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ISSN Library of Congress 2163-8470 (Print) 2163-8446 (On-Line)

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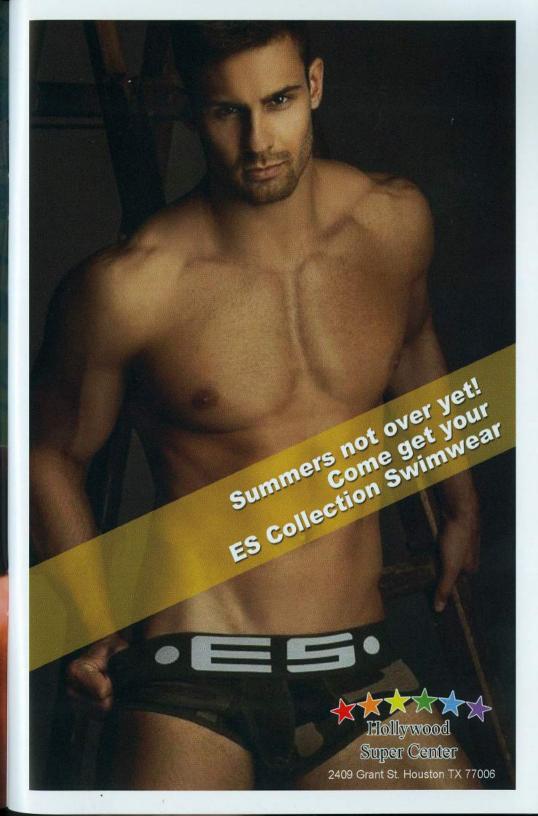
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Love.. Drugs and Man Murders His Lover

by Cade Michal

There are many indications that Texas is not a welcoming place to be LGBT. Despite Houston's lesbian mayor — who declined to comment for this story — and San Antonio's newly passed LGBT-inclusive antidiscrimination ordinance, a heartbroken mother who lost her gay son to a spurned former lover says that the state's "Don't Mess with Texas" slogan extends to the criminal system.

This is a twisted tale of how the Texas legal system is failing one local family, and how a mother is on a mission to "Bring Justice For Her Son."

The feeling of losing a child to murder is pain none, but those enduring it can truly understand. But being forced to sit back and watch an accused murder walk around free is even worse, says Babette Clingan. Her son was murdered in San Antonio in June of 2013 by his boyfriend Antonio Onorato.

Babette and her son Christopher Clingan were close. They spoke often, and texted multiple times a day. She knew something was wrong the moment she did not hear from him..

She had last spoken to him on the Friday night before his death. "Christopher came to Houston a couple weeks prior, and I knew Antonio and Christopher were not getting along, he told me then that he was coming back to Houston because it was not working out there with Antonio". Babette told us that she had only met the 'boyfriend' once and he was "quiet and would not really talk to me."

It was Fathers Day the Sunday her son died, and Babette was worried. She had not heard from her son. She called. No answer. By Monday, she was scared. "I just had this bad feeling in my stomach" she says. She went to Facebook seeking help. One of Babettes facebook posts stated "If anyone has heard from Chris please let me know. I am worried. I think something bad has happened."

At 4:30 p.m. on Monday June 17th Homicide Detective Perez made contact with Babette to inform her of her son's murder.



Christopher Clingan

"I feel lost and fed up." She believes the police in San Antonio are not moving forward with the case because her son was gay. "It appears they don't think he is significant and are brushing it under the carpet," Babette says. "I can't get anyone to call me back and answer my question about what is going on with my son's case except that it may take a long time."

At the funeral service for her son only days later, a hispanic woman approached me. Babette said. "She asked if I was Christopher's mother?" At first, Babette thought the woman might be Onorato's mother. "She then pulled out her phone and handed it to me with a picture of this woman whose face was swollen and beat up," recalls Babette. "I asked who that was, and she told me that was her." Babette had just come face-to-face with Ester Gonzalez, the woman Onorato beat outside Blur Night Club in Houston months prior to Clingans death. "She told me he was dangerous, and his father was cartel, to be careful. She said he has a history of anger issues and was warning me to be careful when I try to do something about Chris' death."

Antonio Onorato, 20, has been charged with the murder of Christopher Clingan, 22, in San Antonio, allegedly committed while he was out on bond for brutally beating Gonzalez outside Blur, a gay bar in Houston, on February 8.

The Houston police report that documented the assault reflects Gonzales "was struck in the face with a closed fist, causing injury and pain. It also states that Onorato struck her in the face, causing her to fall to the ground, bleeding heavily, resulting in a broken nose, black left eye and lacerations to her left

Four months passed before Onorato appeared before Judge Hughes on the related case. May 29th, eighteen days later, after a night of cocaine and alcohol, he would kill his boyfriend, Clingan, with a knife, while Onorato's best friend watched.

The Harris County District Attorney's office found enough evidence to move forward with a misdemeanor assault charge against Onorato on March 19, a full three months before Clingan's murder. Given Onorato's violent history, family members wonder if Clingan would still be alive if the Harris County District Attorney and the Houston Police Department had done its due diligence. "The district attorneys office didn't even object to his bond" Babette, told the Advocate.

The night of June 15th, 2013 it dinner was at the Olive Garden. Clingan and Onorato were having "a good day" in their up-and-down relationship, discussing plans for the evening. Onorato's friend, Lino, was in town from Houston, and joined the couple for a night out in San Antonio, drinking and using cocaine at several gay clubs.

Although Onorato was only 20 years old, he purchased alcohol at several gay bars in San Antonio. On the way home, tensions between the couple began to arise, prompting Clingan to retire to the bedroom upon arriving home.

The Medical Examiner's report indicates that Christopher had cocaine in his system, just enough to show up.

Onorato and Lino weren't tired at all. Standing near the kitchen, Onorato suggested doing some more coke, which Lino declined.

Police and medical records indicate that Clingan was, at this point, in the bedroom sending text messages to a Houston friend, clearly fearful that his boyfriend would turn violent. Clingan's texts to his friend were "begging him to come to San Antonio" and

"offering to pay his way up there to help him move," according to police reports. Clingan texted his friend saying that Onorato was making threats towards him, saying that his boyfriend was threatening to have his friends beat him up.

According to an witness, Clingan came out of the bedroom and told Onorato their relationship was over, and that he's be going home to Houston, alone.

Onorato fell silent, and went to his computer. Clingan told his now ex-boyfriend to "get off the computer, [because] we need to talk about all of this." Onorato refused. "If you don't shut it off, I'm going to shut it off for you," Clingan said before slamming down the laptop's lid. It was approximately 4:20 a.m.

That's when Onorato ran into the kitchen and grabbed a kitchen knife before stepping back in front of Clingan "What? Are you going to stab me with that?" Clingan asked.

That's exactly what Onorato did — eight times. It happened so fast that Lino was in shock. Onorato stopped and threw the knife over his shoulder, stated Lino.

"Oh my god what have I done?" Onorato exclaimed. According to Lino.

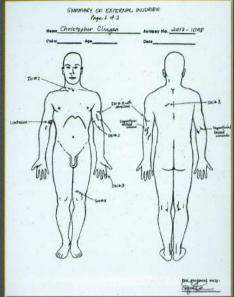
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Clingan ran down the stairs to the front door, leaving behind him a trail of blood from the couch to the front door. Clingan made it across the driveway to his car before he collapsed in the grass. Lino ran after Clingan, and found him on the grass, talking to 911 operators. The first 911 call came in at 4:32 a.m.

Lino took the phone from Clingan and started speaking to the 911 operator. Being told to get towels to apply pressure, Lino ran back into the apartment, where he found Onorato on the phone. "I'm on the phone with the police," he said.

A Texas Murder Continued From Previous Page

The autopsy reports suggest that the first stab wound caused Clingan's right lung to collapse and fill with blood, making it hard for him to breathe. Another wound on his left arm cut a major artery, causing Clingan to lose large amounts of blood quickly, and requiring immediate medical attention.



The 911 operator told Lino that emergency personnel were at the apartment complex, but couldn't get through the security gate. The operator asked Lino for the gate code. "I don't know," Lino said, crying. "I'm not from here; I'm visiting." Lino went door-to-door, knocking frantically and hoping that someone will open up and tell him a gate code. No one does. Nearly 10 minutes have passed since the first 911 call was made, and the ambulance sat just blocks away trying to get into the gated community. Police finally got in; no one knows how.

Conflicting police reports claim that the Sheriff's department would not allow EMT personnel access to Clingan until the scene was cleared. That contradicts statements the 911 operator made to Lino and Clingan, saying that emergency personall were "at the scene trying to get in." Attorney representing Babette Clingan told the Advocate.

A Bexar County law in effect since 2010 requires all gated communities to have an "SOS" system, which is a device connected to the gates that senses when sirens from emergency vehicle are present, and opens the gate or a lock box. This gated community did not have one. The property was subjected to a \$500 fine.

When officers arrived at the scene they saw Linor across the street from the apartment standing over Clingan, applying pressure to his chest with a towel, as he is on the phone with 911.

"Where is the person that did this?" the officer yelled. Approaching the apartment the officers saw Onorato sitting on the staircase, hands covering his face, shaking, crying and covered in what appeared to be blood. According to the crime scene report obtained.



Antonio Onorato Booking Photo

The officer gave a verbal command to stand up and move away from the apartment. On-orato complied. "Is there still anyone in the apartment?" Officer Salazar asked. "I don't know," replied Onorato.

The suspect securely in custody, officers go into the apartment. Police reporst describe the scene as "pool of blood by the front door, and massive amounts of blood on the couch".

"Clingan was covered in blood and gasping for air," Officer Montoya reported. Another officer reported that Clingan was "extremely pale, his eyes were rolled back."

In route to be questioned, Onorato starts to speak.

"I can't believe I caused a murder scene," Onorato says. "Can't believe all this is happening. We were going to be moving to Houston in two weeks." And then "Will they let me see my boyfriend when we get downtown?" According to the police report Onorato admitted to stabbing Clingan.

At the time Onorato made those statements, Clingan was alive; he was not pronounced dead until 5:55am.

"Why would Antonio state he 'can't believe I caused a murder scene' unless in his mind was premeditated, and intended to kill Christopher? Babette asks.

After being booked, Onorato was released less than 20 hours later on a \$100,000 bond, in a car headed to Houston. Onorato has not been in an San Antonio courtroom since.

Houston is the fourth largest city in America. It's mayor that not only supports LGBT equality, but is herself a lesbian. But shes been mum of the Clingan case. Mayor Parker, who is up for re-election, refused comment on the issue.

"The Harris County District Attorneys office has taken the "Not Our Issue" approach relating to the murder charge in Bexar County. Why should they care?" Says Babette. Assigning a 'rookie' assistant district attorney, ultimately obtaining a guilty verdict in the Ester Gonzalez assault trail. "I left the courtroom" she stated. "Just hearing the opening arguments comparing NFL's Houston Texans to the case disgusted me."

Judge Jean Spalding Hughes for the past eighteen years has presided over Harris County Criminal Court 15, which over sees such cases as Domestic Violence. Hughes granted Onorato bond. Allowing Onorato freedom to commit another crime. Something court records indicate Hughes does for people charged with first time DWIs.

Judge Hughes, republican, is a well known and is highly respected through the legal community as "one tough Judge" a courthouse insider tells us. "How this violent man managed to violate bond on an assault charge and commit murder, then be allowed to get bond again baffles me."

Several attempts for comment before and after the Onorato trail requests were made to Hughes. Court Coordinator Laura Conte stated: "Judge Hughes is aware of the case pending in San Antonio, and can not speak with you because the case is still pending. The defendant is on a \$25,000 cash bond on house arrest."

Onorato was convicted of assault against Ester Gonzalez on September 10, after a one-day trial. He was sentenced to one year in Harris County Jail. Onorato's attorney Jack Carroll immediately filed an appeal, allowing Onorato eligible for an appeal bond in the amount of \$500,000. It took him two weeks to raise the money before he was released. He is currently still free.

San Antonio is city under fire from several national Gay and Lesbian organizations after city council member Elisa Chan was secretly recorded making homophobic comments saying homosexuality is "against nature" and that gay people shouldn't be granted adoption rights, among other controversial comments.

Just a few weeks have passed since San Anothio City Council passed the controversial nondiscrimination ordinance inclusive of LGBT identities, but some advocates argue that doesn't go far enough.

In a city where Mayor Julian Castro is running hard to become Hillary Rodham Clinton's vice presidential running mate,(according to the Washington Times) the mayor has won some



positive spurs, by placing the gay-rights agenda squarely before the City Council and winning.

But some think San Antonio's definition of Equality lacks when it comes to LGBT crimes being treated differently than those of heterosexual as demonstrated in the Clingan investigation and the subsequent release of his confessed killer when he was arraigned on an unrelated battery charge.

Our questions were met with roadblocks, denials and false information for some of the city's top officials.

Bexar County Sheriffs Department Spokesman Paul Barry and told us while he had working knowledge of the case, and had responded to media requests. "I had no idea this case had LGBT implications. It really never came up in previous media requests." Assuring us that his handling of this case was done without knowledge of the suspect or victims sexual orientation.

"In talking with my detectives, they tell me they approached the case as they do all cases, but because of jurisdictional and multi-agency issues, presented additional complications." Berry said

What was first thought to be only one 911 emergency call, the night of June 16,2013, now comes indication a second call exists.

A Texas Murder Continued From Previous Page

Furthermore, relating to the 911 call. The 911 operators who took the reported second call from Onorato was reprimanded for his/her actions. "The operator was reprimanded because they disconnected the call," a source close to the case told the Advocate. Bexar County Sheriffs office has declined to comment on its existence of the second call.

You can hear the original 911 call Clingan made, as portions were "leaked" to San Antonio's KSAT reporter Mat Rivers. The call is graphic and you can hear Clingan gasping for air as he lay dying.

Berry confirmed there is an investigation into the "leak" of the 911 call, but would not release the tapes to the Advocate, citing an on-going investigation, and claiming we would need the "Texas Attorney General's permission."

Elected District Attorney Susan Reed, the first female district attorney elected in Bexar County, is not new to LGBT issues in San Antonio. In 2009 an San Antonio officer shot and killed James Lee Whitehead, a drag performer that was being mugged. Reed was quoted as saying: "This is absolutely, totally a clear case of justification of a police officer's actions," she said at the time of the incident. Police Chief William McManus called Whitehead's death an "unfortunate" accident. The officer shot the performer in the process of shooting the robber.

Clingans mother says she was told "the case has not made it to a grand jury, and was not sure it would be, considering the case could be labeled a crime of passion." Texas defines 'Crime of Passion' as "Sudden passion." It involves a person being killed, arising out of provocation by the individual killed or another acting with the person killed which passion arises at the time of the offense and is not solely the result of former provocation.

First Assistant District Attorney Cliff Herberg spoke with the Advocate after several unreturned calls, voicemails and e-mails, saying those were the result of a malfunctioning voicemail system. "Our phone system went down, and it could be the voicemails were lost." No indication as to what happened to the e-mail.

Offering the explanation that Reed did not return our calls probably because she has been out of the country on vacation. "First of all who ever is saying this will be charged as a 'Crime of Passion' does not know their law well. Bexar County will move forward with a murder charge and will seek indictment, absent of some evidence. I have personally been briefed on this case, as it's

as it's high profile. Herberg stated.

"A time frame from arrest to indictment and the case to get moving in roughly 120 days. This case is on track." Herberg said Contradicting statement made by Berry that implicates the case has complications. Herberg was unaware of communications between Harris County and Bexar County

"I think our community needs a change," state District Judge Angus McGinty told the San Antonio Express News "I think the people of Bexar County need change. I'm very concerned."

Judge McGinty preside over the 144th district court, will oversee the Clingan case. McGinty made national headlines months ago when he denied bond to a person accused or murder after allegations the accused hired a hit man to 'take care of the judge.'

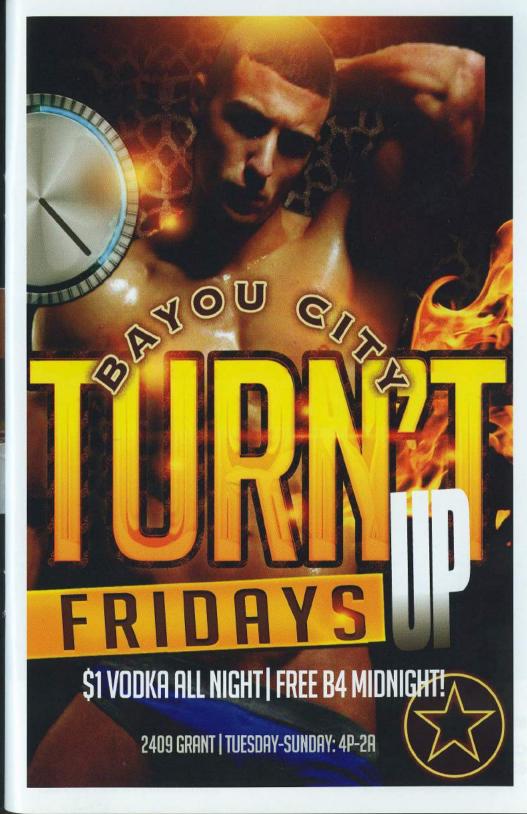


Babette and Christopher Clingan

"He evidently paid someone a certain amount of money on the promise that a second individual would come and get me," McGinty said. That type of threat might make anyone think twice about venturing down the same road. "It's part of the job, but it sure makes it personal," he said. "And it's not the good part of the job."

San Antonio has a long history with LGBT violence and homicides. A simple Google search of some of the Bexar County officials will show just that. Lack of consideration, lack of will to prosecute Hate Crimes, are just a few mentions of cases that have been brought before the current DA and First DA.

Christopher's mother wants the truth. She wants justice for her son, and she doesn't want anyone else to go through this. "It's horrible,



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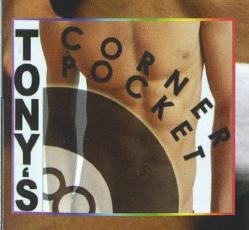
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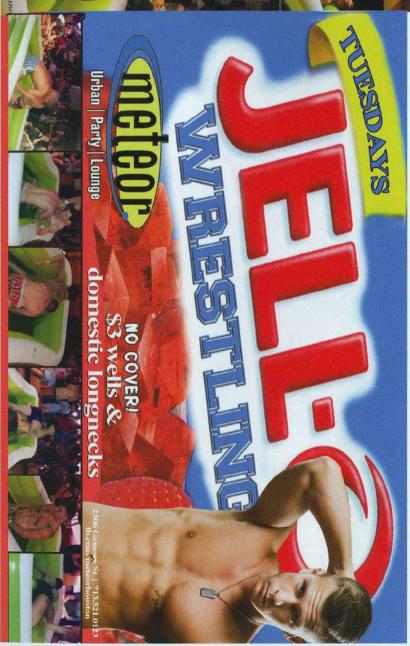
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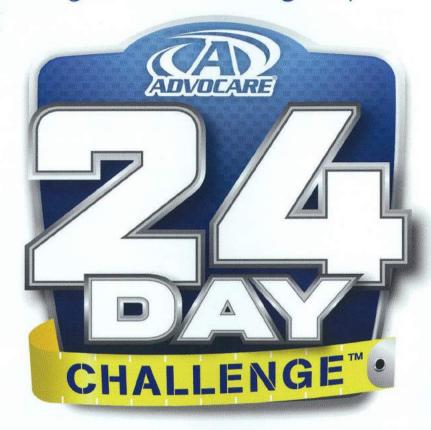


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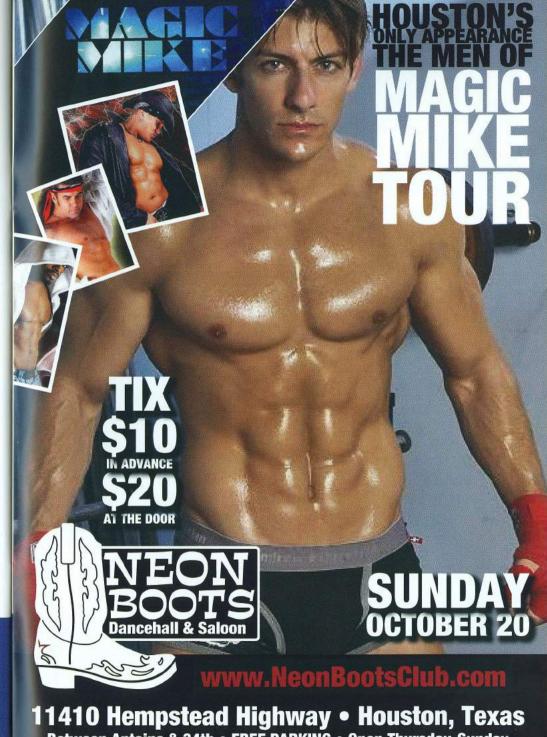
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