

OAKLAND FIRE EXPOSES RIFT OVER NAMING TRANSGENDER VICTIMS

SAN FRANCISCO: Feral Pines proved to be as complex in death as she was in life as friends and family struggled this week to settle on the correct name to remember the victim of the Oakland warehouse party fire killed along with 35 others. Pines, a 29-year-old transgender woman who recently moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, was born in Connecticut in 1987. Relatives largely knew her as Riley, which she asked them to call her after she graduated from college.

But her death set off a storm of grief combined with anger, as friends called news media outlets and government officials to insist she should be named and mourned in death as Feral Pines, the name she used with them, illustrating the difficulty of identifying victims who have not officially changed their names. They especially objected to the use of the first name she was given at birth. Two other transgender women died in the fire, and only one had legally changed her name.

"It takes an immense amount of labor on the part of an individual trans person to get people to recognize who you are and to respect who you are," said Scout Wolfcave, executive director of the Trans

Assistance Project and a friend of Pines. For transgender people, names given at birth may be "something you try to leave behind, and to have people drag that up in a moment you can't defend yourself it's painful. It's painful for friends."

In the wake of the fire, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organizations have called on media outlets to refer to transgender people by the name and gender with which they identify or identified. Proper naming is critical because it validates the way people who have died lived and saw themselves, said Alex Schmidt, senior strategist for transgender media with GLAAD, a group that monitors media and advocates for gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Complicated issue

Yet that may not always be easy when friends disagree on acceptable names, or parents insist on another name even if they accept their child is transgender, he said. "It is a complicated issue," Schmidt said. "It's a case-by-case basis, and we don't always have as much information as we would like." A legal name and gender change would

decide the issue, but people frequently do not have the money or time to embark on the effort, said Sasha Buchert, staff attorney at the Transgender Law Center in Oakland. It can take up to nearly a dozen forms and at least \$450 for a court order to start the lengthy and complicated process, she said.

"The fees around paying for this process are often out of reach for folks who are experiencing high rates of employment discrimination," she said. "It's very complicated." In California, next of kin decides the name that goes on official reports absent other documentation, said Tiffany Woods, a transgender services consultant who worked with Alameda County Sheriff's Office on the best way to identify those who died in the fire.

"Everyone's been proactive and having these intense conversations about doing the right thing," she said. Of the three transgender victims, Cash Askew, 22, was the only one who had changed her name legally. Her family released a statement Friday praising the Oakland guitarist and artist as a "tender, luminous spirit."

Em B, also known as Em Bohlka, was remembered as a caring person and poet who traded Kurt

Vonnegut quotes with her father. "Em was transitioning into a beautiful, wonderful, happy woman," Jack Bohlka, her dad, wrote in a text message to The Associated Press. "I only wish she had more time to complete her transition. It was so wonderful to see her becoming who she was meant to be."

Woods said she has not received complaints about the way Bohlka has been identified. But she said members of the Fritz family objected after learning that Riley Fritz was initially identified solely as Feral Pines, 29, in a city list of names confirmed as those who died in the fire. The official city list of the dead now lists her legal birth name, which friends say she abhorred.

It also says she lived her life as Riley Fritz. The name Feral Pines has been removed. Brother Ben Fritz said Riley was the name she asked him and other relatives to call her, but described her as a complex person and said he also knew her by other names, including Feral Pines and Fyah. He remembered his sister on Friday as someone who could turn a discussion about what to eat into a talk about the politics of veganism. "She saw everything in more sophisticated ways than most people," he wrote in an email. —AP

GIULIANI OUT AS TRUMP NARROWS DIPLOMAT PICK

GRAND RAPIDS: Donald Trump plunged his quest for America's next top diplomat back into the spotlight Friday by confirming that one frontrunner, outspoken former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, will not join his cabinet. Giuliani had made no secret of his desire for the job, but came under media scrutiny over business dealings that could pose conflicts of interest.

He was one of Trump's most ardent supporters in the bitterly divisive election but others were alarmed about the prospect of 72-year-old known for abrasive rhetoric heading up the largest diplomatic mission in the world. Observers in the United States and around the world have been on tenterhooks over who the incoming Republican will pick as they wait to see whether Trump will make good on threats to rip up treaties and free trade agreements. With the decision expected next week, the president-elect announced Friday that Giuliani had removed his name from contention as far back as November 29.

"Rudy would have been an outstanding member of the cabinet in several roles, but I fully respect and understand his reasons for remaining in the private sector," Trump said in a statement. Giuliani, a former federal prosecutor, earned the moniker "America's Mayor" for his leadership of New York in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

"This is not about me; it is about what is best for the country and the new administration," he said in a statement released by Trump's team, confirming that he would continue to work in his law and consulting firms. The New York Times reported that Rex Tillerson, chief executive of Exxon Mobil, was now the leading candidate to become secretary of state. Tillerson met Trump in New York on Tuesday.

New picks next week

Former Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, a fierce critic of Trump during the campaign, is thought to remain in the running. But the Times said Trump had "indicated to several people" that the former Massachusetts governor was now unlikely to be named. In an interview with Fox News, Giuliani followed other ardent Trump loyalists in counseling against Romney, complaining that he "went just a little too far" in savaging Trump during the campaign season.

"You can make friends and make up, but I would not see him as a candidate for the cabinet," Giuliani told Fox. Trump's appoint-

ments so far include four billionaires and three generals in a super-rich, conservative and largely white inner circle set to run the United States from January 20. Many incoming cabinet members have railed against the worker protections and environmental and corporate regulations enacted by President Barack Obama.

Trump told a victory rally in Michigan that "phenomenal" new names would be announced next week, but declined to give specifics. The stop in Grand Rapids was the fifth campaign-style event since the November 8 election as he soaks up adulation from supporters in key states that helped secure his electoral win over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The president-elect defends his picks as "some of the most successful people in the world" but when his choice for education secretary, billionaire Betsy DeVos, took the stage in Michigan, she was heckled by some protesters. A number of protesters were forcibly removed from the floor at different points during the evening. "Where do these people come from? Unbelievable," said Trump as the crowd responded with chants of "U-S-A! U-S-A!"

Oil refineries

He used the rally to name Michigan resident and Australian-born Dow Chemical executive Andrew Liveris as head of a national manufacturing council. Liveris said his company was going to invest in a new research and development center in Michigan that would create hundreds of jobs-with job creation one of Trump's key promises. The president-elect also rehashed his complaints about a Boeing contract to build two new Air Force One jets, which he claims has escalated to \$4 billion. "I'm not paying \$4 billion for an airplane," he told the crowd.

At a rally in Louisiana earlier on Friday, the president-elect said he wanted to see more oil refineries built in the United States, and pledged to do away with "job-killing restrictions" suppressing the energy sector. He also delivered a veiled warning to America's rivals around the world, stating he would be prepared to boost US military production to keep pace with countries like China, which is rapidly modernizing its armed forces. "We're going to have the strongest military in the world, the most updated military in the world. And there has rarely been a time where we have needed it like this," he told the crowd in Michigan. —AFP



GRAND RAPIDS: President-elect Donald Trump smiles as he listens to his pick for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos speak during a rally at DeltaPlex Arena. — AP

TRUMP TO ATTEND ARMY-NAVY GAME, PRESIDENTIAL PREPARATIONS GO ON

PRESIDENT-ELECT CAPS OFF WEEK OF 'THANK YOU' TOUR

NEW YORK: President-elect Donald Trump is partaking in one of the nation's most storied football rivalries, saluting US troops at the annual Army-Navy game as he prepares to enter the White House. The future commander-in-chief planned to attend the 117th game between the military academies at West Point and Annapolis, which is being held on relatively neutral ground, at M&T Bank Stadium in Baltimore, Maryland.

Trump tweeted yesterday morning that he was going to the game "as a show of support for our Armed Forces." The appearance caps a week of rolling out Cabinet picks, holding "thank you" rallies in North Carolina, Iowa and Michigan, and trying to cement his incoming Senate majority with Saturday's runoff election in Louisiana. The incoming president appeared jovial and relaxed as he plunged back into electoral politics on Friday, a full month after he won the presidency. He held large-scale events in Louisiana and in Michigan, where he regaled supporters in Grand Rapids by reciting his victories in battleground states.

Trump is the first Republican to win Michigan since George HW Bush in 1988. He attributed his feat to failures by Democrats. "They forgot about you people," Trump said. "In four years they're not going to forget. But it's not going to

work because you're not going to forget." Several protesters were removed from his rally at DeltaPlex Arena, prompting the president-elect to declare at one point, "Get 'em out of here." Trump introduced Betsy DeVos, his choice for education secretary who hails from west Michigan, and announced that Andrew Liveris, the chief executive of Dow Chemical, would lead his American Manufacturing Council. Taking the stage, Liveris said the company would soon bring a new research-and-development center to Michigan.

GOP support

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Trump campaigned for Republican John Kennedy, the state treasurer who faces off against Public Service Commissioner Foster Campbell, a Democrat, for the seat of retiring Republican Sen David Vitter. Neither won a majority in the November primary. Polls found Kennedy with a comfortable lead in the runoff.

While candidate Trump was often at odds with the establishment wing of his party, GOP leaders have broadly supported him as president-elect, and he's trying to consolidate any lingering factions, most immediately in Louisiana, where a Kennedy win would cement the party's four-vote advantage in the new Senate. In private, people

close to Trump said he was expected to name yet another Goldman Sachs executive to his White House team. The president-elect's National Economic Council is to be led by Gary Cohn, president and chief operating officer of the Wall Street bank, which Trump repeatedly complained during the election campaign would control Hillary Clinton if she won. Major decisions remain - most importantly Trump's choice for secretary of state. The deliberations have become a source of tension within his transition team, with chief of staff Reince Priebus said to be backing Mitt Romney while other advisers oppose the idea of selecting the 2012 GOP nominee, given his fierce criticism of Trump during the campaign.

Trump announced that Rudy Giuliani, the former New York mayor who was an early favorite, was no longer under consideration. On a busy Friday, Trump also spoke by telephone with Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who broke with protocol during the campaign to endorse Hillary Clinton and said afterward she would not maintain "a diplomatic silence in the face of attitudes of racism, sexism, misogyny or intolerance of any kind." Sturgeon's office said she used Friday's call to emphasize the "values Scotland and the United States share." Trump's transition team described the conversation as a "short congratulatory call." — AP

MEXICO QUIETLY MARKS 10 YEARS OF DRUG WAR

MEXICO CITY: Ten years after Mexican troops were unleashed against drug cartels, the country will mark the anniversary without fanfare today, with murders rising again and the military eager to return to barracks. President Enrique Pena Nieto, who inherited the drug war when he took office in December 2012, has promised his countrymen and women a "Mexico in peace."

His government has created a new federal police force and imprisoned or killed several drug kingpins, but Pena Nieto has kept troops on the ground despite allegations of abuses and criticism from human rights groups. The administration has no events planned to commemorate the controversial deployment that was launched by his predecessor, Felipe Calderon, on December 11, 2006.

Ten days after taking office, Calderon deployed some 5,000

troops to his western home state of Michoacan-the start of a militarized campaign against drug trafficking. Calderon's six-year term was marked by a surge in murders, rising from 10,253 in 2007 to a peak of 22,852 in 2011. The figure dropped in the first two years of Pena Nieto's presidency, only to rise again in 2015. Although murders remain well under the worst years of Calderon's presidency, there were 17,063 homicides in the first 10 months of 2016, already surpassing last year's 12-month total of 17,034.

Smaller gangs, bigger problems
Much of the bloodshed is blamed on ultra-violent turf wars between drug gangs. The government has captured major fugitives, such as the Sinaloa drug cartel's powerful leader, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. But the weakening of major drug cartels such as the Beltran Leyva, Zetas, Guf

and Knights Templar has led to the emergence of smaller gangs that seek to diversify their business through kidnappings and extortion.

"The war has become much more complex. The level of death has escalated," Raul Benitez Manaut, a security expert at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, told AFP. The drug cartels have terrorized the population by leaving the decapitated bodies of their rivals on roadsides or hanging them on bridges, while mass graves are regularly found in the countryside.

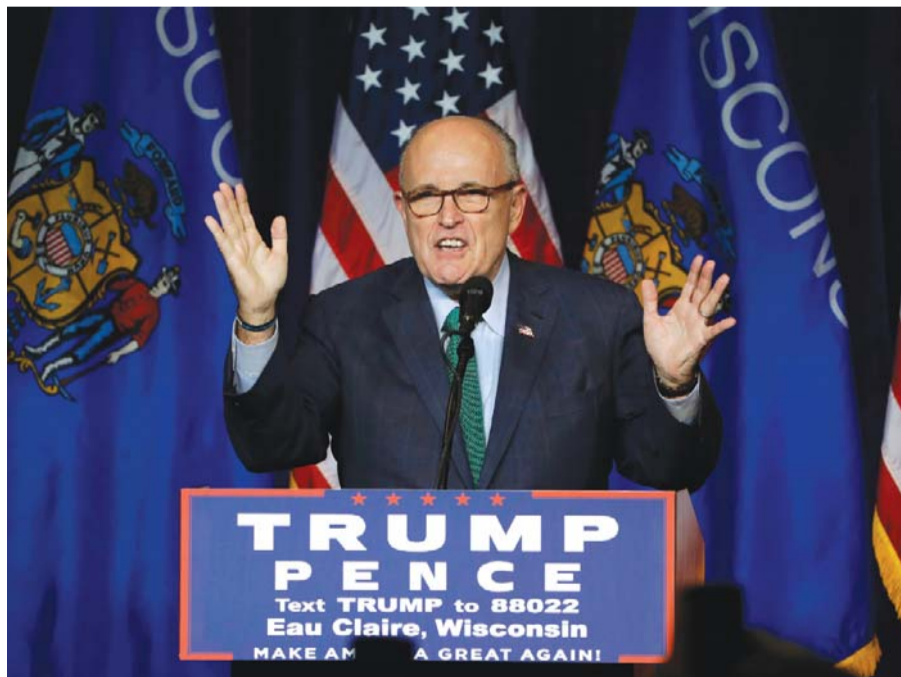
Police have been accused of colluding with criminals while soldiers and marines have faced allegations of committing torture, extrajudicial killings and sexual abuse. Even Defense Minister Salvador Cienfuegos agrees that troops do not belong in a law enforcement role. "We didn't ask to be here. We don't like it. We didn't study how to chase criminals," Cienfuegos said on Thursday. He said he would be the first to raise "not one, but two hands" in favor of returning troops to barracks. "Our function is some-

thing else and it's been made into something unnatural. We are doing things that don't correspond to our training because there's no one else to do them," the minister said.

Though Pena Nieto acknowledged on Friday that the armed forces were doing tasks that "don't correspond to them in the strictest sense," he insisted that they are "determined to continue" policing the streets. And federal police in Jalisco state Friday arrested Jesus Beltran Guzman-a son of one of the Beltran Leyva cartel's founders and a nephew of "El Chapo" — in a drug bust, authorities said.

Grim cases

But Javier Oliva, a Mexican security expert at the London School of Economics, said "there is no strategy" and the troops are always one step behind. Drug consumption in the United States, meanwhile, has not ceased and the legalization of marijuana in several US states has prompted drug cartels to step up production of heroin while synthetic drugs proliferate. — AFP



EAU CLAIRE: In this Nov 1, 2016 file photo, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani campaigns for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. — AP

PATRONS BACK PIZZA PLACE TARGETED BY FAKE STORIES

WASHINGTON: There's at least a slice of good news for a pizza restaurant in the nation's capital caught up in fake news stories about a child sex trafficking ring run by prominent Democrats. In the days since a conspiracy theorist showed up and fired an assault weapon inside Comet Ping Pong, supporters of the restaurant have turned out in droves to buy pizzas and leave homemade signs and flowers.

More than 2,000 people said on Facebook that they're going to this weekend's "Stand With Comet" event to support the pizza place and other neighborhood restaurants targeted by fake news fanatics. John McKeel walked out of Comet Ping Pong Friday carrying "The Smoky," with mushrooms and bacon; and "The Jimmy," topped with meatballs. But McKeel wasn't just coming for the food. "I had to come today," said McKeel, 39, of Alexandria, Virginia.

The Facebook page urged people to support not only Comet Ping Pong but other nearby stores that have been subjected to harassing and threatening online comments and phone calls since the fake news stories began spreading. "If they run out of dough today, that'd be a good thing," said Erick Sanchez, the event's organizer.

So many came out Friday that people waited an hour and a half for a table and carry-out took 45 minutes. Other local restaurants spontaneously sent over wait staff to help. Others sent food for employees. The restaurant also is getting support online, where a GoFundMe page set up to help it pay for legal expenses and extra security had passed \$15,000, with a goal of \$28,000. Interim District of Columbia Police Chief Peter Newsham visited Friday, with a message for fake news peddlers.

"It's not funny. It's serious. It can have very, very serious consequences," he said, adding that police are following up on the harassment and threats local businesses have received. The man police arrested Sunday at Comet Ping Pong, Edgar Maddison Welch, has a court hearing next week. Police have said the 28-year-old from Salisbury, NC, fired shots from an AR-15 assault weapon after coming to "self-investigate" the conspiracy theory known as "pizzagate."

He surrendered peacefully "when he found no evidence that underage children were being harbored in the restaurant," police said. Joey Allen, the marketing and events manager for the District Restaurant Group, which owns the nearby Jake's American Grille, says its restaurant also was harassed with calls related to the conspiracy. At one point the calls were daily, Allen said. — AP



ACAPULCO: A forensic medic investigates the crime scene where two people were shot dead by unidentified attacker. — AP