

## Our Mission:

**THE AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
ALUMNI NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL  
AND TRANSGENDER  
SUPPORTERS**

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Ally (GLBTA) Resource Center works to strengthen and sustain an inclusive campus community that welcomes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities by providing support, educational resources, and advocacy.

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

The spring semester is in full swing and I wanted to take a few minutes to introduce myself to you all, inform you of our annual reception, and let you know about some of the programs we're sponsoring this year.

My name is Sara Bendoraitis and I am the new Director in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally (GLBTA) Resource Center at American University. I started in this position in last February, having moved to the DC area most recently from Texas, where I worked for Texas A&M University in the Women's and Gender Equity Resource Center. The Resource Center provided education and advocacy for/about women, GLBT and sexual violence issues. I am very excited to be here at AU and I look forward to meeting you all.

For those who may not already be on the GLBTA Resource Center alumni list, please contact me at [sara.bendoraitis@american.edu](mailto:sara.bendoraitis@american.edu) or 202-885-3372 in order to keep informed about special news items and invitations to events of interest for our GLBTA alumni. We would also love to hear how you are doing since graduating from AU!

All the Best,  
Sara Bendoraitis

## GLBTA RESOURCE CENTER TOWN HALL MEETING

Thursday, March 27, 5:30 p.m.  
Mary Graydon Center  
Gianni Lounge Room 200

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD AS OUR CENTER MAKES  
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

## CONTACT US

Hours of Operation  
Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Phone: 202-885-3347  
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Website: [www.american.edu/glbta/](http://www.american.edu/glbta/)

# ALTERNATIVE MEXICO! BREAK

This trip will focus on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Movement in Mexico. Mexico is traditionally a conservative, Catholic country. Since the emergence of LGBT movements in the 1970's, there have been many struggles but recent progress. Recent laws have been enacted, including a national anti-discrimination law and a law for domestic partnership in Mexico City. Also, there is current national legislation under consideration on transgender rights.

We will be working to expand connections and build transnational relationships between the LGBT movements in Mexico and the U.S. We also believe that this solidarity can help to create a more global LGBT human rights movement. During our trip, we will work towards a greater mutual understanding and to identify the ways in which we can create and continue solidarity after our trip.



## VISITS TO:

- BGay-BProud Café
- Teotihuacán ancient ruins
- LGBT youth community center
- Frida Khalo house and museum
- LGBT performance/theater spaces







## TENTATIVE TRIP ITINERARY INCLUDES

### Meetings with:

- LGBT community leaders
- Human rights activists
- Community organizations
- Lesbian organizations
- Transgender groups
- Mexican legislators
- LGBT performers
- Mexican sexologists



### IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS can be made online at:  
[www.american.edu/anewau/giving/index.cfm](http://www.american.edu/anewau/giving/index.cfm)

Select "Campus Life" from the Area/School drop down menu on the left, then select "Alternative Breaks" from the Fund menu on the right. Finally, write in the name of the trip in the Special Instructions box.



## FOR FURTHER CONTACT INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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**Student Trip Leader**  
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**Alternative Break  
Coordinator**  
 Shoshanna Sumka  
*sumka@american.edu*

# The Coming Battle: Marriage Equality in D.C.

By: Kevin Ballie

The first few months of 2008 have yet to finish, yet some of D.C.'s most prominent queer activists already have 2009 in mind. Some local activists, according to a report by the Washington Blade, are hopeful that expanded Democratic majorities in the U.S. Congress and Democratic control of the White House would grant greater local autonomy to D.C. in 2009. The implications of greater autonomy would be felt far and wide on many local issues, not least of which would be marriage equality.

The fight for marriage equality has no dearth of supporters in the city, ranging from 9 members of the D.C. council to the honorable mayor himself, Adrian Fenty. Given the overwhelming support from local political leaders, it is evident that D.C., unlike the rest of the nation, has the political will to legalize gay marriage but not the political authority. Unlike other parts of the country with congressional representation, Washington D.C. lives under constant threat of congressional intervention over many matters.

Despite a history of under-representation, Washington D.C. has recently made great strides in pushing for a full voting rights member in the House of Representatives. This goal is widely predicted to become a reality if Democrats succeed in expanding majorities in Congress and taking the White House in the 2008 elections. In addition to pushing for a representative in the House, D.C. has begun to assert its authority in funding controversial anti-HIV programs.

Last year Washington D.C. earned national attention for announcing that they would fund a needle exchange program to combat HIV infection in D.C. The move became possible after Congress removed a decade long regulation that barred the capitol from taking part in such a program. These recent moves have turned many LGBT local activists a bit more optimistic about marriage equality in the nation's capitol.

D.C. Council member Jim Graham (D-Ward 1) has in the past pledged to introduce a bill to legalize same sex marriage in the District within the next two years. Local blog [dcformarriage.blogspot.com](http://dcformarriage.blogspot.com), run by D.C. activist David Mariner, has tracked the growing momentum for marriage equality. Even if the D.C. politicians and the Congress clear the way for marriage equality in D.C., the likely risk of a large backlash from other parts of the nation are a possibility as was seen after the state of Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage.

It is yet to be seen if organized local opposition to marriage equality will surface as the possibility of legalization becomes more likely and the issue is given more attention by the local media. At the end of the day, the issue for now is more or less out of the hands of the residents of D.C. The opinions of Washingtonians are largely marginalized as the threat of a Congressional veto looms over the head of every resident.

## *Trans-forming AU's Restrooms*

By: Nick Sakurai

In October 2006, Washington, D.C. enacted some of the strongest legal regulations in the world to secure the human rights of transgender and gender variant people. These regulations have two major effects on restroom facilities. The first is that transgender and gender variant people must be allowed to use multi-user facilities that correspond to their gender identity or expression, regardless of physical/legal sex. The second is that in order to prevent harassment and increase options for people, that all single-user restrooms must have gender-neutral signage.

I am very proud that American University has been at the forefront of considering the needs of transgender populations even before Washington, D.C. came to legally affirm transgender rights. In 2002, we became one of the first U.S. colleges to amend its anti-discrimination policies to ensure the inclusion of transgender and gender variant communities. AU has labeled all of our single-user restrooms

as gender neutral and we have secured an agreement that single-user restrooms will be built in all renovations and new building projects as a way to ensure safe and accessible restroom facilities for all people. Our most recent renovation of the ground floor of Mary Graydon Center added a gender-neutral, single-user restroom to the building.

But the journey has not ended. It is just beginning. There are still ways in which our office is working to improve life on campus for transgender and gender variant communities, including advocating for transgender-inclusive health insurance at AU; producing educational events, trainings, and publications on gender identity and expression; and providing support and advising one-on-one with transgender and gender variant members of the AU family. We also invite your input and support as our office advocates, educates, and provides support for transgender and gender variant communities at AU.



# Alumni Snapshots

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### Robert J. Letourneau

*1992, BA, School of International Service*

After working in public health at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill for the last 10 years, where I have been providing technical assistance to American Indian/Alaska Native Tribes and Tribal Organizations across the United States, I have recently started a small business to feed my creative side. My business ([www.rjldesign.us](http://www.rjldesign.us)) offers interior redesign, staging for real estate sales, and various design consultation services. With the support of my partner of ~6 years (Russell), I hope to eventually split my 'professional life' between design and public health.

### Joseph T. Tanzi

*1985, BA, School of International Service*

I am the point person for Marriage Equality NY in NY's 10th Senate District my mission: Persuade my State Senator(D), Ms. Shirley Huntley, to vote in favor of NY's Same Sex Marriage Bill. (No easy task). She is a Christian right Democrat. This Bill has passed the Assembly. We are now focusing our efforts on the State Senate. The Governor has pledge to sign it. NY will have the distinct honor of becoming the first state in the U.S. to have legislated the right of same sex marriage.

### Nate DeCarolis

*2002, BA, CAS: Neuroscience*

Currently halfway through my Ph.D. in Integrative Biology at University of Texas, Southwestern Medical Center, in Dallas, TX. My project is fascinating and seeks to characterize and define properties of adult neural stem cells in mice.

### Pamela Strother

*2004, MBA, Kogod School of Business*

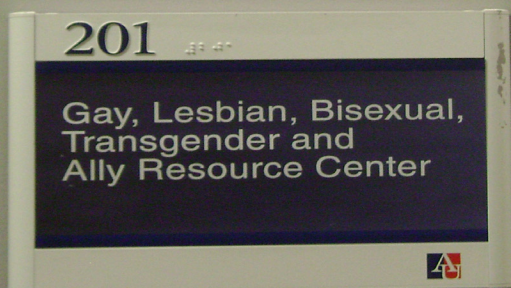
This past year I founded a consulting firm called realChange Partners. We provide strategic planning and fundraising training to national, regional and local non-profit organizations. While both me and my business partner have been historically rooted in managing and providing services to LGBT organizations, our firm has expanded to healthcare, environment, foundation and arts clients. Please get to know us at [www.realchangepartners.com](http://www.realchangepartners.com).

### Kelly Costello

*2003, BA, CAS: Elementary Education*

I am currently living in Denver, CO and working as the Director of Victim Services at the Colorado Anti-Violence Program ([coavp.org](http://coavp.org)). When I'm not at work or hanging out with my roommate Anna (class of 2002) or my boyfriend, Jessie, I'm filling up my time as a co-founder of the Denver Zine Library ([denverzinelibrary.org](http://denverzinelibrary.org)) and co-organizer of The Tranny Roadshow ([trannyroadshow.org](http://trannyroadshow.org)).

To have your profile included in future additions, please email [glbta@american.edu](mailto:glbta@american.edu)



# *A Narrowing ENDA*

By: Kevin Travis Ballie

One of the most significant divides in the LGBT movement in over a decade has been over the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. ENDA, a national bill meant to outlaw workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression, came closer to a reality after a Democratic takeover of Congress in 2006. The controversy arose after Democratic congress members expressed concern about the gender identity portion of the bill creating difficulty for the overall bill.

ENDA has been a recurring proposal on the national level for decades. Originally in 1964, it was proposed that "sexual orientation" be included in the historic Civil Rights Act of that year. Such an inclusion would have prohibited discrimination in public facilities, in government and in

employment for LGB individuals. Since then, the bill has slowly but surely narrowed over time to just include employment protections.

Over 368 organizations opposed the effort to further narrow the bill by excluding transgender individuals. These organizations were in direct opposition to the nation's largest gay organization, the Human Rights Campaign. Intense organizing has developed among those that support a gender expression inclusive ENDA, as was witnessed by AU students and staff that attended 2008's Creating Change, the nation's largest annual gathering of LGBT and allied activists. The bill will most likely come up next in 2009, however no one can predict if 2009 will be a year of unified LGBT action or divisions.

## Calender

### **LAVENDER LANGUAGES**

Friday February 15 through  
Sunday February 17

Organized by the department of anthropology  
[www.american.edu/lavenderlanguages](http://www.american.edu/lavenderlanguages)

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Thursday, March 27, 5:30 p.m.  
Mary Graydon Center  
Gianni Lounge Room 200

### **LOREN CAMERON**

Wednesday, April 2, 8:15 p.m.

Mary Graydon Center  
Gianni Lounge Room 200

Transgender photographer Loren Cameron  
speaks on his work.

Sponsored by Queers and Allies

### **GLBTA RESOURCE CENTER ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY**

Tuesday, April 15, 5 p.m.  
Mary Graydon Center  
University Club Room 4

