



In the American colonies, anyone convicted of committing a homosexual act could be sentenced to death. Today; gays and lesbians are the most frequent targets of hate crimes. While other forms of violent crime continue to fall, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs recently reported a 26 percent increase in crime against gays and lesbians.

Like all bias crimes, anti-gay offenses are aimed not just at individual victims but also at the communities to which those individuals belong. A brick through the window of a lesbian couple's apartment sends a message of hate to every gay person in the area. Graffiti on the door of a church that welcomes gays and lesbians is a warning to everyone who believes in tolerance. A physical assault on one gay man reminds all others that their turn could be next.

1984 Bangor, Maine A Rose for Charlie:

By the time Charlie Howard reached high school in the late 1970's, he was accustomed to his classmates' taunts and sneers. Charlie was fair-haired and small boned. He has a learning disability. His severe asthma would have made it difficult for him to participate in sports, even if he had wanted to. The way he walked and talked set him apart from most of the other boys in Portsmouth, N. H. As a little kid, he got laughed at and called a "sissy". In later years, he got shoved around and got called a "fag".

Charlie had to have a tough shell just to get through most days without crying or running away. Underneath, he has accumulated a lot of scars and bruises. He wondered if people would ever leave him alone - or if, because he was gay, he would be the butt of their jokes forever. Charlie couldn't wait to get out of high school, but he skipped his graduation ceremony because he didn't want his family to witness how the other students treated him.

Many new graduates see the future as an open door. Charlie saw doors closing. Since his grades were low, he wasn't considered as "college material" Jobs were scarce in Portsmouth, especially for someone who made no secret of being homosexual. He didn't get along well with his stepfather, so he knew he couldn't continue to live at home.

As long as he remained in Portsmouth, Charlie felt, he would be an embarrassment to his family.

Leaving town seemed to be his only option. He drifted away around for a few years, into his early 20's, and the familiar hassles and put-downs wherever he went. He eventually moved in with a man in the small coastal town of Ellsworth, Maine. When the relationship broke up in early January, 1984, Charlie decided that nearby Bangor, with a population of 30, 000, offered better opportunities for work and a social life.

A mutual friend introduced Charlie to Scott Hamilton and Paul Noddin, who lived in a big Victorian house they had restored on Highland Avenue in Bangor. Charlie had no money, no job, and no plans. Scott and Paul offered him a place to stay while he looked for work.

As the weeks passed, Charlie's prospects remained bleak as the Bangor winter. The local job market wasn't what he had hoped for, and after a month Scott and Paul suggested that Charlie might be better off returning to Portsmouth, where he had more connections. Charlie's mother let him move back home.

The new arrangement didn't last a week. He moved in with another man, but this situation didn't work out either. He called Scott and Paul. They could hear the pain in Charlie's voice, so they decided to help him give Bangor another try.

Something was different this time. Charlie was more upbeat and determined, and his high spirits seemed to open more doors. A neighbor helped him get a part-time job through a city employment program. He found a warm community of friends at the Unitarian Church, which had a number of openly gay members. The church also sponsored Interweave, a gay and lesbian support group.

As a token of thanks for their generosity, Charlie surprised Scott and Paul by decorating their house for Easter and cooking an elaborate meal. A few weeks later, he took a place of his own on the third floor of an old rooming house on First Street, behind the church. The building was run down, but Charlie livened his surroundings with posters and plants, and eventually, a kitten.

Church had never been a big part of Charlie's life, but the acceptance he felt among the Unitarians was a new experience. Here he found a new place to express his own openness and sense of humor, his love for life. He started attending services regularly and soon decided to undertake the preparations required for membership.

The Unitarian Church and Interweave were the only two organizations in Bangor that welcomed homosexuals. Many of the other churches, in fact, were openly hostile. Fundamentalist preachers used their pulpits to blame gays and lesbians for many of society's ills. There were no gay bars in town, and the local clubs routinely kicked out couples of the same sex who tried to dance together. Most of Charlie's friends experienced verbal harassment, and several had been physically attacked. Incidents of

gay bashing often went unreported because victims expected little support from the police.

As a newcomer in town, Charlie Howard ignored some of the unwritten rules observed by more long-term residents. He wore whatever he felt like, for instance, even if earrings and a shoulder bag and, occasionally eye make-up weren't "acceptable" adornments for Bangor males. He liked to call people "dearie." In moments of joy, mischief, or defiance, he could burst out into song (usually "I Am What I Am" from the musical *La Cage Aux Folles*).

Refusing to camouflage himself in the crowd, Charlie drew the crowd's attention and its anger. High school kids baited him with obscenities on the street. He got ejected from the West Market Disco for dancing with a man. One day in a grocery store, a middle aged woman suddenly started shouting at him, "You pervert! You queer!" Everyone stared. Charlie dropped his basket and walked slowly toward the door, terrified. Just before exiting, he choked back his fear, turned, and blew a kiss at the cluster of hateful faces.

This confrontation seemed to mark a turning point for Charlie. The stares of strangers began to spook him a little more after that. Sometimes he was afraid to leave his apartment. He stepped outside one morning and found his pet kitten lying dead on the doorstep. It had been strangled.

Charlie's friends wished they could shield him from such cruelties, but they knew he would have to come to his own terms with this perilous world. He wasn't the only one for whom church and Interweave meetings sometimes felt like shelters in a storm.

Interweave sponsored a potluck supper on the night of Saturday, July 7th, 1984. When the party broke up around 10 o'clock, Charlie talked his friend Roy Ogden into walking downtown with him to check his post office box. They headed up State Street. Midway across the bridge spanning Kenduskeag Stream, in the heart of Bangor, Charlie noticed a car slowing down just behind them. He thought it was one belonging to some high school boys who had harassed him a few days earlier. When they stopped the car and got out, he knew that he was right.

The three young men had just left a party to look for some more beer when they spotted Charlie.

Shawn Mabry, the driver, was a sixteen year old high school dropout who had recently been in trouble for using a numchuk. Mabry was making a name for himself in the city hockey league. Daniel Ness, a year older than Shawn, lived with his family on the west side, the upper-class side of Bangor. His favorite subject was art. Jim Baines, almost 16, managed to keep up his grades while playing football and basketball. He planned to go to college someday.

Two girls stayed behind in the car. One of them had a fake ID that she intended to use to buy the beer.

"Hey Fag!" one boy yelled. Then the three started running. Roy and Charlie took off, but Charlie tripped on the curb and fell hard onto the walkway. He couldn't get his breath: the excitement was making his asthma kick in. He felt his legs jamming.

Charlie scrambled to stand, but the boys grabbed him. They threw him back down and laid into him with kicks and punches.

"Over the bridge!" shouted Jim Baines. Daniel grabbed Charlie under the arms and lifted. Jim got him by the legs.

Charlie was gasping now. He snatched enough air to yell, "I can't swim!" From the far end of the bridge, Roy heard his plea.

Jim and Daniel heaved Charlie up onto the guardrail. They had to pry his hand loose. Shawn gave the shove that sent him over. They looked down at the black water 20 feet below and congratulated themselves.

The girls in the car were grinding the ignition. They yelled for Jim and Daniel and Shawn to come on. The boys spotted Roy Ogden watching from the end of the bridge and promised him he'd be sorry if he ever told anyone. When they got back in the car, they were laughing.

Roy waited for the car to disappear. He could still hear the boys whooping and hollering. Then he ran along State Street till he found a fire alarm. In a few minutes, fire engines and police cars were screaming toward the bridge.

Shawn, Daniel, Jim, and their two friends went back to the party. Everyone could see they had a story to tell. "We jumped a fag," they said, "and threw him in the stream." The other kids laughed and pumped them for details, then resumed dancing and drinking.

Around 1 a.m., rescue pulled out the body of Charlie Howard, 23, out of the Kenduskeag, a few hundred feet downstream from the bridge.

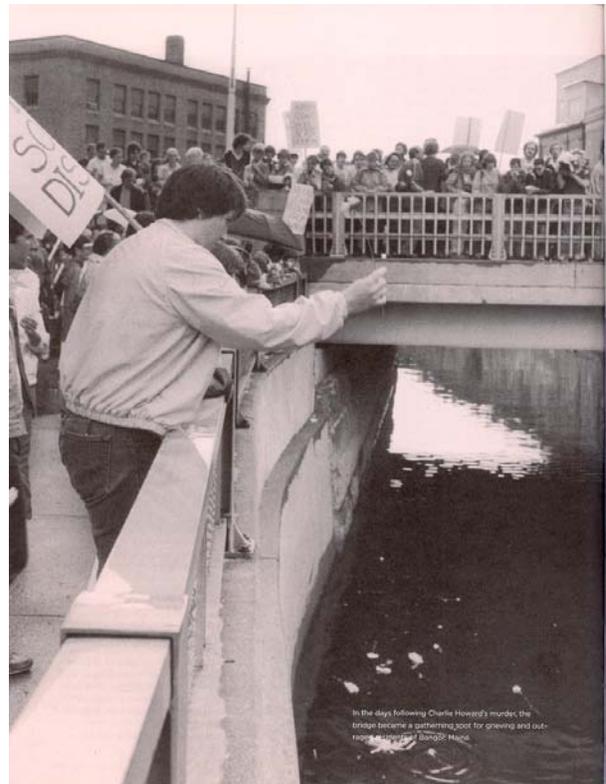
Daniel Ness turned himself in the next morning, as soon as he heard the news. He couldn't believe Charlie was dead. They never intended to kill anybody- they just meant to "show" him. Shawn Mabry and Jim Baines decided to hop a freight train out of town, but had second thoughts when they got to the railroad tracks. They each went home, where they were arrested. All three spent Sunday night in the Hancock County Jail.

Local and state authorities agreed on Monday morning that the youths posed no further threat to the community. Shawn, Daniel, and Jim were released into their

parents' custody. The state filed formal charges of murder the following week. The boys were later tried as juveniles rather than adults. All three were convicted and sentenced to detention at the Maine Youth Center.

On Monday night after Charlie Howard's murder, more than 200 people crowded into a memorial service at the Unitarian Church. Afterward, a candlelight procession crossed the bridge. Charlie's mother had requested that someone drop a white rose into the water. The marchers moved on to the police station, where they stood silently in the street. Hecklers from the crowd of onlookers shouted obscene names.

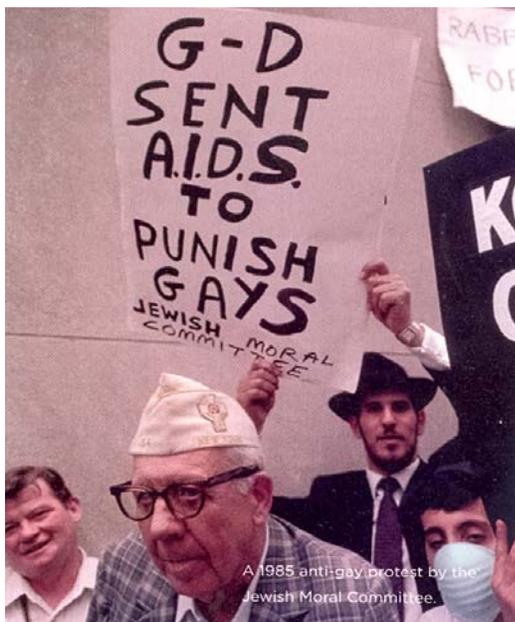
A week later, at the spot where Charlie Howard was tossed over, someone spray painted the words "faggots jump here".



IN CONTEXT

'Disposable People'

Among sexual minorities, perhaps no group is currently as marginalized as the transgender community.



Often the targets of harassment, transgender residents of Washington, D.C., have experienced a recent surge in bias-motivated violence.

In August 2002, teenagers Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis, both transgender, were gunned down while sitting in Thomas' Camry at a stop sign a few blocks from Thomas' home. A few minutes later, the shooter returned and fired more rounds into their bodies, to make sure they were dead.

The best friends' joint funeral was packed. The Washington Post devoted a 3,500-word feature to the two lost lives. Local transgender activists

redoubled their efforts to prevent another tragedy. Police vowed to do the same.

One year later, on the first anniversary of their deaths, there was another vigil for Davis and Thomas. By now, the sadness had hardened into bitterness - over the lack of an arrest in the case, over police officials' reluctance to call the murder a hate crime, and over the continued violence that had claimed another transgendered victim, Kim Mimi Young, earlier that spring.

The mayor came again, along with the chief of police. Frustrations were vented. Promises were made. And then all hell broke loose.

Early on the morning of Aug. 16, 2003, four days after the anniversary vigil, 25-year-old Latina immigrant Bella Evangelista, a well-known figure in the transgender community, was shot and killed by an acquaintance. Police arrested 22-year-old Antoine D. Jacobs as he pedaled away from the scene on a bicycle, charging him with first-degree murder and later with a hate crime.

Four nights later, shortly after a vigil for Evangelista, police found the body of Emonie Kiera Spaulding. The 25-year-old transgendered woman had been brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the scraggly, trash-strewn woods bordering Malcolm X Avenue. The same night, another transgendered woman, Dee Andre, survived a shooting near the U.S. Capitol.

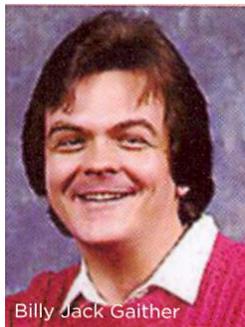
"We're scared," said Mara Kiesling, executive director of the Washington-based National Center for Transgender Equality. "This spree of violence made us feel more vulnerable than we deserve to feel. I'm sure it's increased the hopelessness for a lot of people. When you start hearing about 18 events in a week, you don't know what to do."

While the murders and assaults were "unrelated" in the law-enforcement sense of the term, most of the incidents did have at least one thing in common: "transphobia," which Jessica Xavier, a local transgender activist, calls "the most powerful hatred on the planet."

"We are regarded by most as disposable people," she said. "What we're seeing is a war against transgendered women. And it's not only here - it's happening everywhere in this country."

IN FOCUS

Hate in Alabama



BILLY JACK GAITHER'S FRIENDS DESCRIBED him as a "good-natured country boy." A native of Sylacauga, Ala., Billy Jack loved listening to country music, dancing and collecting dolls. The 39-year-old was friendly, well-liked and openly gay.

On Feb. 19, 1999, Billy Jack was participating in a local pool tournament when two acquaintances asked him to go for a ride.

That night, Steve Mullins and Charles Butler J r. drove Billy Jack to a secluded boat ramp. There, they beat Billy Jack and crammed his limp body into the trunk of his own car.

They drove Billy Jack's car to the banks of a nearby creek - the same creek, local residents remembered, where area churches once performed baptisms. Mullins and Butler placed two tires on a concrete platform overlooking the water, doused the tires with kerosene and set them on fire. Then they removed Billy Jack from the trunk, beat him with an ax handle and tossed his body into the flames.

Mullins and Butler later admitted to killing Billy Jack because they were tired of him "talking queer stuff"

In Alabama - as in other parts of rural and southern America - the gay community had grown accustomed to harassment and intimidation. But Billy Jack's death shook the community to its core.

His murder came on the heels of two other hate-driven killings in 1998: the brutal slaying of Matthew Shepard near Laramie, Wyo., and the dragging death of James Byrd Jr. in Jasper, Texas.

Across Alabama, candlelight vigils were organized in Billy Jack's honor. People in attendance were somber but resolute. The message was clear: We cannot let this happen again.

At a vigil in Huntsville, gay resident Curtis Bathurst reflected on the quick succession between Matthew Shepard's murder and Billy Jack's.

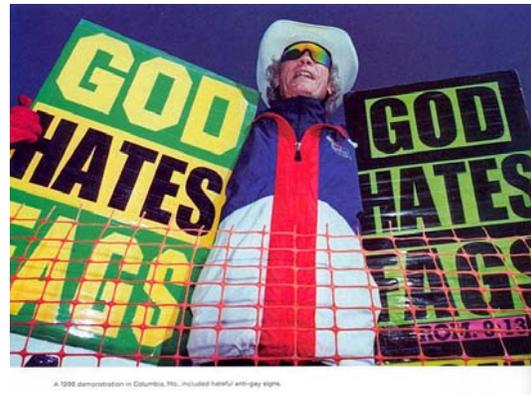
"I was angered last time. Now I'm scared," Bathurst said. "But we will not go back into the closet. We will not be afraid to be identified, to have our picture taken. What you see here tonight is light. It is the light of resistance."

Both Mullins and Butler eventually were convicted of capital murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole. However, despite their admission that the crime was motivated by hate, the murder of Billy Jack wasn't seen as a hate crime in the eyes of the state.

Alabama's hate-crimes statute fails to include offenses based on sexual orientation. Gay rights advocates hoped Billy Jack's brutal death would prompt the state legislature to reexamine the law.

From an editorial at the time, in a major Alabama newspaper: "If ever there were a reason for toughening up hate-crime laws, the gruesome deaths of Billy Jack Gaither and Matthew Shepard make the case."

Seven years later, a bill to expand the law to include sexual orientation failed to pass in the Alabama Legislature.



An annual vigil for Billy Jack Gaither on the Alabama Statehouse steps.

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'NOT PROPER PERSONS'

From the late 1940s to the mid-1950s, numerous government agencies participated in a campaign to remove homosexuals from federal employment.

The Senate Subcommittee on Investigations issued a report on Dec. 15, 1950, outlining the reasons for this policy.



In the opinion of this subcommittee homosexuals ... are not proper persons to be employed in Government for two reasons; first, they are generally unsuitable, and second, they constitute security risks

Aside from the criminality and immorality involved in sex perversion such behavior is so contrary to the normal accepted standards of social behavior that persons who engage in such activity are looked upon as outcasts by society generally. ...

As has been previously discussed in this report, the pervert is easy prey to the blackmailer. It follows that if blackmailers can extort money from a homosexual under the threat of disclosure, espionage agents can use the same type of pressure to extort confidential information or other material they might be seeking.

Since the initiation of this investigation considerable progress has been made in removing homosexuals and similar undesirable employees from ... positions in the Government.