Charlegne began to understand her Transsexual nature better, and moved on to an active role in the Twenty Club, and her eventual transition. I can report to you that she is happy, healthy, and living the life she has always wanted to.

Charlegne's path was not always smooth, but compared to many in the community, she did very well. Her kids still talk to her. She is gainfully employed. She enjoys hobbies, friends, and sports. While she is not active in the transgendered community, she did not turn her back on the community either. Many of us, given Charlegne's success, would probably have dropped the discrimination case years ago. Old news...ancient history...not relevant to her present life.

The MCAD decision may have no impact on Charlegne's life. She has moved along to other employment, and the anger, pain, and stress that ensued from this experience have faded from her memory somewhat. BUT – by pursuing this – filing it with the MCAD and keeping at it, she has helped to make the state of Massachusetts a bit safer and saner place for a transgendered person.

Well done, Charlegne! Your COS sister's thank-you!

A lesson to us all: Make things better. The transkids of today will be the trans-adults of tomorrow. Even if its too late to make things better for "ME", try to improve the situation for the next generation. Our work at Pride, Outreach Speaking, Children from the Shadows, and other GLBY rights and education events make that happen. Our willingness to be out and visible make that happen.

Charlegne did not seek to set legal precedent or be a cause celebre – she simply tried her best to keep her job while she transitioned, and when the company continued to make her life miserable...she took some action.

She made the world a better place. That's all that any of us can hope to do!

Massachusetts Upholds Transgender Rights

By Beth Shapiro, 365Gay.com

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ruled that transgender people are protected under Massachusetts state laws prohibiting sex and disability discrimination.

It reverses an early decision in which transgender people were excluded from the civil rights protections.

Jennifer Levi, a staff attorney for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, called it a "tremendously important decision for transgender people." Levi said the decision acknowledges "there is no principled reason, legal or otherwise, to graft an exclusion onto non-discrimination laws for transgender people."

The Commission based its decision on a 1989 United States Supreme Court case, Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins, in which Ann Hopkins, an accounting firm associate was denied partnership because many of the partners thought she was too masculine, macho and aggressive. In its decision, the Supreme Court explained that enforcing sex stereotypes is a form of sex discrimination.

The Commission's decision also made it clear that, unlike the federal disability laws, Massachusetts' disability law does not exclude transgender people from protection.