

DignityUSA works for respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations, genders, and gender identities—especially gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons—in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support.

Highlights in this issue:

| | |
|---|------|
| Advent Expectations and Christmas Blessings | p. 1 |
| Editor's Note on the Use of the LGBTQI Acronym | p. 2 |
| DignityUSA Leads Memorials for LGBTQI Murder Victims | p. 2 |
| Transgender Day of Remembrance | p. 5 |
| Development News | p. 7 |
| Boston 2017 Conference Updates | p. 8 |
| Faith Community News | p. 9 |
| New book: Cross-National Public Opinion about Homosexuality | p.10 |

A Future Not Our Own

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives include everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one

day will grow. We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing this.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Advent Expectations and Christmas Blessings



By Lewis Speaks-Tanner,
DignityUSA President

We are into another Advent season. Let it be an opportunity to reflect and recharge ourselves.

After such a long election season, the electoral outcome does not bode well for LGBTQI people. I, along with many

LGBTQI leaders, hope we are wrong. In 2017, we will need continued collaboration with many different organizations to prevent our hard-won rights from being chipped away or reversed nationally and by individual states. As we continue to share our stories, more people get to know our struggles and lives.

Over the last 47 years, DignityUSA members have continued to work for justice. We have had many advancements as well as disappointments over the years. The work continues. I am reminded of a prayer written by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, who had the following prayer included in a reflection for the anniversary of the martyrdom of Romero. It is titled "The mystery of the Romero Prayer." The mystery is that the prayer is attributed to Oscar Romero but never spoken by him.

My prayer for Advent is that we have a prayerful, reenergizing and stress-less Advent! May our Christmas be blessed as we continue to proclaim God's peace through justice! Merry Christmas to one and all!



Editor's Note on Use of the LGBTQI Acronym

In this issue, we have intentionally started using the LGBTQI acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex." Not only are we honoring and acknowledging intersex members of DignityUSA who have requested the inclusion of "I," but the LGBTQI usage has become standard among international human and civil rights groups, especially in Europe and Africa.

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| | |
|------------------|------------------|
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National Office

DignityUSA
 PO Box 376
 Medford, MA 02155-0004
 Voice: 202-861-0017 or 800-877-8797
 Fax: 781-397-0584
www.dignityusa.org
Info@dignityusa.org
<http://facebook.com/DignityUSA>
<http://twitter.com/DignityUSA>

Staff

Marianne Duddy-Burke – Executive Director
executivedirector@dignityusa.org
 Voice: 617-669-7810

Peggy Burns – Operations Manager
Info@dignityusa.org

Logan Bear – Technology Services Manager
webminister@dignityusa.org

Publications Team

Leo Egashira – Publications Committee Chair
Leoeg@dignityusa.org

Peggy Burns – Proofreader
 Paul Keaveney – Proofreader

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DignityUSA Leads Memorials for LGBTQI Murder Victims

By Marianne Duddy-Burke,
 DignityUSA Executive Director



In Rome and at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting, DignityUSA marked November's spirit of remembrance to draw attention to the failure of most Catholic officials to explicitly condemn anti-

LGBTQI violence, even in the wake of the Pulse massacre in Orlando, and the largest number of murders of transgender people on record in 2016.

Reflections offered at both events noted that "fewer than 10" of nearly 300 active bishops in the U.S. had acknowledged that those at Pulse were targeted due to being in a "club ... established as a haven and community space for the LGBTQI community by a Catholic woman to honor her gay brother who had died of AIDS," and that none have spoken about the risk to transgender people. Rather, declared DignityUSA, "The worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history occurred at a gay club, and the leaders of our Church failed to explicitly link this violence with the homophobia and transphobia so rampant in our society, and in too many religious communities. They hid behind words like 'innocent victims' and 'tragic loss of life' – certainly true, but sinfully incomplete."

At the Rome Vigil, sponsored by Cammini de Speranza, photos of the Pulse victims flashed behind an altar that held a stark wooden cross and a rainbow Easter candle, and a ring of candles representing the lives lost. As stories of some of the victims' lives were read,

Continued on page 3



DignityUSA Leads Memorials . . . , continued from page 2



Andrea Rubera and Marianne Duddy-Burke at Cammini di Speranza, Rome



The memorial created by Larry Ranley at Baltimore's Harborside Walk

and a choir sang hymns of mourning, candles around the foot of the cross were lit. Nearly 70 people, including a couple who had met at Dignity/Los Angeles and who retired in Rome, wept and prayed. One woman in attendance, who sobbed through much of the service, said she had visited Pulse on several occasions while studying just outside of Orlando.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops blocked DignityUSA from renting a conference room at the Baltimore, Maryland hotel where they were meeting, so we held the vigil outside the hotel. Dignity/Washington Chapter member Larry Ranley constructed a rainbow tent that provided a dramatic and eye-catching backdrop for the dozen or so people—Dignity members, folks from nearby LGBTQI-friendly parishes, and a Roman Catholic Woman Priest—who participated in the prayer, attracting attention from many on the Harborside Walk. DignityUSA Board member Allen Rose created a powerful Rosary litany, in which the biography of a murder victim became linked with a prayer, and each Mystery's reflection had real meaning for the LGBTQI and ally community. We prayed and read each victim's biography over the course of two and one-half hours.

At the conclusion, those present shared what it meant to be part of the event. One woman, a recent transplant from Orlando to Baltimore, had been a frequent patron of Pulse, and also made her First Communion and Confirmation at the

Continued on page 4

DignityUSA Leads Memorials, continued from page 3

Catholic church closest to the club. She noted that several victims' funerals were held there, and wondered if the priest acknowledged the sexual orientation or gender identity of those he buried. "What if it had been me?" she asked. "Would he have told the truth about my life?" She came to the event representing a new group of Latino/a queer and ally Catholics in Baltimore, and expressed the group's immense gratitude that the witness was occurring.

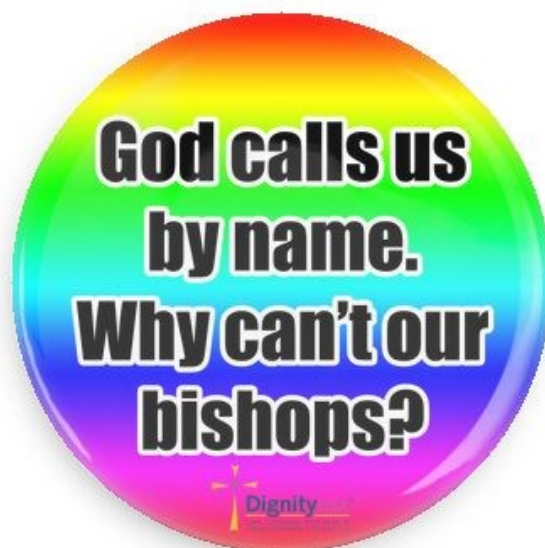
The Baltimore vigil was held exactly one week following the U.S. national election. We noted how the election results have exacerbated the anxiety many LGBTQI people and allies were already experiencing. "An atmosphere of increased polarization, and a sense that it is permissible for those in the dominant culture to taunt and target the 'other' has permeated the LGBTQI community. The Vice-President Elect's history as a champion of restrictive, anti-LGBTQI religious liberty laws raises tremendous concerns about the future of the civil liberties advances our community and supporters have achieved. Reports that the bishops' conference may amend the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care facilities, to prohibit the provision of any gender reassignment services means that many Americans could lose any access to appropriate, respectful health care."

In remarks that followed reflection on what we



learned about those killed, we outlined what we seek from the U.S. bishops in honor of the victims. "We honor them, not only is ensuring their names and their lives are not forgotten, but in recommitting ourselves, as people of deep and enduring faith, to ending all hatred and violence rooted in misunderstanding, ignorance, and inflammatory religious rhetoric. We will

continue to remind the leaders of our Church that LGBTQI people and our families are numbered among the people of God, that we are members of their flocks, and that we deserve and demand pastoral care and policies from our Church that respect our dignity, humanity, and the reality of our lives. They can start by naming us as LGBTQI people, using the names we use, and the terms that honor the communities with which we identify. Our bishops can talk with us, rather than about us. Our bishops must take a clear, unequivocal stand against any violence—physical, verbal, theological, emotional—directed towards LGBTQI people or our community. They must work with us and with our families to develop pastoral care programs and protocols that are appropriate and respectful. This is what we call for in the name of LGBTQI people whose lives have been lost to violence."



Allen Rose noted, "These events are a beginning not an end. It is really important that our bishops begin to call us by name. DignityUSA will continue to work for that for however long it takes."

Copies of the remarks, prayers, and biographies from the Baltimore vigil have been sent to the new President and Vice President of the USCCB, and the remarks and some photographs can be viewed at the [DignityUSA website](http://DignityUSA.org).

Transgender Day of Remembrance, November 20, 2016

During the week of November 14-20, individuals and organizations around the country participated in Transgender Awareness Week to help raise the visibility of transgender and gender non-conforming people and address the issues these communities face. The Dignity/New York community commemorated Transgender Day of Remembrance by honoring the memory of those whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence at our community liturgies. DignityUSA Board President Lewis Speaks-Tanner said, "All of us must do everything in power to ensure trans people feel safe. Even one death is too many—no one should die for expressing their gender identity."

At the LGBT Center in Greenwich Village, our community gathered along with people from all over the world who joined us from their "House Church" at our Come To The Table: Catholic Worship for All liturgy. Many of us returned to join our evening community at St. John's in the Village.

There, we were honored to have Melissa Sklarz. Melissa was the first trans person elected to office in 1999 and is currently a Director at the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (in New York).

Melissa Sklarz reminded us during her homily that "We have Orlando every year:
... Women of color continue to struggle dispropor-

tionately.

...I hope that this list (of those we remember tonight) will diminish.

...We carry their names in our heart as we move forward.

...We stand on the shoulders of others, and someday others will have ours to stand on.

...Love, the answer is always love.

...You inspire people, as we become empowered in our city, so that our next generation will empower others."

Melissa then called out the names on her list with how they were murdered. It was haunting knowing that we would name them again in a few moments.

During our Prayer of the Faithful, we followed the custom Christians of El Salvador developed to express their faith and their resistance when people were murdered or disappeared. They called out their names at liturgy followed by "¡Presente!" which means "You are Here"! Solemnly, our litany of names of those murdered this past year due to transphobic hatred and violence called out "¡Presente!" after each name.

Joining us at liturgy was Sara Davis Buechner who received a warm welcome back to the Dignity/New York community after being in Vancouver, Canada for many years. The following day, on her Facebook page she wrote, "I joined some illustrious company at the evening Catholic Mass celebrated by New York City's DignityUSA Chapter in Greenwich Village.

Continued on page 6



At Dignity/New York's Transgender Day of Remembrance liturgy: Left to right: Robert Brande, Dianne Weyers, Brendan Fay, Mitch Kalaminsky, Melissa Sklarz, Sara Davis Buechner, Lewis Speaks-Tanner, Tim Ascolese

Trans Day of Remembrance, continued from page 5

Directly to my left behind the altar there are two legendary civil rights activists: Melissa Sklarz, Development Director of the Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund; and Brendan Fay, co-founder of the Civil Marriage Trail Project. They are giants of the LGBTQI community and heroes to me. The cards on the altar feature the names and photographs of 24 transgender people murdered in hate crimes this past year. Of course we may all think "there but for the Grace of God," but it is not enough simply to remember, or to be grateful at Thanksgiving time. In this age when bigotry, xenophobia, and misogyny stand poised to corrupt the highest offices of our Democracy, we must redouble our efforts to celebrate, honor, and protect the very diversity that gives us strength. The fundamental meaning of American Freedom depends upon our voices and deeds, now."

A Dignity/New York member shared this reflection about the day: "The two Dignity/New York liturgies that focused on the remembrance of transgender people who had been killed or abused in the last year touched me more deeply than I expected.

When I was 24 in 1972, I was introduced to the demimonde of transgender women in Seattle, Washington. Many worked as prostitutes on Pike St. to survive. Some had sexual reassignment surgeries paid for by mafia owners of topless bars, who expected these girls to perform in their "clubs." I saw how difficult their lives were. The choices and lifestyles of these trans women scared me, but I admired their resilience, tenacity, and sense of community.

Part of my fears arose from memories of my own gender questions and confusion as a gay adolescent, in a southern state that had clearly delineated roles for boys and girls. Before I understood the conflict between "binary expectations" and "gender fluidity," I struggled with impulses, desires, and behaviors that were only allowed to girls. Queer was clearly a pejorative designation. I think this was common for many young gay people in the 1950's thru '70's. Of course, long before that as well. The pain of my personal ambivalences seemed to recede when I found myself in a loving, gay relationship. Caring for another person was all that mattered.

But in Seattle I began to understand that love does not cure everyone's suffering. The people that continuously "dressed up" and put themselves at risk by illegally hustling on the streets, or in bars, seemed tragic to me, forced to accept society's only role for them.

All these years later, I thought transgender people were beginning to see progress in gaining simple human rights and protections, and a modicum of acceptance, understanding, and dignity. But this recent presidential election campaign, particularly on the far right, has unleashed the ever-present demons of hatred and intolerance of people who do not conform, particularly for people of color and in poverty. The legal struggles in North Carolina and Indiana, and the election of an equal opportunity bully as President, has sent me and many other non-binary queer people into a tailspin.

At Come to the Table's liturgy we prayed for particular transgender victims of violence, with deep sorrow. The Dignity Mass included the impressive Melissa Sklarz who gave a powerful, knowledgeable, inspiring call to action and perseverance in her homily. I began to feel a glimmer of hope, and resolved to secure rights and protections for this special community of transgender people.

For the saints we know of, but not of their names, and those who died unknown. "¡Presente!"



For the full memorial list, see The Transgender Day of Remembrance website: <https://tdor.info/>

For a list of resources about Transgender issues see the websites listed below.

National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE)

<http://www.transequality.org/>

Sylvia Rivera Law Project <http://srlp.org/>

Transgender Law Center

<http://transgenderlawcenter.org/>

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund

<http://www.transgenderlegal.org/>

Development News

By Chris Pett, Board Member and Development Committee Chair



As we launch the annual Advent Appeal, I continue to focus on the strength of this community, our movement and mission, especially following the disappointing (putting it mildly) federal election results.

While many of us may be frustrated and concerned, we still have our values, gifts, and God's Spirit moving across and within all of us. "Now more than ever" will be the cry of many progressive advocacy organizations as they reach out to their members and extended networks requesting financial support.

So as we embark on the Advent Season, "now more than ever" will we need your financial support and will be appealing to our members, family members, allies, etc. for the resources which will allow DignityUSA to be the uplifting, hopeful voice of LGBTQI Catholics on an even greater scale than we've been able to do this past year.

DignityUSA members will receive a physical mailing early in December, which is being augmented by weekly Facebook postings that will include testimonials witnessing to where and how DignityUSA has made a difference in their faith and lives and relationships. You are welcome to record a brief (30 second) video testimonial as an individual, family or as a Chapter and send it to Logan Bear at webminister@dignityusa.org. A written testimonial would also be helpful. Also please send those to Logan at his email address.

And for the first time, we will have a DignityUSA Advent Calendar, which you can find at <https://www.dignityusa.org/advent-calendar>. Visit each day for inspiration about how YOU and this movement are helping to make our world and our Church more just for LGBTQI people.

When you see the Facebook postings, please "Like" and then "Share" with your own personal message encouraging members of your extended networks to contribute.

We all have the opportunity during these times of uncertainty and concern to live our faith and values authentically. And we have the opportunity to act on these values: to bring support and comfort to those in our community who are feeling at-risk and fearful; to volunteer; to advocate for dialogue, reconciliation, and respect across our communities.

AND, to provide your financial support as the DignityUSA Board considers the challenges we will likely face this coming year, and what resources we will need to respond.

Thank you as always for your gracious support and prayers!

DignityUSA is an Approved Charity for the Combined Federal Campaign!

Attention Federal employees: Starting with the Fall 2016 Campaign, you can designate DignityUSA as a charity to receive your pre-tax workplace contributions! Campaigns began in September; please indicate that you would like to have your gift benefit CFC number #73047 -- DignityUSA on paper form, or DignityUSA (Dignity, Inc.) online. We'd be so grateful if you elect to direct your giving to DignityUSA. Thank you for your support!



Remember: New Year, New Dateline!

Just a reminder that this will be the last issue of the monthly DignityUSA Dateline. Starting in January, Dateline will be available via email and Facebook on a biweekly basis. Please be sure we have your current email! Updates should be sent to info@dignityusa.org.

Boston 2017 Conference Updates

Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey to Keynote Boston Conference



DignityUSA is thrilled to announce that Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey will deliver the Keynote Address titled, “Table Manners for Hungry Radicals,” at the July 6-9, 2017 conference. Dr. Lightsey is the only openly queer lesbian African-American ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, and is associate dean and professor of contextual theology and practice at the Boston University School of Theology.

She is a veteran who teaches about just war theory, as well as teaching courses on LGBTQI Theology.

“Dr. Lightsey’s conviction that theology and activism are deeply linked makes her a perfect keynoter for DignityUSA as we address the theme of A Place at the Table,” said Philip White, Boston conference co-chair. “She has worked in Ferguson, Missouri and in Orlando following the Pulse shooting, and will surely enrich our gathering by sharing her reflections on those experiences with us.”

Interviewed about her goals in working with students, Dr. Lightsey said, “I want them to be able to articulate theologically what impact queers of faith may have upon the church and society.” She believes students must examine their own assumptions, realizing that no one, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation, “gets away without being influenced by these societal constructions” of stereotypes.

In describing her on-the-ground work, Dr. Lightsey says, “(The) call to Biblical Obedience is not and cannot be solely for the purpose of LGBTQI rights. It must address oppression wherever its tenacious tentacles grip the lives of God’s people and Earth itself. This is why we must all work together and use our voices against oppression.”

Dr. Lightsey is the author of *Our Lives Matter: A Womanist Queer Theology*, which reviewers call “a

timely publication” that “challenges readers to move beyond theory and to acknowledge the full humanity of all persons and is a must-read for any who self-identifies as Christian.”

Dr. Lightsey’s address will be given the morning of Friday, July 7, 2017 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, the site of most conference activities. Look for more information about conference speakers and activities in the weeks ahead!



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

DignityUSA

B O S T O N 2 0 1 7

DignityUSA’s 23rd National Gathering is Also our First “Conference”

Have you noticed that we are using “Conference” rather than “Convention” when referring to our upcoming national gathering? We’ve heard from many Dignity members and friends that they thought “convention” implied a business meeting focused on internal issues, and was more appropriate for “insiders” and current leaders. We know our gatherings offer much more: inspirational, thought-provoking reflections on emerging issues, engaging workshops, moving liturgies and prayer experiences, a range of social events, high-quality entertainment, and opportunities to meet or reconnect with incredible people from all around the country... You told us “conference” seemed a better reflection of this variety of offerings, and felt more welcoming. So, we’re throwing a conference—a great conference—and there’s A Place at the Table for you! Registration will open in January 2017.

Faith Community News



40th Anniversary, August 12, 2016

Dignity/San Antonio held its 40th anniversary at its worship space at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Over 100 guests helped to celebrate the occasion. Dinner was a catered meal of delicious Mexican food and dessert. Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director of DignityUSA, was our guest speaker. There were also several other speakers from our community who advocated for the work that this chapter does for the city of San Antonio. There was also a table with photos of past Dignity/San Antonio members who are no longer with us. Adding to the festive mood, an all-female Mariachi group entertained the crowd. A great time was had by all.



Marianne speaking at Dignity/San Antonio's 40th Anniversary

Solidarity Sunday, October 9, 2016

Dignity/San Antonio observed Solidarity Sunday with an interfaith service that included sharing from a variety of faith perspectives and remembering those who have violently lost their lives because they were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans-gender. Our guest speaker was

Deb Meyers, Nickie Valdez, and Carmen Tafolla



Carmen Tafolla, PhD, Fr. Eddie Bernal's sister-in-law. Fr. Eddie was an advocate for our Chapter for many years and we wanted to acknowledge his dedication to our chapter. After the service, we gathered for a pot luck dinner and continued our great conversation.

Annual Fall Ball, November 12, 2016

Dignity/San Antonio held its annual Fall Ball at the El Tropicano Hotel in downtown San Antonio on Saturday, November 12, with approximately 84 people in attendance. A fabulous sit-down dinner of chicken piccata, roasted pork loin, or grilled Portobello mushrooms was served. Afterwards, attendees danced the night away with the DJ. Over the course of the evening, raffles were held for wine baskets, handmade blankets, gift cards, and pictures that were painted and framed by our own Dignity members. A great time was had by all and we all look forward to next year's Ball.



Mary Hunt visits Dignity/San Antonio, November 20, 2016

Mary Hunt of WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual), accompanied by partner Diann, was in town for a convention and was able to celebrate liturgy with the Dignity/San Antonio community on Sunday, November 20.



Mary Hunt and Nickie Valdez

Dignity/Boston News

On November 17, 2016, Becky Duddy-Burke and Mary Beth Foley represented Dignity/Boston at a panel discussion on the campus of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. The event was hosted by the university's Newman Association and the theme was understanding the experiences of LGBTQI Catholics. Emilee Cocuzzo, one of the Newman Association student leaders, asked Becky and Mary Beth a variety of questions concerning their own faith experiences, coming out, and their thoughts about the Catholic Church's views and practices regarding LGBTQI individuals. The questions offered opportunities to share information about the advocacy work of Dignity/Boston and DignityUSA with the audience that consisted of approximately 15 youth who identified as LGBTQI and allies. Students discussed a recent hate crime on campus in which hurtful words were written on a bathroom stall after the presidential election.

Becky and Mary Beth offered their support and suggestions for how the students could continue to work towards a safe and accepting campus for all. The students' advisor, Ed Carr, raised a thoughtful question about how "straight Catholic allies" could work toward a more inclusive Church which led to a discussion about Catholic reform groups and coalitions. At the conclusion of the event, students approached Becky and Mary Beth with individual comments and questions, leaving all present with feelings of hope that the stories of Dignity/Boston members as LGBTQI Catholics could be shared at future events on campus, and that this generation of students is committed to, and ready to fight for, social justice in their communities.

New book of interest

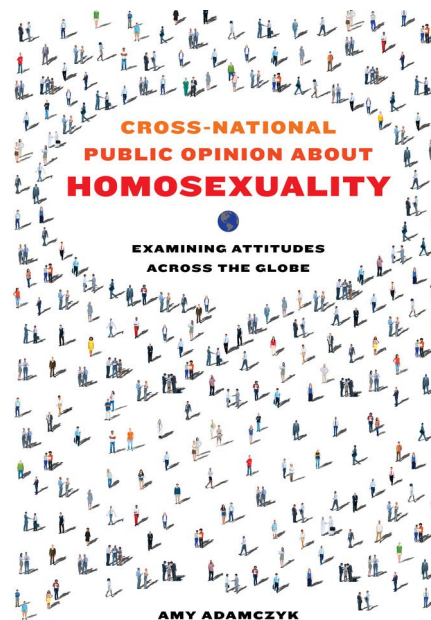
Cross-National Public Opinion about Homosexuality: Examining Attitudes across the Globe

by Dr. Amy Adamczyk

Across the world, public opinion about homosexuality varies substantially. While residents in some nations have embraced gay rights as human rights, in other countries very few people find homosexuality acceptable. Why are there such big differences in attitudes about homosexuality?

Using survey data from almost 90 societies this book shows that cross-national differences in how residents view homosexuality can largely be explained by three country characteristics: the strength of democratic institutions, the level of economic development and the religious context. While these factors can explain a lot of the differences across the world, the way they shape attitudes within individual nations varies widely. Each country has a different story to tell about how these forces affect public opinion. Country case studies, a content analysis of newspaper articles, and in-depth interviews are used to unpack the characteristics working within individual and key sets of nations. Attention is given not only to demographic and country characteristics that shape public opinion, but also the way these factors work within specific countries and combine with a nation's unique history and social context to shape attitudes, laws, policies, and enforcement regarding homosexuality.

For more information: <http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?>



Chapter Anniversary



**44 years
Congratulations!**