

Attacks on LGBT Texans are everywhere. Here's what you can do.

Andrew Edmonson, for the Houston Chronicle

May 9, 2017 Updated: May 9, 2017 1:32pm

Photo: Rogelio V. Solis, STF

Two dozen anti-gay bills have been filed thus far, seeking to discriminate against LGBT Texans in every sphere, from health care to public accommodation to employment.



The message that greeted travelers last week at the bus stop near Montrose and Westheimer was blunt and brutal: "FOLLOW YOUR FELLOW FAGGOTS."

The homemade poster plastered on the wall of the shelter also featured an [image of a lynched man hanging by his neck](#) from a noose, a rainbow butterfly emblazoned on his chest, with his feet dangling below him.

Underneath the incendiary headline, the poster listed several statistics on LGBT suicide rates, which [trend significantly higher](#) than those for heterosexuals. The poster contained a logo at the bottom, branding it as the work of "Fascist Solutions."

Photo: OutSmart Magazine

A Metro rider told OutSmart Magazine he spotted this anti-gay flier affixed to a bus shelter at Westheimer and Stanford in Montrose.

It could only be interpreted as an exhortation for LGBT people to take their own lives.

And as shocking as the image and language might be, they are entirely consistent with the wave of homophobic legislation surging through the current session of the Texas legislature.



TWO DOZEN anti-gay bills have been filed thus far, seeking to discriminate against LGBT Texans in every sphere, from health care to public accommodation to employment.

The most infamous, Senate Bill 6, seeks to police the restrooms that transgender Texans use, effectively barring them from public spaces. Senate Republicans have been relentless in their pursuit of this legislation, despite the fact that it is vigorously opposed by the Texas Association of Business, the state's leading business lobby, and that it could cost the state \$3 billion in tourism revenues.

When questioned by a fellow legislator about the number of public safety incidents involving transgender individuals, the bill's champion, State Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham), was forced to admit that there were none.

The Lone Star State's child welfare system is in crisis, and it desperately needs more foster parents to care for the 22,000 children in the system. Yet HB 3859 would allow faith-based service providers to discriminate against loving LGBT families, preventing them from serving as foster parents. (The bill would also permit providers to refuse to provide services to LGBT foster children.)

And Senate Bill 522 would empower county clerks to refuse to provide marriage licenses to same-sex couples, a clear violation of the equal protection clause.

The lege is lurching toward the home stretch. Because they have been unable to pass standalone bills, lawmakers have been begun to hijack unrelated legislation by loading it down with "religious refusal" amendments. These legislative last gasps provide a dubious fig leaf to cover discrimination, premised on the misguided concept that "religious liberty" allows individuals to pick and choose which laws that they will obey.

AND IN this pitched cultural war being played out on streets of Montrose and in the Texas legislature, transgender Texans have emerged as special targets for vilification.

At a public hearing on Senate Bill 6, the first dozen speakers invited by legislators to testify in support included two organizations classified as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center: Concerned Women for America and the Family Research Council. The testimony of those speaking in favor of the bill attacked and demeaned the humanity of transgender Texans.

"Listening to elected officials and others tell trans folks that we are less than and that we don't deserve the same equality as our peers, as our community members, takes a devastating toll on trans Texans," observes transgender activist Lou Weaver of Houston.

"Listening to elected officials and others tell trans folks that we are less than and that we don't deserve the same equality as our peers, as our community members, takes a devastating toll on trans Texans," says activist Lou Weaver.

"When our trans students hear that they are not the same as their peers, that their peers should be afraid of them, that they should not be allowed in the same spaces, that takes a psychological toll on them. That affects how they do in school, and that affects their future."

"When they call us men in dresses, when they accuse us of being predators, molesters or rapists, and they are not stopped, it hurts," observes Meghan Stabler, a transgender leader in Austin who serves on the national board of The Human Rights Campaign.

"We know who we are, and why. Unless you are trans, you cannot know the journey or struggle. We just ask that others use civility to see us, and not chide us, or bully us, or kill us."

Such rhetoric can also lead directly to violence and death. In February, Chyna Doll Dupree Gibson, a popular Houston performer in Montrose clubs, was shot 10 times and left to die in the parking lot of a strip mall in New Orleans. Eight transgender Americans have been murdered this year. Last year was the deadliest on record, with 27 transgender American being murdered, the majority of whom were people of color.

An ominous wind is blowing through the Lone Star State, and it doesn't disquiet only the LGBT community.

AT THE end of April, the Anti-Defamation League released a report showing that hate incidents have jumped 50 percent this year in the southern part of Texas. They cited a "disturbing trend" that included swastikas, Nazi salutes and bomb threats. Nationwide, the ADL has tracked an 86 percent increase in hate incidents in 2017.

In the 34 days following the presidential election, the SPLC tracked 1,094 hate incidents. The largest number of incidents occurred the day after the election, and 37 percent of them directly referenced Trump, his campaign slogans or his infamous remarks about sexual assault.

"The campaign language of the man who would become president sparks hate violence, both before and after the election," observed SPLC senior fellow Mark Potok.

With his vilification of Mexican immigrants as drug dealers and rapists, his denigration of women and their appearances, his retweets of white supremacist messages (including one that falsely claimed that black people were responsible for 80 percent of the murders of whites), his promises to block Muslims from entering the country and his encouragement of his supporters in beating up black protesters at his rallies, Trump provided an extraordinary platform for this type of hate speech.

As the standard bearer of a major political party who received wall-to-wall media coverage, he normalized this vicious rhetoric, emboldening extremists to come forward with the kind of hate speech seen on the poster at the Montrose bus stop.

In the Age of Trump, there are still some elected officials who provide inspiration with their examples of courage, integrity and leadership. Prior to the beginning of this legislative session, State Senator Sylvia Garcia vowed to "fight like hell" to keep anti-transgender legislation from passing. She's lived up to her word, displaying a gutsiness and tenacity that would have made Ann Richard proud.

WHEN FACING the current tsunami of discriminatory legislation and hate speech, LGBT Texans and people of conscience everywhere must take heart from the example of leaders like Senator Garcia.

We must step boldly forward and make the time to do the following:

- 1) Call your member of the Texas House of Representatives and encourage him or her to vote against HB 2899, the house's version of the anti-transgender bill, which would also remove protections for the elderly and veterans; and HB3859, which would allow discrimination in child welfare services.

2) Educate yourself at the website of the advocacy group [Equality Texas](#). Sign their [pledge](#) to work for a Texas in which all people are treated with dignity and respect and receive legislative alerts when anti-LGBT legislation is coming up for a vote.

3) Join the [Texas Freedom Network](#), a stalwart grassroots organization that has been indefatigable in shining a powerful spotlight on the pernicious effects of legislation discriminating against the LGBT community. They have also assembled a coalition of faith leaders from across the state who have powerfully testified that the concept of religious liberty cannot be perverted to serve as a cover for discrimination against queer Texans.

[Sign up for their daily email alerts](#) on recent developments and the latest news articles about hot civil liberties topics.

***Andrew Edmonson** has served as chair of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and on the board of the American Marketing Association's Houston chapter.*

Russian LGBT Network Steps Up Efforts To Get Gay Men Out Of Chechnya

May 9, 2017 5:03 AM ET

Heard on [Morning Edition](#)

Police in Chechnya have been reportedly cracking down on gay men. Some have been imprisoned and tortured. David Greene talks to a representative of the Russian LGBT Network, which is helping the men.

DAVID GREENE, HOST:

More than a hundred gay men have been rounded up by the police in the Russian republic of Chechnya. That's according to reporting by the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta. So far, the Kremlin has turned a blind eye to this, though German Chancellor Angela Merkel last week urged Vladimir Putin to intervene.

There is an NGO that has been working to get gay men who've been targeted out of Chechnya. It is the Russian LGBT Network. And I spoke with that group's communications manager via Skype. We should say we are not using her name because of the sensitive and dangerous nature of her work. She started by telling me how these men have been treated.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Well, they're telling us that they are beaten. Sometimes some people are beaten to death. And also people are saying that they're tortured with electric current, they are not fed properly and they don't have any water.

GREENE: You have confirmed that some people have died during these - this torturing.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Yes, that's what was reported to us.

GREENE: And the reporting - this is coming from men who have contacted your network and told you about other men who they say have been killed.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Well, yes. Like, in the very beginning when we just got the first information about that, we started the hotline specifically for this purpose. And we publicly stated that, like, any person, if this person feels threatened or if this person were imprisoned or something happened to this person in Chechnya, they should contact us and we are providing help.

GREENE: And how have these men gotten in touch with you and connected with your organization?

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Well, they're writing in emails. And in the very beginning, the first people who contacted us, they were terribly scared. And they wanted to ensure, like, if we can be trusted, if we are going to kill them or help them. But basically then we started the evacuation process, and by now we evacuated around 40 people.

GREENE: And have you relocated them to other regions of Russia or have you gotten them outside the country?

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Well, the first thing for us to do is, of course, to evacuate them from Chechnya, like, to other parts of Russia. But we are also working to evacuate them, to relocate them to - out of Russia

because for most of them it's just deadly dangerous to stay in Russia because some of them are already hunted by their relatives outside of Chechnya.

GREENE: They're being hunted by their relatives, did you say?

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Yes, they are being hunted because, like, homosexuality in Chechnya is considered to be a stain on the whole family. And it is believed that the only way to kind of wash away this stain is to kill this person.

GREENE: That sounds terrible. Is the Russian government supporting your organization? Or what would you like to see from the Russian government?

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Well, the Russian government obviously doesn't provide any support to any LGBT organizations. We try to report to them, but they usually ignore us. And what we want from them right now is to have appropriate investigation of this situation.

GREENE: Are you optimistic that that investigation will happen?

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: You know, it's a very complicated question. For the first weeks when this information became public they didn't do anything. But at the same time, there was a lot of attention from the international communities. There was a lot of pressure. And the Russian authorities were asked a lot about what's going on in Chechnya. And at some point, they weren't able to be silent anymore and they started to do something. It's actually a horrible thing for them, too, for their reputation - like, how do they look like, like monsters?

GREENE: You're talking about the Russian government.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Yeah, because they don't do anything about the citizens of Russia being killed, tortured and kidnapped.

GREENE: We were speaking to the communications manager for the Russian LGBT Network. And we should just remind our listeners we are withholding her name because of the sensitive work that her organization is doing. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Thank you.



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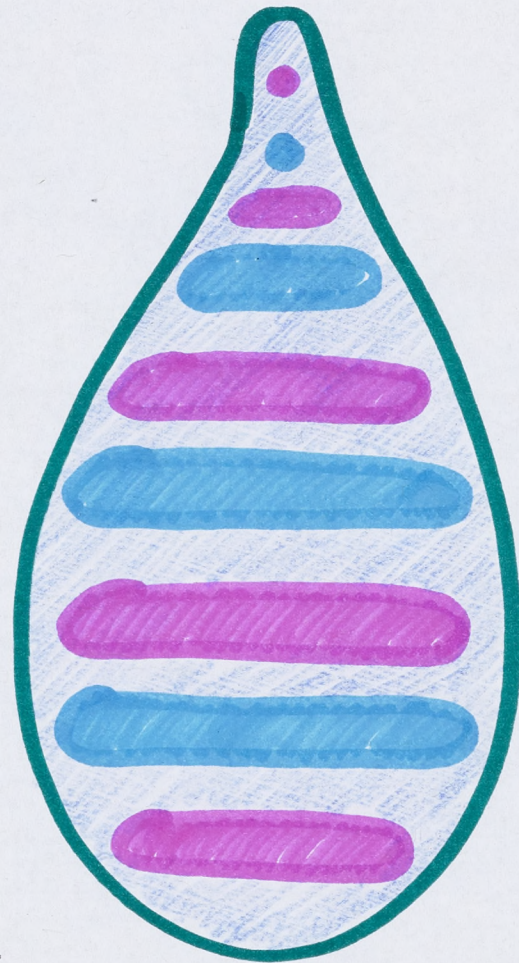
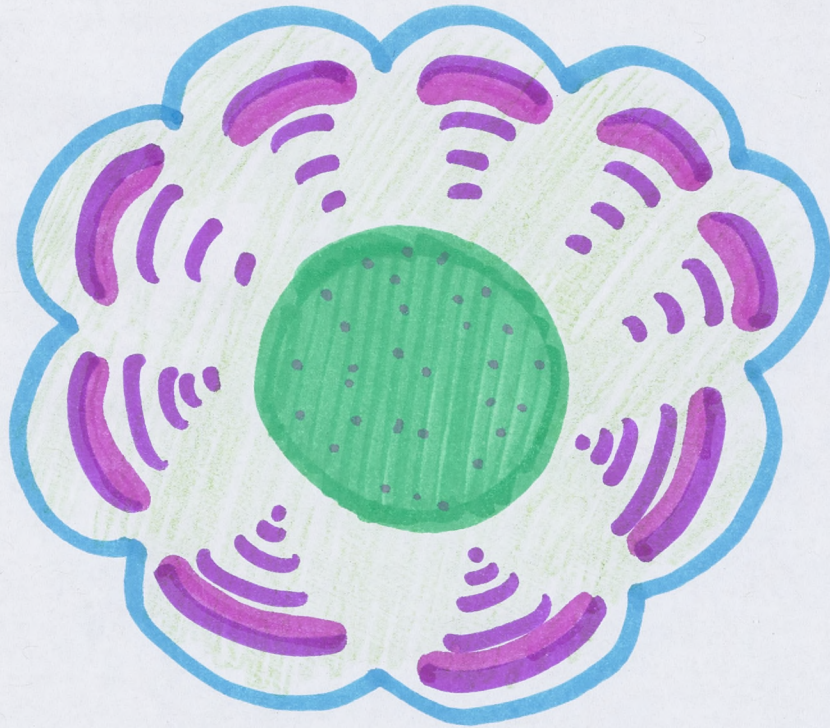
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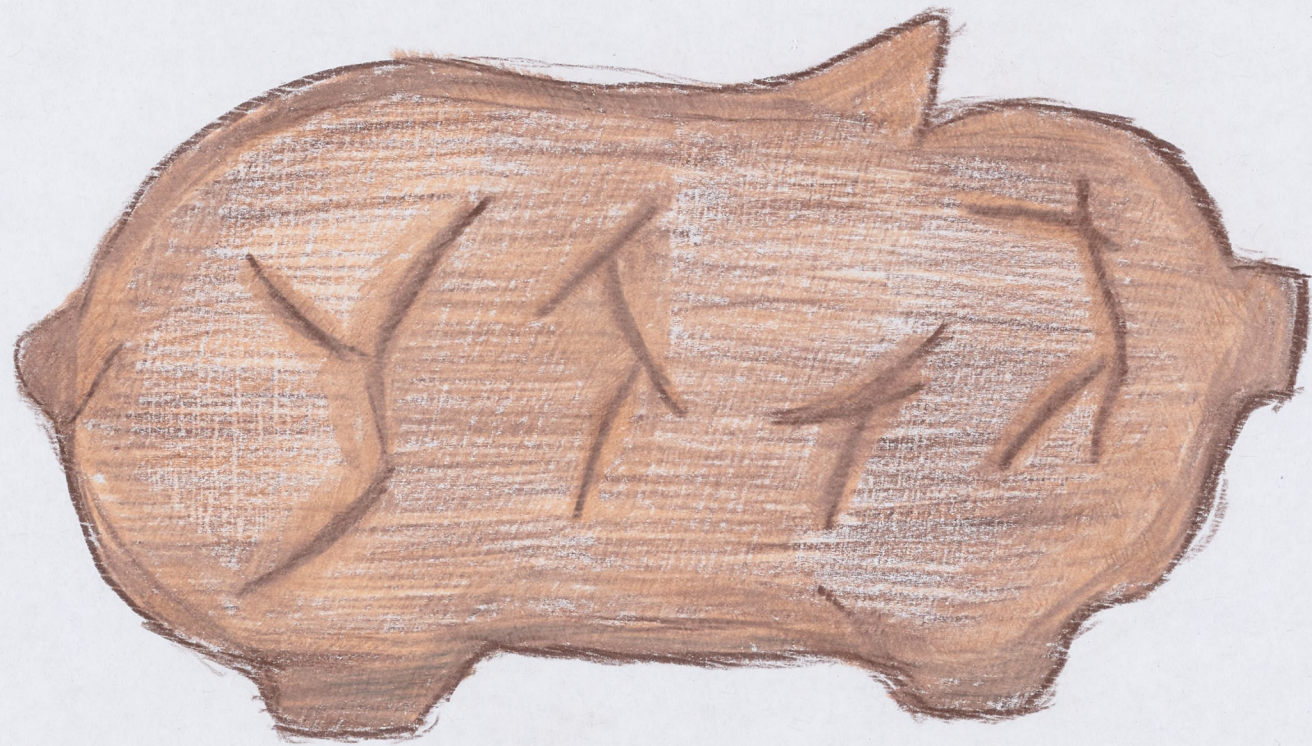
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New York Times

The Census Won't Collect L.G.B.T. Data. That's a Problem.

By PRAVEEN
FERNANDESMAY 10, 2017

L.G.B.T. pride flag at the Women's March on Washington the day after Donald Trump's inauguration. Credit Nina Westervelt for The New York Times



In my roughly 20 years working in the federal policy arena, few things have become clearer to me than the importance of data. If something is not counted, it is neither seen nor understood. For all intents and purposes, it does not exist.

That's why the Trump administration's decision not to collect data on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans threatens these communities in ways that are both symbolic and practical.

It was announced Tuesday that the United States Census Bureau director, John H. Thompson, had abruptly [stepped down](#) from his job, drawing national attention to the agency. But I and others in the L.G.B.T. community have been focused on the bureau's work for months — for reasons related not to its leadership, but to the collection of information. In March, when it published a list of planned subjects for data collection that included a proposed question on these topics, many of us were optimistic. After years of advocating this very change, there was a possibility that we might be more fully counted. But that cheer was to be short lived. The Census Bureau quickly [clarified](#) that it had “inadvertently listed sexual orientation and gender identity as a proposed topic” and made changes to the online document within hours.

During the same month, the Department of Health and Human Services eliminated questions about L.G.B.T. people from drafts of two critical surveys: [the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants](#), which helps inform social and nutritional support programs for seniors; and the [Centers for Independent Living Annual Program Performance Report](#), which helps inform programs designed to allow people with disabilities to live independently.

This is concerning, because sound policy relies on good data, which in turn relies on robust data collection. The federal government needs to understand the American public if it is to devise policy that directly affects it. Such understanding is impossible without data collection.

Given the discrimination, social isolation, health disparities and economic fragility that L.G.B.T. populations as a whole face, this need is especially urgent. The data collection rollbacks don't just prophesy bad policy. They recall a time of deep discrimination and pain that we have spent decades trying to reverse.

Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in a major American city, famously urged gay Americans in 1978 to come out to their relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers to "break down the myths" and "destroy the lies and distortions" about this community.

The national coming-out movement was premised in part on the notion that if L.G.B.T. Americans went from a "them" to an "us" — people's own brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, neighbors and colleagues — it would reduce callousness and undercut the ability to deny them rights. When people came out, it made it harder for others to cling to the belief that they did not have L.G.B.T. people in their families, or that no L.G.B.T. people lived in their neighborhoods, attended services at their houses of worship or worked alongside them.

Failing to collect good data on sexual orientation and gender identity allows policy makers and elected officials to hold the utterly false belief that no L.G.B.T. people use their services and that no L.G.B.T. people live in their electoral districts. It robs policy

makers of the ability to understand us and it makes evidence-based policy more difficult. It puts L.G.B.T. Americans as a group back into the closet.

Without collecting data on sexual orientation or gender identity, we don't know the size of the L.G.B.T. population or how that population is geographically distributed. We aren't able to learn about how many L.G.B.T. individuals have children, or whether that differs in urban versus rural areas. We have no official information about the component groups that make up the L.G.B.T. community and no insight into their income or housing status — topics that are especially salient for transgender people. And we can't possibly know how sexual orientation or gender identity combines with other identities (such as race) and whether that correlates to differences in employment, housing or geographic location.

This information affects the way the federal government designs and delivers services to the American people. Without the data formerly collected through the Survey of Older Americans Act Participants, for instance, H.H.S. can't meaningfully assess whether L.G.B.T. individuals have greater difficulty getting access to programs that provide transportation, caregiver support or home-delivered meals.

The canceled census data collection also represents missed opportunities for improving the lives of L.G.B.T. Americans and their families. For example, without data to guide the effort, how can program administrators ensure that information on the Summer Food Service Program — which allows low-income children to have access to nutritious meals when school is out of session — reaches L.G.B.T. parents in places where they live, in media they consume and in language that includes them? Without this information, children could be more likely to go hungry.

Policy implications aside, the news also stings for personal reasons. The census is a snapshot of the American family. The administration's recent decisions cut L.G.B.T. individuals out of the family portrait, calling into question our membership in the family. Many of us know that feeling all too well.



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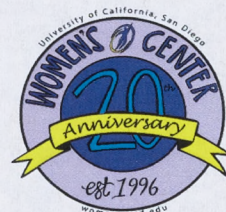
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**Student
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Week 5 Faculty Mixer
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a film by
QUYÊN NGUYEN-LE



Quyên Nguyen-Le

FILM SCREENINGS
AND CONVERSATION
WITH FILMMAKER

A DOCUMENTARY BY QUYÊN NGUYEN-LE



QUEER
VIET
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Quyên Nguyen-Le is an award-winning queer Vietnamese American filmmaker from Los Angeles, California. In the past, Quyên directed a film for James Franco's *The Labyrinth Anthology*, and was a recipient of the 2016 Armed-with-a-Camera Fellowship for Emerging Asian American Filmmakers from the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival.

Queerness Vietnamese is a documentary following the lives of three queer second generation Vietnamese Americans, navigating language, politics, and familial relationships.

Nước (Water/Homeland) is a short film about a queer Vietnamese American teen who attempts to understand their mom's experience as a Vietnam War refugee.



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Indonesian police arrest 141 men over 'gay sex party'

22 May 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39996508>

Being gay is not banned in Jakarta, but police said the men could be charged under anti-pornography laws

Indonesian police have arrested 141 men attending what they called a "gay sex party" at a sauna in the capital Jakarta late on Sunday.

Police said attendees, including a Briton and a Singaporean, paid 185,000 rupiahs (\$14; £10) to attend.

Indonesia has witnessed increasing hostility towards its small and low-profile LGBTQ community.

Homosexuality is not illegal under Indonesian law, except in conservative Aceh province.

But Jakarta police spokesman Raden Argo Yuwono said some of those detained could be charged under Indonesia's harsh anti-pornography laws.

Homosexuality is not illegal in Indonesia except in ultra-conservative Aceh province

Earlier this month police made similar arrests in the city of Surabaya



"There were gay people who were caught strip-teasing and masturbating in the scene," he told BBC Indonesian.

Under the ambiguously-worded laws, putting on a live strip show for the enjoyment of the public could be construed as "pornography".

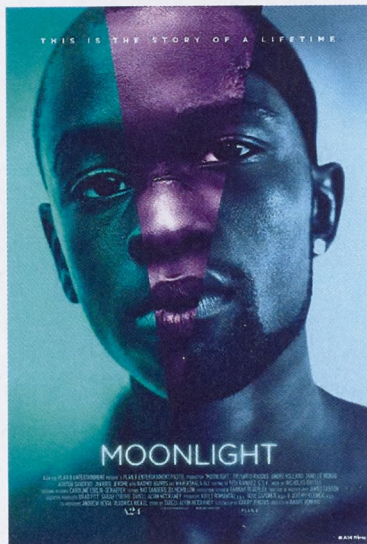
Last week, two men were sentenced to public caning in Aceh after being convicted for engaging in gay sex - in the first such ruling since tough anti-homosexuality laws were introduced there in 2014.

Earlier this month, Indonesian police arrested 14 people in the city of Surabaya for allegedly holding a gay party. They could also face charges under anti-pornography laws.



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