

Using children as political props, Republicans escalate war against LGBTQ teachers



By Randy Fair

Messages keep coming in to me from LGBTQ teachers throughout the South who have been fired or threatened with firing. These teachers have years of experience and exemplary records. Many have advanced degrees.

LGBTQ teachers are increasingly fearful. The Stonewall National Education Project, which educates teachers about inclusive classroom practices, reports that its annual symposium was sparsely attended due to fear of repercussions. One teacher who did attend wore a mask and asked not to be photographed.

This trepidation is not new, but it's been heightened by the current climate. Conservative leaders like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and state lawmakers across the country have fed a national hysteria against the LGBTQ community. With much of the fear mongering focused on schools, LGBTQ teachers have good reason to be afraid.

Teachers contact me because they know I was also threatened with being fired during my teaching career for writing for an LGTBQ publication in the 1990s. Sometimes I want to tell them it might be a blessing in disguise. I want to say, "In your new job, you will probably be appreciated more and almost certainly paid more."

But this flippant response would be totally inappropriate. The people who contact me don't see teaching as a job. They see it as a calling. This profession is something they have trained for and dedicated their lives to.

Now political gamesmanship threatens to turn them away from it.

Where I currently live, the so-called "free state of Florida," conservatives are doing everything possible to restrict people's freedom of speech. Republican

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lawmakers are banning books, curtailing classroom discussions, and weakening laws that protect journalists from political persecutions. Teachers can even face felony charges for keeping classroom libraries.

It's hard enough being a teacher at all, but cruel new laws are putting dedicated LGBTQ teachers in particular danger.

These lawmakers are preying on people's ignorance to score political points. Their outrageous claims about Queer people don't stand up to scrutiny.

In particular, the hateful smear that LGBTQ teachers are pedophiles or "groomers" has been successfully refuted since the 1970s.

In 1978, the "Briggs Initiative" sought to ban gay teachers from the California school system. During that debate, those against the initiative used research to disprove the myth of the LGBTQ teachers as pedophiles—and the public agreed by defeating the measure. Conservative icon Ronald Reagan was surprisingly one of the many politicians to speak out against banning LGBTQ teachers from the school system. But that doesn't give his modern-day admirers any pause in their anti-LGBTQ crusade.

Their political witch hunt continues, and it's doing damage to the lives of real people. The present hysteria may eventually pass, but how many lives and careers will be sacrificed before the madness comes to an end?

During my 31 years in the school system, the LGBTQ educators I knew were some of the most dedicated teachers. Beyond their teaching, many were also responsible for some of the most meaningful extracurricular activities our schools offered students. Why would anyone want to root out these employees, especially during a national teacher shortage?

As we watch politicians destroy the lives and careers of dedicated educators, we should think about the cost to the students, our society, and most of all to our own sense of morality.

Talk about retaliation: Ritzy Chicago club fires its housekeepers

By Press Associates

In what looks like a textbook case of retaliation, which breaks U.S. labor law, Chicago's ritzy Midtown Athletic Club, which now includes a fancy hotel, had planned to fire all its housekeepers on May Day, the international workers holiday.

But when they staged a one-day "Save Our Jobs" walkout, press conference and leafleting on April 1, Midtown arbitrarily canned every housekeeper on April 13, and outsourced their jobs.

The workers say that's illegal retaliation for the walkout, for complaining about labor law-breaking, for questioning safety and health conditions, and for taking their cause to Chicago media.

Their next step is to ask the National Labor Relations Board's Chicago regional office to go to court seeking labor law's toughest move against a boss: A 10(j) federal court injunction ordering immediate return of workers to their jobs, with back pay and damages.

The firing set off an uproar on the Near Northwest Side. Club members in the deep-blue neighborhood bombarded Midtown with complaints.

"It's a huge insult" to the workers, many of whom have toiled there for years, member Katherine Bis-

sell Cordova, one of those who called, told Arise Chicago, the Northwest Side workers center that aids and campaigns for low-wage exploited workers in that gentrifying area.

Midtown may have another motive. One union may be one too many for the bosses. National Labor Relations Board records show that on March 23, the club's mechanics and allied workers voted to unionize with Operating Engineers Local 399.

The club's initial firing announcement followed a week later. The accelerated firing was two weeks after that, along with its announcement of the outsourcing.

"They just want cheap labor they can control," says Arise Chicago organizer Jose Uribe.

It's a textbook case of illegal retaliation.

What is behind Republican attacks on transgender people?



By Robert Reich

Montana Republicans have blocked Democratic transgender lawmaker Zoey Zephyr from participating in a debate over proposed restrictions on transgender youth.

Zephyr, a first-term Democrat from Missoula and the first openly transgender woman elected to the Montana legislature, hasn't been allowed to speak on the state house floor since last Tuesday, when she told Republican colleagues they would have "blood on their hands" if they banned gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth.

On Monday, her supporters brought the House session to a halt, chanting, "Let her speak!" from the gallery before being escorted out. Seven were arrested for criminal trespass. Republican leaders describe the disruption as an "insurrection."

And it's tempting to be appalled at such blatant prejudice but believe there must be more important issues to worry about. According to the Pew Research Center, only 1.6 percent of U.S. adults are transgender or nonbinary (that is, their gender differs from the sex they were assigned at birth).

Yet let me remind you: Bigotry against minority groups based on sexual orientation or gender identity, such as the trans community, is a way fascism takes root.

As the world tragically witnessed in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, the politics of sexual anxiety gains traction when traditional male gender roles of fam-

ily provider and protector are hit by economic insecurity.

Fascist politics distorts and expands this male anxiety into fear that one's family is under existential threat from LGBTQ+ people who reject the family's traditional structure and traditions.

I don't mean to suggest that the imbibers of the Republican lawmakers of Montana are necessarily fearful for their manhood. But they may lean more toward hierarchy and domination than the typical American.

Notably, Republican lawmakers now eagerly enacting restrictions on transgender youth across the nation have not moved to alleviate economic anxieties at the root of much of this. Why not? Because those anxieties fuel the anger that animates these politicians' most ardent supporters. Scapegoating a minority group based on sexual orientation or gender identity gives these supporters even more fuel.

A similar blind anger found expression in the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 — which was a genuine insurrection, unlike this week's chants in Montana's legislature. A similar anger propels Trumpism to this day.

If the rest of us want to stop America's slouch toward fascism, we must do two things: First, speak out loudly and forcefully against sexual bigotry. Second, push lawmakers to restore some degree of economic security to the nation's large and increasingly precarious working class.

Supporters of a banned transgender lawmaker in Montana brought the House there to a halt as they chanted, "Let her speak."

LOCAL NEWS

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Brazil: Communist leader wins libel suit against ultra-rightist

By Emile Schepers

Manuela d'Avila, national vice president of the Communist Party of Brazil (Partido Comunista do Brasil) has won a "moral damage" suit against a right-wing member of the country's legislature, Carla Zambelli, who belongs to the same right-wing party as ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, the Liberal Party (PL).

During the 2022 elections, Zambelli had published images of d'Avila and two other political figures with text accusing them of being part of the "genocidal left" because of their support for abortion rights.

The Court of Justice of the State of Rio Grande do Sul ruled that Zambelli must pay d'Avila 20,000 Brazilian real (about \$3,961). Zambelli has a history as an anti-vaxxer and conspiracy theorist.

Starbucks en la sopa con la NLRB otra vez

By Mark Gruenberg

Recuerdas a Jaysin Saxton? La oficina regional de Atlanta de la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales va a batear contra Starbucks y para él, a lo grande.

Saxton fue uno de los dos trabajadores de Starbucks que siguieron al fundador de la compañía y ex director ejecutivo Howard Schultz al presidente de testigos del Comité Laboral del Senado en las audiencias de principios de abril sobre la violación desenfrenada y nacional de la ley laboral de la cadena de café.

Schultz lo negó todo. Saxton, un veterano militar discapacitado negro, procedió a hacer trizas las piadosas proclamaciones de Schultz, al testificar que Starbucks lo despidió ilegalmente por organizar su tienda Starbucks en Augusta, Georgia. También cortó su atención médica, lo que lo obligó al sistema del Departamento de Asuntos de Veteranos, que, sin embargo, no cubre a su familia.

Ahora, el testimonio de Saxton y la investigación posterior de la NLRB muestran que, en todo caso, Saxton estaba subestimando el caso. Entonces, la directora regional de la NLRB de Atlanta, Lisa Henderson, sacó el arma definitiva de la junta: el 27 de abril, presentó documentos exigiendo que el Tribunal de Distrito de los EE. UU. en Atlanta emita una orden judicial 10(j) contra Starbucks y Saxton.

La NLRB usa 10(j)s solo cuando los trabajadores afectados sufrirían un daño inmediato e irreparable si sus casos se abrieran camino a través de la ruta habitual de audiencias, fallos, apelaciones, fallos de la junta y luego viajaran a los tribunales federales. 10(j)s cuando se otorgan, brindan re-

incorporación inmediata, más pagos retroactivos y daños y perjuicios.

No solo eso, sino que Henderson quiere que su propuesta 10(j) contra Starbucks sea una medida cautelar a nivel nacional contra lo que le ha hecho a Saxton, al igual que los primeros trabajadores de Starbucks que se sindicalizaron con Starbucks Workers United, en Buffalo, buscaron allí. Si su oferta tiene éxito, este 10(j) sería el sexto, al menos, contra la cadena gigante del café.

Saxton y sus aliados ganaron la votación en Augusta Starbucks, pero los patrones se negaron a negociar con ellos. Después de un enfrentamiento por eso, un trabajador de Augusta descontento presentó una petición ante la NLRB para anular la certificación, es decir, expulsar al sindicato, informó el Augusta Chronicle. Tres días después, el 11 de abril, el patrocinador de la petición de decert la retiró. No se dio ninguna razón.

"Starbucks, bajo el liderazgo de Howard Schultz, despidió a un padre y a un veterano por atreverse a liderar a sus compañeros socios en una huelga protegida para mejorar las condiciones laborales. Sin embargo, a diferencia del padre de Howard, tengo protecciones legales", dijo Saxton a Starbucks Workers United, los organizadores de Service Employees que están ayudando a los trabajadores de base de Starbucks en su organización de costa a costa.

"Gracias a esas protecciones, el gobierno federal está actuando para proteger, restaurar mi sustento y defender el derecho a organizarme. No puedo esperar para volver a mi tienda y luchar por mis compañeros socios", concluyó Saxton.

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