SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE	UNITED STATES
	-
GERALD LYNN BOSTOCK,)
Petitioner,)
v.) No. 17-1618
CLAYTON COUNTY, GEORGIA,)
Respondent.)
and)
ALTITUDE EXPRESS, INC., ET AL.,)
Petitioners,)
v.) No. 17-1623
MELISSA ZARDA, AS EXECUTOR OF THE)
ESTATE OF DONALD ZARDA, ET AL.,)
Respondents.)
	_
Pages: 1 through 71	
Place: Washington, D.C.	
Date: October 8, 2019	

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13	ESTATE OF DONALD ZARDA, ET AL.,)
14	Respondents.)
15		-
16	Washington, D.C.	
17	Tuesday, October 8, 2	019
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19	The above-entitled mat	ter came on
20	for oral argument before the Supre	eme Court of the
21	United States at 10:05 a.m.	
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24		
25		

1	APPEARANCES:
2	
3	PAMELA S. KARLAN, Stanford, California;
4	on behalf of the Petitioner in 17-1618
5	and the Respondents in 17-1623.
6	JEFFREY M. HARRIS, Arlington, Virginia;
7	on behalf of the Respondent in 17-1618
8	and the Petitioners in 17-1623.
9	GEN. NOEL J. FRANCISCO, Solicitor General,
10	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.,
11	for the United States, as amicus curiae,
12	supporting affirmance in 17-1618 and
13	reversal in 17-1623.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:05 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear
4	argument first this morning in Case 17-1618,
5	Bostock versus Clayton County, and the
6	consolidated case.
7	Ms. Karlan.
8	ORAL ARGUMENT OF PAMELA S. KARLAN
9	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER IN 17-1618
10	AND THE RESPONDENTS IN 17-1623
11	MS. KARLAN: Thank you, Mr. Chief
12	Justice, and may it please the Court:
13	When a employer fires a male employee
14	for dating men but does not fire female
15	employees who date men, he violates Title VII.
16	The employer has, in the words of Section
17	703(a), discriminated against the man because he
18	treats that man worse than women who want to do
19	the same thing. And that discrimination is
20	because of sex, again in the words of
21	Section 703(a), because the adverse employment
22	action is based on the male employee's failure
23	to conform to a particular expectation about how
24	men should behave; namely, that men should be
25	attracted only to women and not to men.

1	There is no analytic difference
2	between this kind of discrimination and forms of
3	discrimination that have been already recognized
4	by every court to have addressed them. For
5	example, discrimination against men who are
6	effeminate rather than macho. Like the
7	discrimination here, that discrimination is
8	because of non-conformity with an expectation
9	about how men should behave.
LO	The attempt to carve out
L1	discrimination against men for being gay from
L2	Title VII cannot be administered with either
L3	consistency or integrity. In the words of the
L4	en banc Second Circuit, it forces judges to
L5	result resort to lexical bean counting where
L6	they count up the frequency of epithets, such as
L7	"fag," "gay," "queer," "real man," and "fem," to
L8	determine whether or not discrimination is based
L9	on sex or sexual orientation.
20	That attempt is futile because when a
21	man is discriminated against for being gay, he
22	is discriminated against for not conforming to
23	an expectation about how men should behave.
24	Finally, the possibility that some
25	employers, but not the employers here, may have

- 1 policies of denying employment opportunities
- 2 both to gay men and to lesbians does not change
- 3 the unlawfulness of what was alleged by the
- 4 employees here.
- 5 Labeling those policies under an
- 6 umbrella phrase like "sexual orientation
- 7 discrimination" cannot hide the fact that such
- 8 an employer is a double discriminator. It
- 9 discriminates against men who do not conform to
- 10 a male stereotype, and it discriminates against
- 11 women who do not conform to an expectation about
- 12 female --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ms. Karlan --
- 14 Ms. Karlan, how do you answer the argument that
- 15 back in 1964, this could not have been in
- 16 Congress's mind because in -- in many states
- 17 male same-sex relations was a criminal offense;
- 18 the American Psychiatric Association labeled
- 19 homosexuality a -- a mental illness?
- 20 MS. KARLAN: Well, I think you read
- 21 the words of the statute. And this Court has
- 22 recognized again and again forms of sex
- 23 discrimination that were not in Congress's
- 24 contemplation in 1964.
- In 1964, those were the days of Mad

1	Men,	so	the	idea	that	sexual	harassment	would

- 2 have been reached, most courts didn't find
- 3 sexual harassment to be actionable until this
- 4 Court did. In Price Waterhouse, this Court
- 5 recognized that discrimination against a woman
- 6 who cursed like a sailor, walked like a man, and
- 7 didn't wear makeup was reachable under Title
- 8 VII. If you had asked members of Congress then
- 9 what they had thought, they would not have been
- 10 thinking about women like Ann Hopkins. They --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How do you --
- do you agree or disagree with Judge Posner's
- 13 statement that the statute should be read to
- 14 encompass sexual orientation discrimination to
- 15 "avoid placing the entire burden of updating old
- 16 statutes on the legislative branch"?
- 17 MS. KARLAN: I disagree with Judge
- 18 Posner. I don't think you need to do any
- 19 updating here. I think you should read the
- 20 words as they were understood then, which is men
- 21 and women. Title VII was intended to make sure
- that men were not disadvantaged relative to
- women and women were not disadvantaged relative
- 24 to men.
- 25 And when you tell two employees who

- 1 come in, both of whom tell you they married
- their partner Bill last weekend, when you fire
- 3 the male employee who married Bill and you give
- 4 the female employee who married Bill a couple of
- 5 days off so she can celebrate the joyous event,
- 6 that's discrimination because of sex.
- Well, if no one has any further
- 8 questions, I'll reserve the remainder of my time
- 9 for rebuttal.
- 10 (Laughter.)
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I think
- 12 we'll have further questions.
- 13 (Laughter.)
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What do you do
- 15 with the argument that this is a
- 16 non-discriminatory policy because it applies
- 17 equally to relationships between women and
- 18 relationships between men? In other words, your
- 19 friends on the -- or -- or you emphasize that
- 20 you need to know the sex of the individuals
- 21 involved before you can determine whether or not
- there's a violation and that that brings it
- 23 within Title VII.
- 24 But what about the response that you
- do not need to know the sex of the people

- 1 involved; you just can have a policy against
- 2 same sex? So you don't care whether the
- 3 participants are women or men. If they're the
- 4 same, then that's covered by the policy.
- 5 MS. KARLAN: I think that's no
- 6 different than having a policy that says
- 7 everyone should comply with the stereotype
- 8 applicable to their sex. And if I can use an
- 9 example from the Court's prior cases, for
- 10 example, in Dothard against Rawlinson, the
- 11 policy on its face said you cannot guard someone
- of the opposite sex. So a woman who seeks to
- guard a man is barred from that job; a man who
- seeks to guard a woman is barred from that job.
- 15 Just put in, instead of the word "guard," "date"
- and you get the same kind of rule here, which is
- 17 a man who wants to date a man can't do it but a
- 18 woman can, and a woman who wants to date a woman
- 19 can't do it --
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But there's, Ms. --
- MS. KARLAN: -- but a man can. They
- are two forms of discrimination.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ms. Karlan, there's
- 24 quite a difference. In the Dothard case, it was
- 25 the disparate impact. There are many more male

- 1 prisoners to guard than females. So that
- 2 policy, even though it applied to men guarding
- 3 women, it had a disproportionate effect on women
- 4 who wanted to be guards because there were many
- 5 more jobs guarding male prisoners than female
- 6 prisoners.
- 7 MS. KARLAN: Justice Ginsburg, the
- 8 part of Dothard against Rawlinson that rested on
- 9 disparate impact was the height and weight
- 10 requirements. The requirement about guarding
- 11 the opposite sex was not a disparate impact. At
- most, the Court noted in a footnote along the
- way that there were more guard positions
- 14 available to men, but it was not a disparate
- impact case. It was a disparate treatment case.
- And so a male person who had wanted to
- guard someone at the Julia Tutwiler prison, the
- 18 prison for women in Alabama, would have had a
- 19 claim that he had been discriminated against
- 20 because of sex. Now, he would have lost that
- 21 claim but on BFOQ grounds, not on because of sex
- 22 grounds.
- 23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What do you do with
- 24 the -- the example that was brought up that,
- 25 unlike race, there are certain distinctions that

- 1 are not only permitted but maybe even required
- between males and females, like physical fitness
- 3 tests?
- 4 MS. KARLAN: So those -- I want to
- 5 answer that question in two parts. The first is
- 6 to notice that in those cases, there is no
- 7 question there's a differential be -- between
- 8 men and women; that is, men and women are being
- 9 treated differently.
- 10 What is at issue there is whether that
- 11 differential treatment constitutes unlawful
- 12 discrimination under Title VII. So, for
- 13 example, in Johnson against Santa Clara County
- 14 Transportation Agency, everyone recognized Paul
- Johnson was denied the job because of his sex,
- but because it was a permissible affirmative
- 17 action program, that was okay. In Dothard
- 18 against Rawlinson, this Court said Ms. Rawlinson
- is discriminated against because of sex, but
- there's a BFOO.
- 21 So if Congress writes an exemption
- into the statute, that's one thing. But this
- 23 Court really shouldn't be writing in an
- 24 exemption for those purposes.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Do you think we

- 1 need exemptions for those BFOQs? It's not just
- 2 the -- physical fitness standards for different
- 3 sports, but big issue right now raging the
- 4 country is bathroom usage. Same-sex bathroom
- 5 usage.
- 6 How are those cases going to be dealt
- 7 with absent a congressional exemption other than
- 8 BFOQ?
- 9 MS. KARLAN: Well, I think the way
- 10 that they get dealt with is everybody agrees if
- 11 you have men's bathrooms and women's bathrooms,
- that's because of sex. It treats men one way,
- it says go to this bathroom. It treats women
- another way, it says go to this bathroom.
- Then the question becomes is that
- 16 permissible to do? And if I could just begin
- with an example that I think will show why this
- 18 is so. When I got up, the Chief Justice said to
- 19 me, "Ms." Karlan, I am willing to bet any amount
- of money I have that when Mr. Harris gets up, he
- 21 is going to say "Mr." Harris.
- 22 He has treated us differently because
- of sex. But that's not discriminatory because
- 24 neither of us has been subjected to a
- 25 disadvantage. And as this Court said in

- 1 Burlington White against North -- Burlington
- 2 Northern against White, what the statute means
- 3 when it says "discriminate against" is to cause
- 4 an injury and requiring people generally to use
- 5 separate bathrooms is not an injury.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, I'm -- I'm not
- 7 sure that maybe how they would see it. And to
- 8 what -- to what extent should we take that into
- 9 account? And -- and same thing with a
- 10 gender-specific uniform requirements.
- 11 MS. KARLAN: Sure.
- 12 JUSTICE GORSUCH: How would you deal
- 13 with those, given that -- that at least those
- 14 affected might think that they're suffering a
- 15 harm?
- MS. KARLAN: So there's no categorical
- 17 rule about these. For example, the fact that
- 18 all of the men sitting at counsel table knew
- 19 that they had to wear ties today and I was free
- 20 not to didn't cause an injury. On the other
- 21 hand, even the dissenters in the Second Circuit
- 22 said, if the Court said women who come to argue
- 23 should argue in Hooters outfits and the men
- 24 should wear --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: No --

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1 MS. KARLAN: -- ties --
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- JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- we're not --
- 3 we're not -- I mean --
- 4 MS. KARLAN: I know.
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- we can talk
- 6 absurd examples --
- 7 MS. KARLAN: No, but I can --
- 8 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- or we can talk
- 9 real world examples.
- 10 MS. KARLAN: I will give you a real
- 11 world example, which is, it probably doesn't
- violate dress code to require men and women in
- business events for the women to wear skirts,
- 14 but if you required a female telephone lineman
- 15 to wear a skirt --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: No, no but are --
- 17 are --
- MS. KARLAN: -- while she's still --
- 19 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I understand that.
- 20 That's not what I'm getting at. And you know
- 21 what I'm getting at. The funeral homes
- 22 example's not a bad -- the case that we're about
- 23 to take up is -- is -- is more in the -- in the
- 24 realm of my question.
- MS. KARLAN: Okay. I --

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1 JUSTICE GORSUCH: You can offer me
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- 2 help if you want to.
- 3 MS. KARLAN: Yes, yes. No, I'm trying
- 4 to offer you help. What I'm trying to say --
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right. All
- 6 right. And what I'm -- what I'm suggesting,
- 7 counsel, is that there are male and female
- 8 bathrooms, there are dress codes that are
- 9 otherwise innocuous, right, most -- most people
- 10 would find them innocuous.
- But the affected communities will not.
- 12 And they will find harm. And how does your test
- deal with that one way or the other? That's
- 14 what I'm asking you to address, if you'd like
- 15 to.
- MS. KARLAN: Yes. My test says that
- 17 you have treated the people differently because
- 18 of sex, which is what we are asking you to hold
- 19 here. When you treat a gay man who wants to
- 20 date a woman differently than a man -- woman who
- 21 wants to date a woman, that -- that's
- 22 discrimination.
- Then you get to what I've said, which
- is you have to ask whether a reasonable person
- 25 under these circumstances would be injured by

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1 the imposition of the particular sex-specific
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- 2 world. So when the Chief Justice calls me Ms.,
- I am not injured. When I go to a -- when I --
- 4 JUSTICE GORSUCH: You -- you are not,
- 5 but another --
- 6 MS. KARLAN: It -- it --
- 7 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- person might be.
- 8 MS. KARLAN: Right. And the question
- 9 --
- 10 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Are they reasonable
- 11 or not? And -- and I'm -- I'm -- I'm just --
- 12 I'm wondering, how do you decide those cases?
- MS. KARLAN: An idiosyncratic
- 14 preference does not void an otherwise valid
- 15 dress code or bathroom rule.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: So is it --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Ms. Karlan --
- 18 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I'm sorry. I --
- 19 I -- I -- and I apologize.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Go ahead and
- 21 finish it.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Is it idiosyncratic
- for a transgender person to prefer a bathroom
- 24 that's different than the -- the one of their
- 25 biological sex? Is it idiosyncratic for a

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1 transsexual person to wish to dress in a
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- 2 different style of dress than his or her
- 3 biological --
- 4 MS. KARLAN: No.
- 5 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sex? Okay. So the
- 6 answer to your question is -- the question then,
- 7 at the end of the day, if I understand it, is
- 8 that those are acts of discrimination under
- 9 Title VII as you understand it?
- 10 MS. KARLAN: Yes, although I think
- 11 you'd -- you'd be better advised to ask the
- 12 question to someone who -- who is representing
- someone who is transgender. I am representing
- 14 someone who is gay.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Ms. Karlan.
- MS. KARLAN: And -- yeah.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But you're begging
- 18 Justice Gorsuch's question. We were following
- 19 up on the same thing --
- 20 MS. KARLAN: I truly am not trying
- 21 to --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- which is --
- MS. KARLAN: -- beg the question.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- how do we
- 25 differentiate the two? What is the legal test

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1 that you propose to say this is discrimination
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- 2 because of sex, as you said, calling you one
- 3 thing and your friend another is discriminatory,
- 4 but it's okay because there's no harm.
- 5 So what's the test we apply to, say,
- 6 when it is harm and when it isn't?
- 7 MS. KARLAN: Let -- let me try to be
- 8 clear.
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's be --
- 10 MS. KARLAN: It's not discrimination
- 11 to call me Ms. Karlan and to call Mr. Harris,
- 12 Mr. Harris. It is -- it is because of sex that
- 13 we were treated differently.
- 14 But as this Court has made it clear
- 15 several times, discrimination consists in an
- injury that the law is prepared to recognize.
- 17 And generally across all statutes, this isn't a
- 18 Title VII, and this is why I'm really not
- 19 begging the question here, the Court has said de
- 20 minimis effects are exempted from statutes
- 21 presumptively.
- 22 So if this Court thinks or if another
- 23 court --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why --
- MS. KARLAN: -- thinks --

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1
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- is a dress code
 2
      for Hooters that requires all women to wear a
      scantily -- a scant dress, is that
 3
 4
     discriminatory?
 5
               MS. KARLAN: Yes, it is.
 6
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is it
7
     discriminatory for the woman who just doesn't
     want to wear it because it's demeaning?
8
9
               MS. KARLAN: Yes, it is.
10
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So how about, is
      it discriminatory for the restaurant not to hire
11
12
     a transgender man who wants to wear the uniform?
13
               MS. KARLAN: Well, you're going to get
14
15
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The scant uniform.
               MS. KARLAN: I -- I mean, I do want to
16
17
     get to the question of sexual orientation --
18
               JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, no, no --
               MS. KARLAN: -- here, but I understand
19
      -- I understand.
20
21
                JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But I think what
22
     you're, what you're alluding is, and I still
23
     haven't heard --
24
               MS. KARLAN: Yeah.
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JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- the

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1 explanation, which is the question of how do we
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- 2 tell what's actionable and not?
- 3 MS. KARLAN: Well, if --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: At what -- when
- 5 does that discrimination become an issue?
- 6 MS. KARLAN: I'll -- I'll give an
- 7 analogy from the race area that may be helpful
- 8 to the Court, which is, for many years, there
- 9 was an argument that separate but equal was
- 10 acceptable. And ultimately this Court concluded
- 11 that when it came to race, separate but equal
- 12 was not permissible.
- I don't think the Court has held
- 14 anything like that with regard to sex, but
- you're going to have to answer that question
- 16 about dress codes regardless of how you rule in
- 17 either my case or in Ms. Stephens' case
- 18 because --
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Can I ask --
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would you say the
- 21 test is is the person injured? Yes, it's a
- 22 differential based on gender, but most people
- are not injured by having separate bathrooms.
- 24 In fact, they -- most people would prefer it.
- 25 So are you saying that we have to wait

- 1 for the testing case for the person who might be
- 2 injured by not being allowed to use the bathroom
- 3 of the other sex?
- 4 MS. KARLAN: I think it highly
- 5 unlikely you're going to see cases like that.
- 6 The bathroom issue has been around since the
- 7 beginning of Title VII. Title VII has a special
- 8 provision in 703(a)(ii) that says, when you
- 9 segregate people, the question is whether that
- 10 segregation denies them employment
- 11 opportunities.
- 12 And it is hard to see, quite honestly,
- how requiring men to use a men's room and women
- to use a women's room denies them employment
- 15 opportunities.
- JUSTICE ALITO: May I ask you to --
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Are these --
- 18 Justice Alito.
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: May I ask you to
- 20 respond to what some people will say about this
- 21 Court if we rule in your favor?
- 22 And what they will say is that whether
- 23 Title VII should prohibit discrimination on the
- 24 basis of sexual orientation is a big policy
- issue, and it is a different policy issue from

1 the one that Congress thought it was addressing

- 2 in 1964.
- 3 And Congress has been asked repeatedly
- 4 in the years since 1964 to address this
- 5 question. The Equality Act is before Congress
- 6 right now. Congress has declined or failed to
- 7 act on these requests. And if the Court takes
- 8 this up and interprets this 1964 statute to
- 9 prohibit discrimination based on sexual
- 10 orientation, we will be acting exactly like a
- 11 legislature.
- 12 We might as well just take the
- 13 Equality Act and issue that as our opinion and
- say, as Judge Posner said, that the courts need
- to intervene on questions like this when the
- legislative branch simply will not do so.
- 17 What would we -- how would we respond
- 18 to that question?
- MS. KARLAN: Well, the fact that a
- 20 loose cannon like Judge Posner says, "do
- 21 whatever you feel like" is not what we're asking
- for. We're saying, if you read the words
- "because of sex" and you ask, in 1964, what did
- those words mean? They meant treating men
- 25 differently from women.

1	So if in 1964 it would be
2	discrimination to fire a woman who wanted to
3	you know, a woman who enjoyed sewing, and
4	there's a famous case, it's the foundational
5	case on sexual orientation where they fired a
6	man who said
7	JUSTICE ALITO: We will
8	MS. KARLAN: his body was
9	JUSTICE ALITO: We would not be
10	deciding a major policy question that was not in
11	Congress's mind in 1964, and then Congress has
12	repeatedly failed to address in the years since
13	then?
14	MS. KARLAN: No more than what you did
15	in Oncale. No more than what you did in Price
16	Waterhouse. No more than what you did in
17	JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
18	MS. KARLAN: Newport News.
19	JUSTICE BREYER: Is there is there
20	in my mind, there are three basic parts to
21	this case on the other side, to language.
22	You've dealt with that.
23	The parade of horribles, you've dealt
24	with that. And the third one is the one that
25	Alito is bringing up in one form, as it comes

1 out of the -- out of the briefs, as I read it in

- 2 your opponent's brief.
- I would put it in these terms.
- 4 Imagine a statute that says policemen, dah, dah,
- 5 dah, must pay damages. Passed a long time ago.
- 6 That doesn't apply to German policemen.
- 7 MS. KARLAN: Doesn't apply to what
- 8 kind of --
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: To German policemen.
- 10 The meaning is the same. German policemen are
- 11 policemen. But the statute doesn't apply to
- 12 them.
- How do we know? Well, we know through
- 14 a lot of history, dah, dah, dah. Okay? Now,
- 15 that's the -- that's the box in which I put the
- 16 argument that Justice Alito made. It's a
- 17 serious legal argument, and the argument is that
- 18 at the time Congress wouldn't have dreamt of
- 19 this. And, therefore, the words, though they
- 20 apply, they meant to exclude the gays and
- 21 transgender. Now, what I need to hear is a
- 22 clear answer to that question.
- MS. KARLAN: I think the way to think
- 24 about this is to ask about the specific behavior
- 25 that's at issue, which is a man dates a man, and

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1 then ask: How does that fit within the
```

- 2 language? And the best example I can give --
- JUSTICE BREYER: It fits.
- 4 MS. KARLAN: No, I'm --
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: I give you it fits.
- 6 MS. KARLAN: I'm -- I'm about to
- 7 explain why --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Yeah.
- 9 MS. KARLAN: -- it fits. Which is the
- idea was that people should not be denied jobs
- 11 that they're qualified to do, award-winning
- 12 advocates for child services like Gerald Bostock
- should not be denied a job, because they are a
- 14 man who does something that if they were a
- woman, would cause no problems at all.
- So just to give an example from the
- 17 first sex discrimination case this Court had,
- 18 which was the Phillips against Martin Marietta
- 19 case, a woman who has children at home should
- 20 not be denied a job that a man who has children
- 21 at home.
- Now, all you have to do is say those
- words apply also if it is a woman who has a wife
- 24 at home --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, I --

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1
               MS. KARLAN: -- rather than children.
               CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Several, I
 2
      think about 23, states have been passing laws to
 3
      address these -- these issues. And I -- I don't
 4
     know how many of them, but I think it's a big
 5
 6
     part of them, when they do extend the coverage
      against discrimination on the basis of sex to
 7
 8
      sexual orientation, transgender, they also
9
      include an exemption for religious
10
      organizations.
               Now, if we're going to be extending
11
12
      the -- the -- the understanding of what sex
13
      encompasses, and I know your argument --
14
               MS. KARLAN: Yeah.
15
                CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- that that's
     not doing that, how do we address that other
16
      concern, that at least, I -- I think almost
17
18
     every state legislature that has extended it has
19
      felt compelled to address?
20
                MS. KARLAN: Well, I -- I -- I would
21
      say three things about that:
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the ministerial exception.

created an exemption for sincere religious

belief for a large category of employers through

The first is this Court has already

22

23

24

1	The second is that Congress balanced
2	these issues and has rebalanced them several
3	times in the co-religionist exception.
4	The third thing I would say is to
5	understand this in context, which is 85 percent
6	of American employers are not covered by Title
7	VII at all. So as to those employers, if they
8	have religious objections to hiring someone who
9	is gay, they're free to continue doing that.
10	And the fourth is to make it very
11	clear that the question is not whether people
12	have religious objections to homosexuality; it's
13	whether they have religious objections to hiring
14	someone who is gay or lesbian. And there are
15	many employers whose own religious beliefs would
16	tell them this would be immoral for them, who
17	have no problem hiring gays and lesbians who are
18	qualified to do a job.
19	If I could just ask the Court to do
20	one thing in thinking back to 1964, it is to
21	look at the two foundational opinions on which
22	everybody has played a game of telephone ever
23	since.
24	It's like your opinion last term in
25	Arms Media where you ask where did the idea

- 1 that homosexuality wasn't covered come from? It
- 2 came from first a case where a gay black man
- 3 said he was being treated worse than gay white
- 4 men. It wasn't even a sexual discrimination
- 5 case. The second one came from a straight man
- 6 who was fired because -- who was denied a job
- 7 because he said his hobby was sewing. And the
- 8 employer said: That's an effeminate hobby, so I
- 9 bet you're gay.
- 10 If you look at the reasoning in those
- 11 cases, you will realize that it was not until
- 12 Hively that any court did a careful reading of
- 13 the statute using contemporaneous methods of
- 14 textual interpretation --
- JUSTICE ALITO: But you gave your --
- MS. KARLAN: -- and since then a
- 17 majority of justices -- I mean a majority of
- judges have held that sexual orientation is a
- 19 subset of sex discrimination.
- 20 JUSTICE ALITO: Justice Breyer
- 21 characterized what I said earlier as conceding
- that sexual orientation discrimination fits the
- 23 words of Title VII, but that we should take a
- 24 broader view of what Congress had in mind.
- 25 But that was not -- that was not the

- 1 premise of my argument. And your core -- the --
- 2 the parties have in their briefs, have all of
- 3 these comparisons, and they will make your head
- 4 spin if you -- if you try to figure them all
- 5 out.
- 6 But let me just go to your core one,
- 7 which you began with today. A man is attracted
- 8 to other men. He's fired, let's say. A woman
- 9 is attracted to men; she is not fired. You say
- 10 that's all you need to look at. That's
- 11 discrimination on the basis of sex, right?
- 12 MS. KARLAN: Yes.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Okay. That's not --
- 14 that's not correct, because there are two
- possible explanations for what happened there.
- 16 It could be based on sexual orientation, or it
- 17 could just be based on the fact that the
- 18 employer wants -- does not want to hire men.
- Now, if you add in two other cases,
- that a man who is attracted to women, not fired,
- 21 a woman who's attracted to women, is fired, then
- 22 you have a much better idea the basis for the
- 23 discrimination. And it's sexual orientation.
- 24 It's not sex.
- 25 MS. KARLAN: But in a case like the

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1 two cases before this Court where the employer
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- 2 had hired these men and they were already there,
- 3 the supposition you made in your question
- 4 doesn't apply, which is we know this is an
- 5 employer who's willing to hire men.
- Indeed, the employer in Gerald -- I
- 7 mean the employer in Don Zarda's case had only
- 8 men as skydiving instructors. So when he fires
- 9 a man who wants to date a woman and he -- I mean
- 10 a man who wants to date a man and he does not
- 11 fire a woman who wants to date a man --
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: The -- the point is
- 13 that discrimination on the basis of sex in the
- 14 sense that Congress understood it in 1964 is a
- 15 different concept from discrimination on the
- 16 basis of --
- MS. KARLAN: Well, in --
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: -- sexual orientation.
- 19 MS. KARLAN: -- in 19 --
- JUSTICE ALITO: And that's what you're
- 21 fighting. You're trying to change the meaning
- 22 of what Congress understood sex to mean and what
- 23 everybody understood --
- 24 MS. KARLAN: I -- I'm --
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: -- sex to mean in

- 1 1964.
- 2 MS. KARLAN: -- not trying to change
- 3 that at all. I'm simply saying that if a man
- 4 and a woman both wanted to sew and you fire the
- 5 man who loves sewing and you don't fire the
- 6 woman who loves sewing, that's discrimination
- 7 pure and simple, sex discrimination. If you
- 8 fire a -- if you fire the man who -- thank you.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 10 counsel.
- 11 Counsel.
- 12 (Laughter.)
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sorry.
- 14 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY M. HARRIS
- ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT IN 17-1618
- AND THE PETITIONERS IN 17-1623
- 17 MR. HARRIS: Mr. Chief Justice, and
- 18 may it please the Court:
- 19 (Laughter.)
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Touche.
- MR. HARRIS: In -- in 1982, Wisconsin
- 22 became the first state in the country to pass a
- 23 law banning discrimination because of sexual
- 24 orientation in private employment. The
- 25 proponents of that law celebrated its passage as

- 1 a landmark achievement for gay rights.
- 2 According to the plaintiffs here,
- 3 however, Wisconsin's landmark law actually had
- 4 little, if any, practical impact because
- 5 Congress had already banned sexual orientation
- 6 discrimination nationwide, 18 years earlier in
- 7 the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- 8 To quote Judge Lynch's dissent below,
- 9 Congress did no such thing. Sex and sexual
- 10 orientation are independent and distinct
- 11 characteristics, and sexual orientation
- 12 discrimination by itself does not constitute
- discrimination because of sex under Title VII.
- 14 That's just as true today as it was in
- 15 1964.
- 16 The core error in the Second Circuit's
- 17 holding is actually quite similar to the error
- 18 that led this Court to reverse in Oncale. In
- 19 Oncale, the Fifth Circuit had held that same-sex
- 20 harassment claims were categorically excluded
- 21 from Title VII. This Court correctly reversed
- 22 and held that such claims may well be
- 23 cognizable, as long as the plaintiff meets all
- 24 requirements of the statute, especially what
- 25 this Court called the "critical inquiry into

- 1 whether members of one sex were being treated
- worse than members of the other sex."
- 3 This case is just the mirror image of
- 4 Oncale. Whereas the lower courts in Oncale
- 5 adopted a categorical exclusion, the Second
- 6 Circuit adopted a rule of per se inclusion in
- 7 which plaintiffs alleging sexual orientation
- 8 discrimination receive a free pass around the
- 9 critical inquiry into whether men and women are
- 10 being treated differently because of their sex.
- In short, the Second Circuit simply
- 12 changed the ultimate question from sex to sexual
- orientation. But because both men and women may
- 14 have same sex attractions or partners, a
- 15 stand-alone allegation of sexual orientation
- 16 discrimination cannot, without more, show
- 17 discriminatory treatment --
- 18 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Excuse me. Can I
- 19 understand your argument in context? Let's
- answer the question. Employer looks at a man
- 21 who applies and says: One of my hobbies is
- 22 sewing. And the employer says: That's an
- 23 effeminate hobby. You may be gay. You're --
- 24 I'm not hiring you.
- 25 So is that a mixed motive case? And

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1 -- and are we going to be trying somehow to
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- 2 parse that there's some sort of substantial
- 3 legal difference between the belief that you're
- 4 too effeminate or that a lesbian is too macho,
- 5 whichever, from you're attracted to the other
- 6 sex? How do you tease that out?
- 7 MR. HARRIS: Justice Sotomayor, I
- 8 don't disagree that there will be tough cases at
- 9 the margins, but the problem with what the
- 10 Second Circuit did is they glossed over those
- 11 hard questions and said: We're just going to
- 12 adopt --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, aren't you
- 14 --
- 15 MR. HARRIS -- a per se rule that if
- 16 you --
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- aren't you
- 18 glossing over the BFOQ, meaning, what it seems
- 19 like you're confusing is three concepts, Title
- 20 VII has causation and injury. Not hiring, not
- 21 firing, that's the injury.
- Now the question is what caused that?
- 23 Being too effeminate, that's a sexual trait;
- 24 being attracted to, if you're a man, to another
- 25 man, that's a sexual trait. It's caused by

- 1 those two things.
- 2 Aren't then we moving to the third
- 3 question, which is: Is there a reason
- 4 independent of your religious belief or your
- 5 innate hatred and invidious discrimination for
- 6 why you're treating this person differently?
- 7 And if there is, you have a BFOO. You don't
- 8 have to hire them. You can fire them.
- 9 But if there isn't, they're doing
- 10 their job, and they're not bothering you, and
- 11 they are not bringing their boyfriend or
- 12 girlfriend, if it's the opposite sex, to a
- 13 function to your private home because you don't
- 14 want them there or whatever else is offensive to
- 15 you, they're just working.
- So I don't understand why those are
- 17 hard cases.
- 18 MR. HARRIS: Well --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Any harder than
- 20 what the law applies for race discrimination,
- 21 for religious discrimination, for any of the
- 22 other forms, national origin discrimination.
- MR. HARRIS: So, Your Honor, as this
- 24 Court has emphasized in cases such as Johnson
- 25 Controls, the BFOQ exception has been

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1 interpreted extremely narrowly, and so I think
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- 2 it -- it -- it is important as this Court
- 3 emphasized in Oncale, the Court emphasized
- 4 several times the need to ensure strict
- 5 compliance with all requirements of the statute,
- 6 including the discrimination element, because
- 7 once you find discrimination, it gets very hard
- 8 to make out the BFOQ.
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would Oncale --
- 10 MR. HARRIS: So I don't think --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would Oncale have
- 12 come out differently if the employer said, I
- don't hire women to work on platforms, the only
- 14 people I hire are men?
- MR. HARRIS: Well, that -- that
- 16 obviously would have been discriminatory against
- 17 the women seeking --
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But it's not --
- 19 MR. HARRIS: -- the job.
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- the woman who is
- 21 suing --
- MR. HARRIS: Right.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- it's the male
- 24 who is being harassed by other men. And the
- 25 employer's defense is, you can't compare what

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1 I'm doing to someone who discriminates on the
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- 2 basis of sex between men and women because I
- 3 don't hire women at all.
- 4 MR. HARRIS: So it's, of course --
- 5 it's -- it's not a complete defense or even a
- 6 defense to say, I treat it -- in cases like
- 7 Martin -- like Martin Marietta, it was not a
- 8 defense for that employer to say, because I
- 9 hired other women, it excuses this.
- 10 So the answer to your question is that
- 11 would not be a defense. But --
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That -- that was --
- 13 Martin Marietta was different because it was the
- 14 plus. The plus applied to women and didn't
- apply to men. So you had that distinction.
- Well, take Price Waterhouse. Suppose
- the employer said, I don't want any men who are
- 18 not sufficiently macho, and I don't want any
- women who are not sufficiently feminine.
- 20 If they -- the -- Price Waterhouse
- 21 said we will treat a man who isn't sufficiently
- 22 macho the same way we treated Ann Hopkins, there
- 23 would be, as I understand your argument, no sex
- 24 discrimination.
- 25 MR. HARRIS: I -- I disagree with

- 1 that, Justice Ginsburg. The way -- I think the
- 2 best way to think of Price Waterhouse is, when
- 3 an employer has certain traits or
- 4 characteristics that it values in promotion and
- 5 hiring and discharge decisions, there can't be a
- 6 list of criteria for men and a list of criteria
- 7 for women.
- 8 So the Solicitor General offered the
- 9 hypothetical that Your Honor said. And -- and
- in that situation, there would be two sets of
- 11 criteria. And so maybe both a man who doesn't
- 12 meet the women's criteria and a woman who
- doesn't meet the men's criteria would have a
- 14 claim there.
- 15 But -- but it wouldn't be -- it would
- 16 not excuse it just to say that there are
- 17 different criteria for each set.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Suppose -- suppose a
- 20 Catholic, Jew, want to get married. Employer
- 21 fires the Catholic. Why? He's not against
- 22 Catholics. He's against intermarriage. And
- obviously I can use the same example with race,
- 24 which is famous.
- I take it from your argument that

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1 there would be no claim?
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- MR. HARRIS: There would, in fact, be
- 3 a claim, in both --
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: Why?
- 5 MR. HARRIS: -- situations.
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Why? Why? All
- 7 right.
- If there is a claim there, why isn't
- 9 there here?
- 10 MR. HARRIS: So in the race context,
- 11 the only difference between --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I didn't say race. I
- 13 said religion.
- MR. HARRIS: Right. In -- in the --
- in the context of religion, which first of all
- 16 religion is defined -- is the only one other
- than pregnancy which has an expansive
- 18 definition.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: No --
- MR. HARRIS: Yes, it would be
- 21 religious discrimination because between a
- 22 couple that is Catholic and Jewish and two
- 23 Catholics, the only difference between those
- 24 couples is their religion.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And the only

- 1 difference between the two couples here is that
- one is a man rather than the woman.
- 3 MR. HARRIS: Except that it also
- 4 introduces an independent characteristic, which
- 5 can be completely --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: All right.
- 7 MR. HARRIS: -- neutral to men --
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: So does it there --
- 9 why I'm not against Catholics, I am not against
- 10 Jews, I am against inter-marriage?
- 11 MR. HARRIS: I -- if -- if that person
- or actor exists, I think it's foreign to our --
- 13 JUSTICE BREYER: Oh, it exists.
- MR. HARRIS: -- case law.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: I promise you. There
- are many people, at least in the religious
- 17 context, who are against inter-marriage and are
- 18 not against Catholics or Jews. That's not an
- 19 unrealistic example.
- 20 And all I find in that example is an
- 21 identical case to this one.
- MR. HARRIS: And I -- I think that --
- 23 I do think that most of the -- most people who
- 24 would oppose any sort of interreligious marriage
- 25 would do so for religious reasons. And I would

- 1 also note in the --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Harris, I think --
- 3 I think what all of these hypotheticals are
- 4 about is that in many of our cases, what you
- 5 find is what you said, what did you say,
- 6 independent characteristics? They're all over
- 7 our cases.
- 8 If you take Manhart, which is the
- 9 seminal case, Manhart was all about an
- 10 independent characteristic. It was about life
- 11 expectancy. But we didn't say, oh, we're going
- into some different sort of analysis where we
- don't just say would the same thing have
- 14 happened to you if you were a man or would the
- same thing have happened to you if you were a
- 16 woman, because we had an independent
- 17 characteristic, which was life expectancy.
- MR. HARRIS: Right.
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: And -- and so the same
- 20 thing here. So all of these hypotheticals are
- 21 really about the same thing, which is that
- 22 Manhart gave us a very simple test, and Manhart
- 23 said, what you do when you look to see whether
- there is discrimination under Title VII is, you
- say, would the same thing have happened to you

- 1 if you were of a different sex?
- 2 And, Ms. Karlan made all the -- you
- 3 know, went through all the ways in which,
- 4 obviously, the -- the same thing would not have
- 5 happened to you if you were a different sex, you
- 6 being her client.
- 7 So, I mean, that's the question.
- 8 There are independent characteristics in all
- 9 these cases. We have insisted on this extremely
- 10 simple test. If you apply that test, I guess it
- 11 seems to come out against you.
- MR. HARRIS: A couple things. First,
- 13 let me address Manhart and then address --
- 14 address the test more generally.
- So in Manhart, this Court noted that
- 16 the -- the policy wasn't just about longevity.
- 17 That -- that employer made no attempt to do any
- 18 sort of bona fide underwriting or life
- 19 expectancy estimates. It simply charged the
- women more.
- 21 So even a woman and a man, if they
- 22 each had a 75-year life expectancy, they would
- 23 be charged different rates, even though they
- 24 were totally, similarly situated with respect to
- 25 that.

JUSTICE KAGAN: Yes, but Manhart was

2	very clear that women in the aggregate were
3	probably going to be fine under this policy,
4	because women in the aggregate do have a higher
5	life expectancy. I mean, I think actually
6	Manhart makes clear why another aspect of your
7	argument is is wrong, because you say, well,
8	we have to look at these big classes.
9	Well, there was nothing wrong in
10	Manhart when you looked at big classes. What
11	became wrong in Manhart was when you looked at
12	individuals. And when you look at individuals,
13	which Manhart insisted one do, one should do,
14	and when you apply the test that Manhart

18 And, similarly, I guess I'm just going

treated differently if she were a man? The

insisted you apply, would this woman have been

- 19 to ask you again, if you applied that test,
- don't you lose? And if you do lose, why should
- 21 we not apply that test?

answer was yes.

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15

16

- MR. HARRIS: Here's the problem with
- 23 the test. In Manhart, in Newport News, in
- 24 Martin Marietta, the comparator test makes
- 25 perfect sense because you know exactly what

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1 you're testing for, so the comparator helps you
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- 2 draw inferences from the evidence.
- The problem here is, unless the
- 4 Plaintiffs can point to something outside the
- 5 comparator to tell us why we need to hold sexual
- 6 orientation -- to -- to tell us why that is
- 7 irrelevant, they're -- they're just assuming
- 8 their conclusion.
- 9 So their comparator would say, you
- 10 would ask if a gay man has suffered sex
- 11 discrimination by comparing him to a
- 12 heterosexual woman, which that version of the
- 13 comparator can't isolate if it's the sex or the
- 14 sexual orientation.
- 15 And so I do think, unless they can
- 16 point to something outside the comparator, to
- justify putting sexual orientation off limits --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well counselor --
- MR. HARRIS: -- the comparator doesn't
- 20 -- doesn't answer the ultimate question.
- 21 JUSTICE GORSUCH: Well, it certainly
- 22 may not answer -- isolate the sole or proximate
- 23 cause, but I -- I think the -- the argument on
- 24 the other side is the language of the statute
- 25 has a but-for causation standard, a more

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1 generous causation standard.
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- 2 So perhaps there are two causal
- 3 factors at work here. But isn't one of them sex
- 4 in the narrow sense of -- of -- of biological
- 5 gender? What's -- what's your response to that?
- 6 MR. HARRIS: Yeah. So in the -- what
- 7 I'm arguing is simply that sexual orientation
- 8 standing alone is not, without more, sex
- 9 discrimination. And so the -- I'm sorry, remind
- 10 me of the question one more time?
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Sure. So the --
- MR. HARRIS: Right.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: Your -- your
- 14 response to Justice Kagan was, I need to focus
- on sexual orientation because that's the sole or
- 16 primary causal factor here for the firing.
- 17 And I think the response from the
- 18 other side is: But the statute has a more
- 19 generous causal --
- MR. HARRIS: Oh yes.
- 21 JUSTICE GORSUCH: -- formulation, a
- but-for causal formulation, so perhaps you're
- 23 right that, at some level, sexual orientation is
- 24 surely in -- in play here. But isn't sex also
- in play here because of the change of the first

- 1 variable?
- 2 MR. HARRIS: Right. So I think --
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: And isn't that
- 4 enough? It -- it you know, the statute talks
- 5 about a material causal factor or some
- 6 formulation like that, not the sole cause, not
- 7 the proximate cause, but a cause.
- 8 And one -- one would -- in what -- in
- 9 what linguistic formulation would one -- would
- 10 one say that sex, biological gender, has nothing
- 11 to do with what happened in this case?
- 12 MR. HARRIS: Yes, Your Honor. So what
- 13 you're referring to, I believe, is the
- 14 motivating factor language. And so, in what I
- just referred to as the sort of benchmark
- scenario, sex would not be a motivating factor
- 17 there.
- 18 If you look at Mr. Bostock's
- 19 complaint, for example, and you strip out any
- 20 mention of his sex as being a man -- again, we
- 21 -- we dispute the allegations, of course, but it
- 22 -- it would still make perfect sense. But if
- 23 you stripped out any reference to his sexual
- orientation, it would make little, if any,
- 25 sense.

1	And so in in Price Waterhouse, this				
2	Court helped give guidance about how to do the				
3	motivating factor analysis and said imagine you				
4	gave the employer truth serum and said what were				
5	your true reasons for doing this? Would one of				
6	them be the characteristic? And what I would				
7	call that that benchmark scenario				
8	JUSTICE GORSUCH: All right, let's				
9	MR. HARRIS: sex would not be				
10	JUSTICE GORSUCH: Let's let's do				
11	truth serum, okay? Wouldn't wouldn't the				
12	employer maybe say it's because this was this				
13	person was a man who liked other men? And isn't				
14	that first part sex?				
15	MR. HARRIS: Your Honor, I think in				
16	common parlance, we would call that a same-sex				
17	attraction. And I want to be clear, if there is				
18	some reason to think that employer and some				
19	of the amicus briefs say that much				
20	discrimination against gay and lesbian people is				
21	is based on sort of animus against gay men or				
22	lesbian women.				
23	If there's some reason to believe that				
24	in that scenario, then that may well be a				
25	motivating factor, but when you simply have an				

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1 employee saying I was fired because of my sexual
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- 2 orientation, that alone does not show that --
- 3 what -- what this Court called in Oncale the
- 4 critical -- critical issue of distinguishing
- 5 between men and women.
- 6 JUSTICE KAVANAUGH: Are you drawing a
- 7 distinction between the literal meaning of
- 8 "because of sex" and the ordinary meaning of
- 9 "because of sex"? And, if so, how are we
- 10 supposed to think about ordinary meaning in this
- 11 case?
- 12 MR. HARRIS: I don't see a difference
- 13 between the two as far as -- and -- and the last
- point, running out of time, I think to go back
- to some of the questions about bathrooms and
- 16 fitness standards, I want to be clear, under the
- 17 Plaintiff's simple but-for test, if you truly
- 18 simply apply the Manhart test or -- in the way
- 19 they want to do it, I don't see any way that
- 20 single-sex bathrooms or showering facilities --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: You have to have
- someone who's injured. You have to have someone
- 23 who's injured. And the response to the
- 24 bathrooms is who is the complaining plaintiff?
- 25 And for most people, they would not be

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1 complaining plaintiff. They would not be
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- 2 eligible because they're not injured by the
- 3 separate bathrooms. In fact, they like it.
- 4 MR. HARRIS: Yes, Your Honor,
- 5 although, of course, if someone, for example, is
- 6 fired, imagine a factory with hazardous
- 7 materials where people shower after work and to
- 8 -- to clean up, and a -- a man used the women's
- 9 bathroom and is fired. That person would
- 10 certainly be injured. And I think, under my
- 11 friend's test, they would say just change the
- 12 sex and that person wouldn't have been fired.
- But here's the problem: That's not a
- 14 similarly situated person. The proper analysis
- 15 would say that a neutral policy, such as use the
- 16 showering facility that corresponds to your
- 17 biological sex, the man who uses the women's
- 18 shower, the -- the comparator is not a woman who
- 19 uses the woman's shower. It's a woman who uses
- the men's shower, because otherwise you're not
- 21 -- otherwise you're -- you're loading the dice
- or you're not looking at similarly situated
- people.
- 24 And the last thing I'd like to get
- into is this Court, in Espinoza, Footnote 2 -- I

- 1 think there was some discussion of the states
- early on. In Espinoza, in interpreting national
- 3 origin discrimination, this Court said the state
- 4 practice interpreting parallel laws is highly
- 5 instructive. And so I -- I think the fact that
- 6 22 or 23 states have done this by legislation
- 7 and zero have done it by judicial
- 8 interpretation, just shows that this isn't belt
- 9 and suspenders. It's not redundancy, that sex
- and sexual orientation both in 1964 and today
- 11 are different concepts that mean different
- things, and common users of -- of language both
- today and in 1964 would have recognized that.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can they ever be?
- MR. HARRIS: I'm sorry?
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I know -- can they
- 17 ever be? Justice -- justice -- Judge Lynch
- 18 below said that homophobic stereotypes are
- 19 unrelated to sexual orientation. The very first
- 20 case before us shows that that's just not true,
- 21 that homosexual orientation is highly correlated
- 22 to people's stereotypes.
- If you're too effeminate a man, you're
- 24 a homosexual. If you're too macho a woman,
- 25 you're a lesbian. Happens all the time. So I

- 1 find it somewhat difficult to unwind the two.
- 2 If not difficult, nearly impossible.
- 3 MR. HARRIS: It often is, Your Honor,
- 4 and it's a sad reality that homophobic slurs are
- 5 often directed at heterosexual or homosexual
- 6 people to -- to criticize --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And that's okay
- 8 under your theory?
- 9 MR. HARRIS: It is absolutely not,
- 10 Your Honor, if that person can show
- 11 discrimination because of sex, but what -- what
- 12 the courts can't do is what the Second Circuit
- 13 did and the Seventh Circuit did in Hively.
- 14 Footnote 11 of the Zarda opinion is very candid
- about this where it talks about operationalizing
- 16 its holding. The Second Circuit is just going
- 17 to change the jury instructions to tell juries
- 18 that if they find sexual orientation
- 19 discrimination, they've now found sex
- 20 discrimination.
- 21 So, Justice Sotomayor, I don't
- 22 disagree that there will be difficult cases at
- the margins, but the answer is not to change the
- 24 ultimate inquiry and replace it with something
- 25 that Congress never could have intended.

JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if you have a

2	minute, let me ask you this: Let's imagine that			
3	the decision maker in a particular case is			
4	behind the veil of ignorance and the subordinate			
5	who has reviewed the candidates for a position			
6	says: I'm going to tell you two things about			
7	this candidate. This is the very best candidate			
8	for the job, and this candidate is attracted to			
9	members of the same sex.			
10	And the employer says: Okay, I'm			
11	going I'm not going to hire this person for			
12	that reason.			

- Is that discrimination on the basis of sex, where the employer doesn't even know the sex of the individual involved?
- MR. HARRIS: May I?

- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Please.
- 18 MR. HARRIS: That would not be
- 19 discrimination on the basis of sex. And I think
- that's exactly right. If you get a resume that
- 21 -- that has a name that could be male or female,
- 22 and there's something on there suggesting that
- the person is gay and they're not hired for that
- 24 reason, that would be sexual orientation
- 25 discrimination. That has absolutely nothing

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1 whatsoever to do with sex discrimination.
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- 2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 3 counsel.
- 4 General Francisco.
- 5 ORAL ARGUMENT OF GEN. NOEL J. FRANCISCO
- 6 FOR THE UNITED STATES, AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING
- 7 AFFIRMANCE IN 17-1618 AND REVERSAL IN 17-1623
- 8 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Mr. Chief Justice,
- 9 and may it please the Court:
- The issue is not whether Congress can
- or should prohibit employment discrimination
- 12 because of sexual orientation. The issue,
- rather, is whether it did so when it prohibited
- 14 discrimination because of sex.
- 15 It did not for two reasons. First,
- 16 sex means whether you're male or female, not
- whether you're gay or straight. So if you treat
- 18 all gay and men -- gay men and women exactly the
- 19 same regardless of their sex, you're not
- 20 discriminating against them because of their
- 21 sex.
- 22 Second, any doubt is removed by the
- 23 history of Title VII and related statutes since,
- in the face of unanimous interpretation by the
- 25 courts and the executive branch that persisted

- 1 for decades, Congress has repeatedly extended
- 2 other statutes to specifically cover sexual
- 3 orientation, yet has refused to do so with
- 4 respect to Title VII.
- 5 The employee's position would nullify
- 6 that conscious choice.
- 7 And Justice Gorsuch, if I could first
- 8 address your question about our -- my friend on
- 9 the other side's argument about the literal
- 10 meaning of the statute, well, there are
- 11 essentially two responses to that argument. And
- 12 they're related.
- The first is that under that
- interpretation, you actually couldn't fire a man
- for using the woman's restroom because in some
- 16 metaphysical sense, that man's sex is a but-for
- 17 cause for his firing.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But he's not --
- 19 GENERAL FRANCISCO: The reason --
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- injured. He's
- 21 not injured.
- 22 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Well, he's fired,
- 23 Your Honor, in my hypothetical. And the reason
- 24 why that is permitted --
- 25 JUSTICE GORSUCH: I think counsel

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1 acknowledged all of that.
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- 2 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yeah. And the
- 3 reason why that's permitted, though, to do that,
- 4 is because you're treating -- and this is my
- 5 second point -- you're treating him the -- the
- 6 same as a similarly situated woman; that is, a
- 7 woman who uses the men's room.
- 8 And that's always the critical
- 9 analysis when you're trying to determine if
- 10 somebody is being --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it --
- 12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- discriminated
- 13 against because --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it --
- 15 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- of their sex.
- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is it -- let me
- 17 give you a not-hypothetical case. An airline
- 18 hires only women as cabin attendants, but it
- 19 fires them if they marry. The airline's defense
- is whatever we're doing, it's not sex
- 21 discrimination against women because we don't
- 22 hire any men at all, married or unmarried.
- That case, I take it from your brief,
- 24 you would say there's no sex -- no violation of
- 25 Title VII?

1	GENERAL FRANCISCO: Well well, no,
2	Your Honor, because I think the problem is that
3	the prohibition on hiring any male flight
4	attendants would in and of itself violate
5	JUSTICE GINSBURG: That but
6	GENERAL FRANCISCO: Title VII.
7	JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the male is no
8	complaining. The complainant is the woman who
9	was fired because she married.
10	GENERAL FRANCISCO: Okay. So then
11	JUSTICE GINSBURG: The male
12	complainant might have a very good case, but my
13	case
14	GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right, and my
15	JUSTICE GINSBURG: is the woman.
16	GENERAL FRANCISCO: And my problem
17	with the hypothetical is that the way it is
18	constructed, there is, you know, presumably no
19	men that have the job in the first place. Now,
20	if you say that in theory men should be able to
21	have the job, then the question would be would
22	you also have fired men who were married?
23	And if you only fired women who were
24	married but not men who married, that would
25	plainly be a violation of Title VII because

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1 you're treating similarly situated people
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- 2 differently. But to finish --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: General, that --
- 4 that's an --
- 5 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- my answer to
- 6 Justice --
- 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- an impossible
- 8 idea to -- to put into practice by taking out
- 9 the sex.
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: May -- may I just
- 11 continue with it?
- 12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Yes, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: The hypothetical is
- 14 not a hypothetical. Its Sprogis against United
- 15 Airlines. And it was given, and not challenged,
- that they didn't hire men as cabin attendants.
- 17 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But they fired this
- woman because she married, she didn't look like
- 20 Cheryl "Fly Me."
- 21 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Once she married,
- 23 she wouldn't be attracted to the male
- 24 passengers.
- The court of appeals said, Title VII

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1 was meant to strike out the entire spectrum of
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- 2 sex stereotyping, so if this woman was fired
- 3 because she wasn't -- she would no longer be so
- 4 attractive to men if she is married, that's sex
- 5 discrimination.
- And we don't have to have a -- a -- a
- 7 male involved. This is a woman who was treated
- 8 in a very stereotypical way. She is no longer
- 9 young and attractive when she married.
- 10 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Your Honor, I --
- 11 I -- I do think that the question is always, are
- 12 you treating similarly situated men and women
- 13 differently. There are times where issues of
- 14 proof are very difficult.
- 15 For example, in the Price Waterhouse
- 16 case, Ann Hopkins was fired because she was
- 17 aggressive --
- 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But this was --
- 19 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- because she was
- 20 rude to staff --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- this was an
- 22 actual case. This was an actual case and it was
- 23 given that no males are hiring and no male is
- 24 complaining.
- 25 GENERAL FRANCISCO: But, Your Honor,

- 1 the way that actual case was resolved was
- 2 because the woman had not brought her claim in a
- 3 timely fashion on the sex discrimination piece.
- 4 And so the way this Court resolved that decision
- 5 was it said, all right --
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The -- no. This
- 7 case --
- 8 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- she is being
- 9 treated the same --
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- never came to
- 11 this case, never came to this Court.
- 12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Oh all right, so I
- 13 guess I'm thinking of the wrong case.
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Sprogis against
- 15 United Airlines, Seventh Circuit.
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: General, could I go
- 17 back to your opening statement and particularly
- 18 to the second part of it?
- 19 You talked about the history of -- of
- 20 Title VII and some of the subsequent legislative
- 21 history, and I guess what strikes me, and I was
- 22 struck in reading your briefs too, is that the
- arguments you're making, I would say, are not
- ones we typically would accept.
- 25 For many years, the lodestar of this

- 1 Court's statutory interpretation has been the
- 2 text of a statute, not the legislative history,
- and certainly not the subsequent legislative
- 4 history.
- 5 And the text of the statute appears to
- 6 be pretty firmly in Ms. Karlan's corner. Did
- 7 you discriminate against somebody, against her
- 8 client, because of sex? Yes, you did. Because
- 9 you fired the person because this was a man who
- 10 loved other men.
- 11 And part of that -- and it only has to
- be part, we've made very clear there's no search
- for sole cause in Title VII -- part of that is
- 14 you fired the person because he was a man. If
- 15 he were a woman, he wouldn't have been fired.
- This is the usual kind of way in which
- 17 we interpret statutes now. We look to laws. We
- 18 don't look --
- 19 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- to predictions.
- 21 We don't look to desires. We don't look to
- 22 wishes. We look to laws.
- Why doesn't that mean your argument
- 24 failed?
- 25 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Because, Your

- 1 Honor, I think that what our brief attempts to
- 2 do, at least, is make a straightforward textual
- 3 argument. The law distinguishes between sex and
- 4 sexual orientation.
- 5 Those are two different traits. And
- 6 that's precisely why when Congress wants to
- 7 prohibit discrimination based on sexual
- 8 orientation, it doesn't define sex as including
- 9 sexual orientation. It lists it as a different
- 10 trait.
- JUSTICE GORSUCH: What -- what is --
- 12 GENERAL FRANCISCO: And so under Title
- 13 --
- 14 JUSTICE GORSUCH: What is your
- response to the two-comparator problem we've
- been discussing and the fact that at least one
- 17 contributing cause appears to be sex?
- 18 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Well, Your Honor,
- 19 a couple of responses. First, I don't think
- 20 that one contributing cause is sex. I think
- 21 that as long as you're treating gay men and
- women exactly the same regardless of their sex,
- 23 the contributing cause is sexual orientation,
- 24 not sex.
- 25 And, two, I think it reflects the fact

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1 that sex and sexual orientation are different
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- 2 traits. And if you do the analysis the way my
- 3 friends on the other side suggested, you've
- 4 completely eliminated the distinction between
- 5 two very different traits and you've -- and
- 6 you've essentially rendered -- you nullified
- 7 Congress's careful -- very careful decisions in
- 8 numerous other statutes to specifically protect
- 9 sexual orientation and gender identities, we'll
- 10 --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Is there --
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is there anything
- 13 --
- 14 GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- get to in the
- 15 next case.
- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- in this record
- showing that the employers would not employ
- 18 lesbian women?
- 19 GENERAL FRANCISCO: You know, Your
- 20 Honor, in these cases, and this may have been a
- 21 better question for my colleague, but I think in
- 22 these cases, the employers have -- in the
- 23 cases -- the sexual orientation cases, the
- 24 employers have generally denied that they
- 25 discriminate based on --

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1
               JUSTICE GINSBURG: But all we know on
 2
                GENERAL FRANCISCO: -- their sexual
 3
      orientation.
 4
                JUSTICE GINSBURG: Did this go --
      the -- the -- the allegation is that the person
 6
     was discharged when he announced that he was
 7
 8
     gay. There's nothing in the record as far as I
9
      can see that there was a policy on the
10
      employer's part of discharging or not --
11
                GENERAL FRANCISCO: Right.
12
                JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- discharging
      lesbian women.
13
14
                GENERAL FRANCISCO: I think that's
15
      right. I think basically the employer's
      defenses here were, one, I didn't fire him
16
     because he was gay, but, two, if you think I
17
18
     did, Title VII doesn't prohibit discrimination
19
     based on sexual orientation.
20
                And if I could address lastly the
21
     point that the Chief Justice and Justice Alito
22
     were raising about so-called legislative
23
     updating that Judge Posner suggested, here I
24
      think that a judicial ruling would be
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particularly pernicious because when Congress

- 1 seeks to expand the scope of Title VII's
- 2 liability provisions, it typically couples that
- 3 itself with an expansion of the religious
- 4 employers exemption to Title VII, precisely
- 5 because issues of sexual orientation like issues
- of gender identity raise different issues from a
- 7 religious liberty perspective.
- 8 The employee's position here would
- 9 only do half of that work. It would expand the
- 10 scope of liability without giving any
- 11 consideration to those religious liberty
- interests on the other side of the balance, and
- that is precisely why this is the type of issue
- 14 that is better left to Congress than the courts.
- Justice Gorsuch, I want to make sure
- 16 that I fully addressed your -- your textual
- 17 considerations, though, because I really do
- 18 think it boils down to the fact that sex and
- 19 sexual orientation are different traits.
- 20 May I finish my answer?
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Sure.
- 22 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Title VII
- 23 prohibits discrimination based on one of those
- traits, as long as you treat men and women who
- 25 are similarly situated with respect to the other

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1 trait exactly the same, you're not
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- 2 "discriminating" under -- within the meaning of
- 3 Title VII.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 5 counsel.
- 6 GENERAL FRANCISCO: Thank you.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Five minutes,
- 8 Ms. Karlan.
- 9 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF PAMELA S. KARLAN
- 10 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER IN 17-1618 AND THE
- 11 RESPONDENTS IN 17-1623
- MS. KARLAN: Thank you.
- 13 Let me start with the question that
- Justice Ginsburg asked because I think it's
- 15 illustrative of contemporary sexual orientation
- 16 discrimination cases.
- 17 Virtually none of them involve an
- 18 employer, and neither of the cases before you
- 19 does, who claims to have an across-the-board
- 20 policy of firing both all gay men and all
- 21 lesbians.
- What tends to happen, and this case is
- 23 illustrative of this, is a man who also doesn't
- 24 conform with some other gender-based stereotypes
- and who is gay gets fired, which puts them in

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1 exactly the position that Justice Sotomayor
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- 2 mentioned, which is really devilishly hard to
- 3 figure out what's going on here.
- 4 The second point I just want to leave
- 5 the Court with is, the entire argument on the
- 6 other side depends on the idea that men who are
- 7 gay and women who are lesbians are being treated
- 8 the same. And that's just not so.
- 9 Because if you look at what actually
- 10 causes the problem, it's the man who says, I
- 11 married my partner, Bill. If any woman who
- 12 worked there had married Bill, he wouldn't --
- 13 she would not have been fired. And he is.
- 14 And you have to look, because the
- 15 textual language tells you to, at such
- individual and not at the overall class.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Ms. Karlan, would
- 18 you address these -- General's statement at the
- 19 end? He -- he goes back to the comparator
- 20 should be a woman who -- a -- a man who likes a
- 21 man and a woman who likes a woman. You're
- 22 trying to get to that.
- 23 MS. KARLAN: I -- I -- yes. I think
- 24 he -- he is varying two things there. One, he
- is varying the sex of the employee and, second,

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1 he's varying the sex of the person to whom the
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- 2 employee is interested.
- 3 And if two things that --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So give us an
- 5 example from a case how you can't do that.
- 6 MS. KARLAN: I'm not sure -- of course
- 7 you can do it but you don't have to. Because
- 8 all you need to do is show that sex played a
- 9 role here.
- 10 And if the answer is if a man had --
- if a woman had come in and said, I like to date
- men, you wouldn't have fired her, and when a man
- says, I like to date men, you did, that's enough
- 14 to show sex discrimination.
- 15 JUSTICE ALITO: But what if the
- 16 decision maker makes a decision based on sexual
- 17 orientation but does not know the biological sex
- 18 of the person involved?
- 19 MS. KARLAN: Well, there is no
- 20 reported case that does that. And I --
- JUSTICE ALITO: All right.
- MS. KARLAN: -- think the Court --
- 23 JUSTICE ALITO: But what if it -- what
- 24 if it --
- MS. KARLAN: -- can wrestle with --

- 1 JUSTICE ALITO: What if it happened?
- We have had a lot of hypotheticals of things
- 3 that may or may not have happened.
- 4 What if that happens? Is that
- 5 discrimination on the basis of sex where the
- 6 decision maker doesn't even know the person's
- 7 sex?
- 8 MS. KARLAN: And -- and how do they
- 9 know the person's sexual orientation?
- 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Because somebody who
- interviewed the candidates tells them that.
- MS. KARLAN: And they are unable to
- tell anything about the person's sex?
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: No.
- 15 MS. KARLAN: So this is Saturday Night
- 16 Live Pat, as -- as an example, right?
- 17 (Laughter.)
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I'm not familiar
- 19 with that.
- MS. KARLAN: Okay.
- JUSTICE ALITO: But --
- MS. KARLAN: Which is the person named
- 23 Pat, and you can never tell whether Pat is a man
- 24 or a woman.
- I mean, theoretically that person

- 1 might be out there. But here is the key --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Theoretically what?
- 3 MS. KARLAN: Theoretically that person
- 4 might be out there. But here is the key: The
- 5 -- the cases that are brought are almost all
- 6 brought by somebody who says my employer knew
- 7 who I was and fired me because I was a man or
- 8 fired me because I was a woman.
- 9 Somebody who comes in and says I'm not
- 10 going to tell you what my sex is, but, believe
- 11 me, I was fired for my sexual orientation, that
- 12 person will lose.
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if that's the
- 14 case, then I think your whole argument collapses
- 15 because sexual orientation then is a different
- 16 thing from sex.
- 17 MS. KARLAN: Of course it is. No one
- 18 has claimed that sexual orientation is the same
- 19 thing as sex. What we are saying is when
- 20 somebody is fired who --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, let me amend it.
- 22 Your argument is that sex -- discrimination
- 23 based on sexual orientation necessarily entails
- 24 discrimination based on sex.
- 25 But if it's the case that there would

- 1 be no liability in the situation where the
- 2 decision maker has no knowledge of sex, then
- 3 that can't possibly be true.
- 4 MS. KARLAN: If there was that case,
- 5 it might be the rare case in which sexual
- 6 orientation discrimination is not a subset of
- 7 sex.
- But in the case where the person knows
- 9 the sex of the person that they're firing or
- 10 refusing to hire, and knows the sex of the
- 11 people to whom that person is attracted, that is
- 12 sex discrimination, pure and simple.
- 13 And it's important to understand that
- 14 -- and -- and this goes back to something that
- Justice Ginsburg asked during the opening
- 16 argument, that discrimination against gay men
- and discrimination against lesbians is not one
- 18 thing.
- 19 And in 1964, if you look at the
- 20 members of Congress's brief, they will tell you
- 21 if you looked in the dictionary there was no
- 22 phrase "sexual orientation."
- That is a modern way of combining two
- 24 kinds of discrimination: Discrimination against
- 25 gay men, which goes back to Leviticus and the

1	common law, and discrimination against lesbians,			
2	which was not part of Leviticus and was not part			
3	of the common law.			
4	Indeed, in 1964, there were only 16			
5	states in the United States that clearly forbid			
6	some act in which lesbians could engage.			
7	So the idea that this is one large			
8	idea about sexual orientation discrimination in			
9	the abstract, without reference to sex, simply			
LO	burkes the history and burkes the understanding.			
L1	And if you look at the harassment cases, you			
L2	will see why this is true. Gay men are harassed			
L3	in a different way than lesbians.			
L4	Thank you.			
L5	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,			
L6	counsel. The case is submitted.			
L7	(Whereupon, at 11:07 a.m., the case			
L8	was submitted.)			
L9				
20				
21				

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