

# houston VOICE



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Lambda Literary Foundation loses staff and halts publications  
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JULY 8, 2005

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**VIVA ESPANA:** Spain third country to ok gay marriage. Page 3



**BLESS THEM:** United Church of Christ votes yes on marriage. Page 6



## O'Connor vacancy 'chilling' to activists

Gay marriage may loom large in confirmation battle

By EARTHA MELZER

WASHINGTON — Gay civil rights groups reacted with alarm to news of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's retirement last week. O'Connor, a moderate conservative Reagan appointee and the nation's first female Supreme Court Justice has been a key swing vote on the court since 1981.

Though her record was on gay issues was mixed, she voted to uphold Georgia's sodomy law and the Boy Scouts right to discriminate, O'Connor voted with the majority on two landmark gay rights cases — Romer vs. Evans, which overturned Colorado's constitutional amendment against protecting gay men and lesbians from discrimination, and Lawrence vs. Texas, which struck down state sodomy laws.

The resignation of O'Connor, a key swing vote in the closely divided court makes certain that significant and long-term changes are close at hand for the Supreme Court. O'Connor has said that she will continue on the court until a replacement is named.

"In the wake of O'Connor's announced retirement the specter of a sharp U-turn looms large," Kate Kendell of the National Center for Lesbian Rights said. "One day our sexual intimacy was criminal in 13 states and the next day that badge of inferiority was erased. The Lawrence decision served as a lightning rod, initiating a necessary national discussion about gay rights.

Kendell said that she is worried that the debates over gay rights could be stopped if O'Connor is replaced by a conservative and the court hands down



The retirement of Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has liberal and conservative groups spending millions to influence President Bush's choice for a replacement. (Photo by Ben Margot/AP)

anti-gay opinions.

"It is not likely that Lawrence, for example, would be overruled next year or even in the next five years," Kendell said, but it is possible that issues like adoption, other parenting rights, relationship recogni-

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Chrissy Gephardt will be in Houston next month to receive the Uncommon Woman award at the Uncommon Legacy Foundation Brunch.

## Chrissy Gephardt to be honored in Houston

Uncommon Legacy Foundation bestows Uncommon Woman award on congressman's daughter

By BINNIE FISHER

Many gays and lesbians will attest that coming out to parents remains among their most daunting experiences.

However daunting, few are likely to top this story: You're a woman married to a successful doctor whom your parents adore. You've discovered you're a lesbian, and you've decided to tell your parents over dinner in a restaurant.

Oh yes, and your father's running for minority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, and he's likely to run for President in 2004.

That's Chrissy Gephardt's coming-out story in a nutshell, and

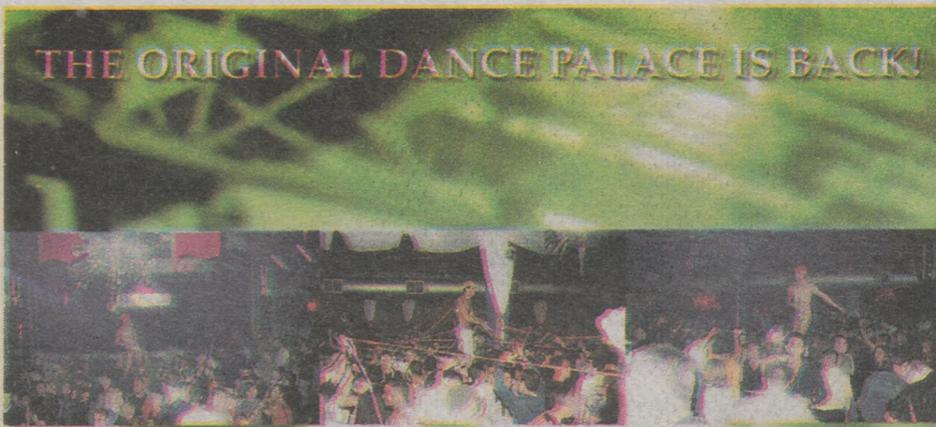
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**Local life**  
Gay writer Joey Guerra has found his dream job and dream blog  
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Gay icon Cyndi Lauper rooms in rent control Heaven  
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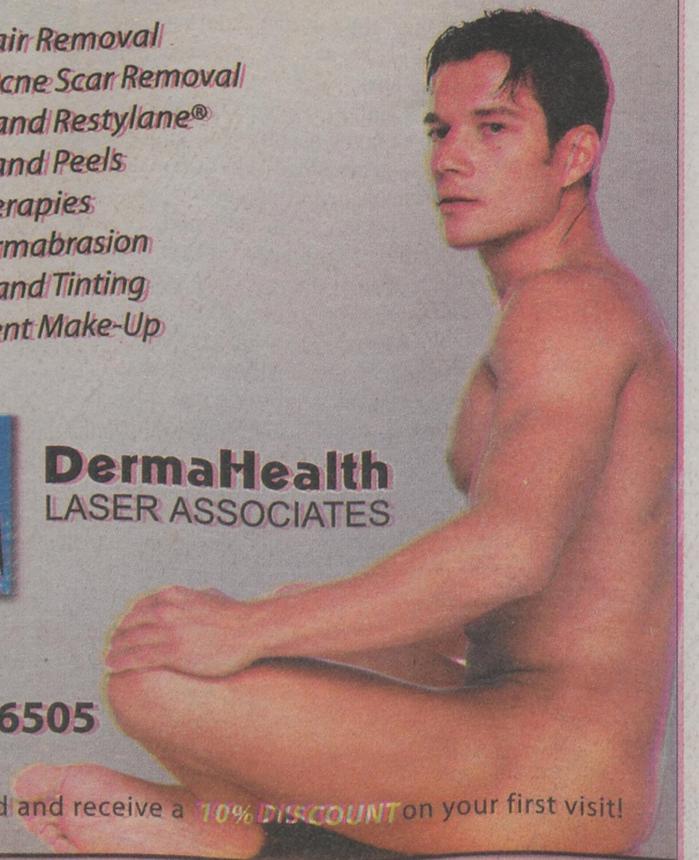
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## local news

# Gay judges head back to bench for new term

Barnich, Kirkland enjoy meeting, helping people in their courtrooms

By ELLA TYLER

The city's two openly gay municipal judges are headed to another two-year term, thanks to a reappointment by Mayor Bill White and the June 29 approval by the City Council.

John Paul Barnich, the city's first openly gay municipal judge, was appointed by Mayor Lee Brown in 1999 and has been re-appointed twice. Steven Kirkland was appointed as a part-time judge by Brown in 2001 and became a full-time judge in 2002.

"The job of municipal judge is busy and interesting," Kirkland said. "More than 1.5 million cases were filed in our courts last year. Most are traffic tickets, but we hear juvenile offences such as minors in possession and curfew violations, and Class C misdemeanors such as assault, shoplifting and public intoxication," he explained.

"We also hear all charges about violations of city ordinances, so we really do hear 'slime in the ice machine' cases. Houston is a microcosm of the world, and that fact is proven to us every day in municipal courts," Kirkland added.

Kirkland handles jury trials and conducts juror orientation.

"My favorite part of the job is meeting the people. Every day, more than 100 times a day, I get to look at the world through someone else's eyes and that is truly exciting," he said.

Barnich handles arraignments and trials.

"I enjoy serving on the bench because there is a genuine opportunity to help people. This is the first and only contact many of them will have with the judicial system, and I like to help them out and help them through the process," he said.

"Many of them are very nervous, so I order them not to be nervous," Barnich joked.

Barnich said he hoped people became safer drivers after appearing in his court.

"A few months before I was appointed, I got a ticket for not wearing a seatbelt, so I've worn a seatbelt ever since. I was in a car accident recently and my new classic car, a 1984 Cadillac Seville — with the bustle-back trunk — was totaled, but I was fine," he said. "The driver of the car that T-boned me told that he had dropped his cell phone and bent over to look for it and didn't see the red light."

Barnich graduated from South Texas College of Law in 1980. Before Barnich was appointed judge, he was in private practice working indigent clients with AIDS.

"I was lead counsel in a suit against Castle Dental for refusing to treat a



Gay municipal court judges Steven Kirkland and John Paul Barnich rode in the Pride parade last month. The two men were reappointed to another two-year term by Mayor Bill White and had the appointment approved by City Council on June 29.

patient with AIDS. We won that case and forced a lot of changes in the way dentists behaved," Barnich said.

"The person who was behind my candidacy was the late Professor Gene Harrington, and I'm grateful to him for pushing my appointment," Barnich said. "Gene was saying 'we need a gay judge' so when I interviewed with City Council, Councilman Chris Bell asked 'What difference is there in a gay judge?'"

"My answer was that I wanted a wicker bench, industrial gray carpet, track lights and a good sound system so I could play show tunes. Bell laughed, and I was confirmed," Barnich said.

The joking stopped and Barnich said, "There really is no difference in gay judges. All of us swear to uphold the law."

Kirkland said he and Barnich are not regarded differently than the other judges.

"We both did well in the Houston Bar Association's Poll," Kirkland said. "I am really proud that I was the second highest rated municipal court judges in the 'works hard and is prepared' category."

Kirkland graduated with honors from the University of Houston Law School in 1990. Before becoming a judge, he worked for Texaco as an environmental litigator and was in private practice. Kirkland served as treasurer and campaign manager for Anise Parker's city council campaigns.

Kirkland and Barnich rode in the Pride parade last month. Barnich said he hadn't ridden in parade for several years.

"When I was the chair of the board for AIDS Foundation Houston, I used to ride in the parade, and we were always well received. I had forgotten how much fun it is to be out in my community with all these people who are so happy to see us," Barnich said.

## national news

# Spaniards celebrate

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

The vote to legalize same-sex marriage in Spain, coupled with the expected Senate vote in Canada to do the same, is renewing the debate over marriage equality in the United States and raising questions about whether U.S. states will recognize such unions performed abroad.

Spain became the third country to allow gay men and lesbians the right to marry their same-sex partners on June 30. But the celebrations were tempered by a Spanish court ruling this week that gay Spaniards can only marry non-citizens from countries where same-sex marriage is legal, the Associated Press reported.

Spain's historic decision to recognize gay marriage came just days after Canada's House of Commons voted in favor of marriage equality for gay couples; the Senate is now debating the measure, where it is expected to pass. Gays are already allowed to marry in most provinces and one territory of Canada, primarily because of court rulings. U.S. gay couples have traveled to Canada since 2003 to marry because there are no residency requirements there.

However, the U.S. government and federal agencies will not recognize same-sex marriages legally performed in foreign countries (or Massachusetts) because of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as between a man and a woman for all federal purposes. The federal government also won't recognize married same-sex couples who are Canadian citizens.

Joe Varnell and his partner, both Canadian citizens, were not allowed to declare themselves a family at customs when they tried to enter the United States in September 2003. According to the agents, Varnell recalled, "We didn't qualify as a family because same-sex marriage is not legal in the U.S."

"Just because you don't do it in your backyard doesn't mean you can deny everyone else's right to do it in their backyard," Varnell told the Blade.

Rather than fill out two forms, he and his husband returned to Canada.

"That border stuff is the first indignity imposed," said Gary Buseck, legal director of Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, a gay legal rights group.

## States must decide

While DOMA clearly defines the federal government's position on same-sex marriage, state laws aren't always so explicit.

DOMA leaves it to the states to decide whether to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states or territories.

So how will states recognize same-sex marriages performed in other countries?

The answer varies by state, said David Buckel, marriage project coordinator for Lambda Legal. "[On the state level] there is a patchwork of varying levels of respect," he said.

When straight couples legally marry outside the United States, the marriages are generally accepted as if they married in the U.S., Buckel said. Exceptions are



Spaniards were dancing in the streets at a rally in Madrid on Saturday to celebrate parliament's approval of same-sex marriage, meaning Spain joins the Netherlands and Belgium as the only countries where gay marriages can take place. (Photo by Mariana Eliano/AP)

made when a straight couple's marriage goes against public policy, like marrying someone who is underage, he said.

Massachusetts, where gay marriage is legal, should recognize same-sex marriages performed in Canada, he said. The issue becomes more complicated with the rest of the 49 states, including Connecticut where a new civil union law also defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

Even in states with DOMA laws, couples should not assume their marriage in Canada will be invalidated at home, Buckel said. Some DOMAs define marriage between a man and a woman only for marriages performed within the state, leaving the door open for recognition of couples legally married outside the state, he said.

Buckel added that even if a state government refuses to recognize a legally performed same-sex marriage, private corporations, like car insurance or health care companies, could adopt more pro-gay policies.

"The DOMA law may be limited to government recognition," he said. "It doesn't say anything about private employers."

New York is unique in having a strong law recognizing legal marriages performed outside the state, according to Alphonso David, staff attorney at Lambda Legal.

While several New York employers and companies have recognized same-sex marriages performed in Canada, some have not. Lambda Legal is suing a Long Island school district for denying spousal health benefits to a gay employee married in Canada.

But whether a marriage will be recognized in the U.S. is not the only factor same-sex couples should consider when deciding to marry in Canada. While there are no residency requirements to marry in Canada, there are residency criteria to divorce, according to GLAD. For a Canadian court to grant a divorce, one partner must live in Canada for a year.

Gay rights advocates are not just discussing how Canada and Spain will affect individual couples, they are also debating how those international developments may affect U.S. policy on same-sex marriage.

## local news

# Gephardtts taking diversity message to colleges

GEPHARDT, continued from Page 1

she'll be in Houston next month to talk about it and to reveal how her family has since come to champion her rights.

Gephardt, daughter of U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-Missouri), will be in Houston August 7 to receive the Uncommon Woman award at the Uncommon Legacy Brunch.

Gephardt, who is on the national board of the Victory Fund, is also expected to be the guest of honor at an August 6 event for that group while she's in Houston.

Contacted at her home in the nation's capitol, Gephardt said, the message she will bring to Houston is one that she believes is important.

"My message is that we need to continue to fight on the path toward equality," she said.

Although gays and lesbians have suffered setbacks in the past six months as more and more states have voted to ban same-sex marriage in their state constitutions, Gephardt said, "We shouldn't sit back. We need to continue to show that GLBT people are around you every day. We're your neighbors. We go to the same churches as you. We're in the grocery store."

The role of activist fighting for equality for gays and lesbians is a far cry from where Gephardt was in 2001 when she decided to come out to her parents. She knew it wouldn't be easy.

"I had prepared myself to be dis-

owned," she said. "You always expect the worst from people."

Gephardt had what any parent would want for their daughter. She was married to a successful physician who would be able to take care of her for life.

"He's a very nice man and a very successful guy who everybody loved," she said. "What woman would say they didn't want to be married to a guy who was nice and successful?"

She wasn't sure what her father would say. "Even though his politics are the politics of inclusion and he was for gays in the military and equality, it's different when it's your own family. I think my father found himself in a weird position."

The Gephardtts weathered the storm and offered their support to their daughter. When Dick Gephardt ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004, he wanted his daughter on board to reach out to gays and lesbians.

At the time, Dick Gephardt told CNBC, "She's going to be active in the campaign, and she'll go talk to gay and lesbian groups and all kinds of groups. I'm very proud of what she's done with her life, and she'll be a great representative of this campaign."

With a background in social work, Chrissy Gephardt is now preparing to attend law school. She hasn't decided what she'll do with her law degree when she gets it but she's certain of this, "Whatever I do, it will be to fight for social justice."

She's also working on a memoir about

being the child of a politician, and she's doing some traveling with her dad.

Gephardt and her father have begun traveling the country, mostly to colleges to speak to students about "diversity, acceptance and love." She said her father talks about that night in the restaurant and how he and his wife found acceptance.

"Here we are five years later, and they love me unconditionally," she said.

Since 2001, Gephardt has lived with her partner, Amy Loder. Both took part in Pride festivities in Washington, D.C., and they are expected to travel together to Houston.

In her talks around the country, Gephardt said, "I encourage people to be out if it's safe for them to do so. If people like you, it becomes a non-issue."

As for the politics of 2005, Gephardt said, "I feel like this country is under mass brainwashing."

Partial blame, she said, should go to the news media.

"Never has the media in this country been so controlled," she said. "The media seems almost afraid of this (the Bush administration, and it holds back."

If the Democrats are to have a chance in 2008, Gephardt said, they'll need to take lessons from the Republicans.

"We need to have a cohesive message and come together as one," she said. "That's one thing the Republicans have done well. We're going to have to show that we can protect people and be tough on ter-



Chrissy Gephardt and her father, U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-Missouri), are traveling together and talking to college groups about diversity, acceptance and love.

rorism and show that we have a plan to get the U.S. out of Iraq."

As for who is likely to get the Democratic nomination in 2008, Gephardt said, she doesn't know whether it will be Hillary Clinton.

"I personally love Hillary," she said. "I totally believe in her, and I would totally support her candidacy. I sort of waver on whether she can win. People are very polarized. They either love her or they hate her."

Whatever happens between now and the next election, Gephardt said, she will be working to get people out of their closets and into the voting booth.



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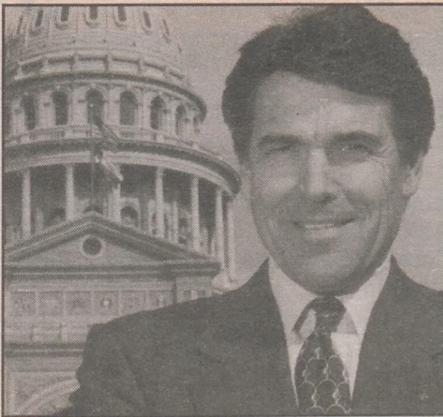


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## national news briefs

### Texas gay military vets demand apology from governor

AUSTIN — Hundreds of people demonstrated last week at the Texas Capitol to protest Gov. Rick Perry's recent statement about gay veterans and his signature on a bill to have voters consider a state constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, media outlets reported. Almost 500 people, many of them gay military veterans, participated in the protest. Last month, Perry, after signing the bill, referred to gays who protested the move as "grippers." Asked at a news conference how he would explain to Texas gay war veterans that they cannot come home from Iraq and get married, Perry said, "Texans made a decision about marriage and if there's a state that has more lenient views than Texas, then maybe that's a better place for them to live." Gay veterans and supporters demanded an apology from Perry. "We don't need an explanation, just an apology," retired Col. Paul Dodd told reporters. "We have proud, courageous, bold veterans — some who are gay — but they should all be welcome with open arms and treated like heroes." Some 65,000 gay veterans live in Texas, according to Urban Institute estimates.



Gay vets and their supporters marched on the Texas Capitol on July 2 to demand an apology from Gov. Rick Perry, who said gay veterans who want to marry might find 'a better place... to live' if they do not agree with Texas' laws on gay unions. (File photo by Richard Carson/AP)

### After D.P. decision, Calif. official wants court to rule on gay marriage

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California's attorney general last week urged the state Supreme Court to decide whether gay marriage is permitted under the state constitution. Attorney General Bill Lockyer asked the justices to review a trial judge's decision in March that said state laws limiting marriage to heterosexual couples are unconstitutional. The attorney general wants California's top court to remove the case from an appeals court. "Same-sex couples... should not have to put their lives and affairs on hold indefinitely while this matter works its way through several levels of court proceedings," Lockyer said. The move came two days after gays won a major legal victory when the state Supreme Court let stand a new law granting registered domestic partners many of the same rights and protections of heterosexual marriage. The unanimous justices agreed the sweeping measure does not conflict with a voter-approved initiative defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

### Gay Denver teacher fired for allegedly bullying students

GOLDEN, Colo. (AP) — A teacher who claimed she was targeted for being gay has been fired for what the school board said was demeaning and intimidating behavior toward students and parents. Susan Romeo, an elementary school teacher, was suspended in October when the school district began investigating allegations against her. The Jefferson County School board voted unanimously last week to dismiss Romeo for bullying students, harassing parents and lacking sexual boundaries, which included leaning over to expose her breasts to a student. Romeo said she has not decided her next move. She said in January that parents who opposed her because of her sexual orientation had been meeting for several years, sometimes with administrators. She never told students she was a lesbian, she said, but she had disclosed the information to a parent who asked.

### Mass. governor cuts funding for 'pro-homosexual' programs

BOSTON (AP) — Gov. Mitt Romney signed the state's \$23.8 billion budget into law last week, but vetoed about \$110 million in spending that he deemed ineffective or wasteful. Included in the cuts was a 70-percent increase in what the conservative Massachusetts Family Institute deemed as funding for "pro-homosexual" programs in schools. "Overall, the budget is fiscally responsible," Romney said. He said he shared many of the Legislature's priorities, such as increasing local aid for education and housing. But he cut funding that he said wasn't necessary or went around typical funding avenues. Among his vetoes was \$100,000 funding increase for the Governor's Commission on Gay & Lesbian Youth. Romney also recently endorsed a new petition drive for a proposed state constitutional amendment to limit marriage to heterosexual couples.

### L.A. school district settles suit alleging anti-gay bias

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The city's school district and the American Civil Liberties Union last week announced the settlement of a federal lawsuit that accused employees at a high school of harassing gay and lesbian students and staff members. The settlement will require anti-discrimination training for students and staff at Washington Preparatory High School in South Los Angeles as well as for middle school students who will attend the campus. Additional details about the settlement were not released. The suit filed in October accused administrators and teachers at the Los Angeles Unified School District campus of creating "a climate rife with hostility toward and discrimination against students and staff based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation." ACLU of Southern California attorney Christine Sun said she was pleased with the settlement, calling the mandatory training "a model for the rest of the state."

From staff and wire reports

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## national news

# United Church of Christ votes for gay marriage

By DYANA BAGBY

ATLANTA — Gays are hailing a vote by the governing body of the United Church of Christ to affirm same-sex marriage as “courageous and prophetic” against a mounting movement of anti-gay political and religious sentiment.

But the July 4 vote is also inciting backlash among some congregations that have left or are threatening to do so.

The UCC, with 1.3 million members and more than 5,700 congregations worldwide, became the first mainline Christian denomination to endorse same-sex marriage when its General Synod overwhelmingly approved a resolution to endorse “equal marriage rights for all regardless of gender.”

UCC officials said an estimated 80 percent of the 884 registered delegates to the conference, held in Atlanta July 1-5, approved the resolution with only a handful of abstentions. Voting members held green cards to show approval of the resolution during the vote on Monday.

Several UCC congregations already define themselves as “open and affirming,” meaning they bless same-sex holy unions. The General Synod’s vote went further by endorsing same-sex marriage rights and encouraging state and local governments to do the same.

The resolution was combined in an execu-

tive committee vote July 3 with a second resolution that asks UCC members to engage in “serious, respectful and prayerful discussion of the covenantal relationship of marriage and equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender.”

A third resolution, presented by the conservative Biblical Witness Fellowship, defined marriage as solely between a man and a woman. The resolution was defeated by about 80 percent of the General Synod during a vote Monday evening, according to Rev. J. Bennett Guess, the gay news director for the UCC.

Church leaders said the resolution affirming same-sex marriage puts the denomination in the middle of a contentious social issue, but it is also the duty of the church to address truth as it relates to humanity.

“This vote was essentially a decision around our theological understanding of God’s justice,” UCC President and General Minister John H. Thomas said Monday.

“I see this as an opportunity to offer a word of comfort and consolation to the many who have been excluded and also a word to our culture that the Gospel offers more than the predominate, or dominate, voice being heard — and that is a word of grace, healing and hope as well,” he added.

Rev. Mel White, executive director of the national interfaith gay organization Soulforce, applauded the UCC vote as a strike

against “religion-based discrimination.”

## Andrew Young backed vote

The vote by the UCC General Synod set a positive tone at a time when banning same-sex marriage has reached a fever pitch in several states and among religious conservatives across the country, according to Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, interim national coordinator for the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.

“This resolution continues the UCC’s experience and witness of Christianity that God acts in the world, in history and at this time when governmental jurisdictions are limiting the rights of LGBT people and using sexual orientation and gender identity to distract people from urgent issues of poverty, war, racism, health care, education and environmental protection,” Voelkel said Monday.

Andrew Young, former mayor of Atlanta, civil rights leader and a UCC pastor, accepted an award from the UCC General Synod Monday and expressed his support of same-sex marriage before the vote.

“I had an experience when I was with the [National Council of Churches],” Young said. “There were a number of gay clergy there and I remember once when there was a big issue on race being discussed and I got worked up about it and my gay friends said, ‘Andy, you can’t speak to this issue. You are too emotional about

it. You have to let us fight this battle for you.’ And they said, ‘One day you might have to fight a battle for us.’

“Those were some of the most influential people in my life at that point so I can’t back off this issue,” Young said in a statement.

After accepting his award, Young said, “There is no education without controversy — and there is no resurrection without crucifixion.”

Local UCC congregations are autonomous and the General Synod speaks “to the churches and not for the churches,” Thomas said, leaving it up to individual churches to decide whether to follow the marriage resolution. Churches that don’t will not be disciplined, Thomas said.

But the vote still prompted a swift and negative reaction from some conservative congregations.

Rev. David Runnion-Bareford, executive director of the New Hampshire-based Biblical Witness Fellowship, said Wednesday his office received more than two-dozen phone calls from UCC churches concerned about the same-sex marriage endorsement.

“They’re asking, ‘What are we going to do now?’” he said. “And I expect many more calls in the next few days.”

Bo Shell contributed to this report.



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## national news

## O'Connor record on gay rights issues is mixed

SUPREME COURT, continued from Page 1

tion, including not just marriage but domestic partner recognition could all be imperiled if O'Connor's replacement possesses an agenda hostile to lesbians and gay men."

Paula Ettlbrick, executive director of the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Campaign called the prospect of a Bush Supreme Court appointment, "chilling." And the National Organization for Women declared a state of emergency.

The Log Cabin Republicans issued a statement thanking O'Connor for her service and urging Bush to chose a moderate conservative as her replacement.

"This is the first Supreme Court retirement in modern age of organizing," Stonewall Democrats Executive Director Eric Stern said. He expects groups to mobilize in a faster and more sophisticated manner than ever before.

"Unless our community speaks out about how this retirement effects the rights that protect our families, protect us in the workplace, unless we speak out about these things the press will likely ignore our issues," he warned.

Conservative groups have lined up millions of dollars to support whomever the president picks. The Judicial Confirmation Network, Progress for America and the Committee for Justice have begun a media blitz to support the president's nominee and opened offices in states with key Senators.

"They've done a good technical job, they are able to rely in large measure on support from business groups, said Elliot Minberg of the progressive group People for the American Way.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan nominated Robert Bork, a conservative legal scholar. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) immediately denounced Bork for the effect his judicial philosophy would have on the rights of women and blacks.

Pro-choice groups had time to mobilize and Bork was defeated by a vote of 58-42. Anthony Kennedy was appointed instead. Committee for Justice executive director Sean Rushton said that is a scenario he expects the president will avoid a Bork



Some say U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales may be the best hope for an apparently moderate appointment to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's unexpected vacancy.

scenario by waiting till mid August to name a nominee.

Bush has said that he won't have a "litmus test" for nominees, meaning he would not ask them for their views on abortion rights and marriage rights but instead consider their judicial philosophy.

There are real differences between the people Bush is said to be considering, Duke University law professor Neil Siegel said, "If Bush picks a hard right conservative things will change significantly and swiftly ... Bush's style has been not to compromise, so there is no reason for optimism that he would pick a moderate."

One the other and, Siegel said, Bush doesn't feel beholden to the right, so he might not pick an extreme ideologue. Among the names mentioned for potential nominees Alberto Gonzales, J. Harvie Wilkinson and John G. Roberts, are some of the more moderate candidates, Siegel said.

J. Harvie Wilkinson III, 60, has served

on the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals since is appointment by Reagan in 1984. Wilkinson wrote the majority 4th Circuit court opinion which upheld the military's "don't ask, don't tell policy" which bans gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

The people on the extreme end include Judge Luttig, Edith Jones, and Emilio Garza. These are "new school conservative ideologues" when it comes to issues of federal power, abortion and gay rights, Siegel said.

Garza sits on the Fifth US Circuit Court of Appeals in News Orleans, a former Marine and Texas state judge, Garza is widely known for his view that Roe v. Wade should be overturned.

Edith Hollon Jones, 55, has also served on the Fifth circuit court of appeals in New Orleans since she was appointed by Reagan in 1985. Known as a hardline conservative, Jones has called the Roe Decision an "exercise of raw judicial power."

cise of raw judicial power."

The Supreme Court has already scheduled cases involving gay rights for its fall session. Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights v. Rumsfeld deals with whether the federal government can withhold funds from schools that bar military recruiters due to their policies of discrimination against gay men and lesbians.

Kent Greenfield, and a law professor at Boston College, said that he is not sure how O'Connor's retirement might effect that case. "I think O'Connor has been such a pragmatist on the court it is hard to pin her down in terms of doctrine because she is such a swing vote," Greenfield said.

The Supreme Court is also scheduled to hear the case of Goodman v. Georgia, John Davidson, legal director for Lambda Legal said. This case will consider whether a prison must accommodate HIV positive prisoners under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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## Something to say

Houston Chronicle writer Joey Guerra brings his gay wit to newspaper's columns

By JOHNNY HOOKS

The name Joey Guerra is familiar to many Houstonians, even if they haven't met the affable and handsome writer.

Guerra writes for the Houston Chronicle, profiling everyone from Cher to slain Tejano singer Selena. Recently the Chronicle debuted his blog called "Handstamp," which finds Guerra riffing on local bands, clubs and "must see" events in the Bayou City.

"I am so blessed, I don't want to sound blasé about it, because I am thrilled to get to do what I do, but it all happened so quickly and without a lot of pushing from me," Guerra says.

With his signature humility, Guerra laughs when asked who gave him the most troubling interview.

"Gee, I don't think I've really had one," he says.

Guerra it seems, has come a long way from growing up in the sometimes rough and tumble Denver Harbor area off I-10 East next to the Fifth Ward.

His family still lives in the same house where Joey, 31, grew up. He is the older brother to Richard and Luis.

"I never saw anything crazy there, but it was kind of a tough neighborhood. I went to L.L. Pugh Elementary, which was two blocks down the street from my house, and later went to McRenolds Middle School, about five blocks from my house. But for High School I left the area and went to Milby High. Interestingly enough Milby was the science Magnet school which basically trained everyone to be a chemical engineer, imagine that," Guerra says.

Guerra remembers his post-schooling almost wistfully, working at Exxon Laboratories for about a year, "with the white lab coat, goggles and everything. It seems like a life time ago," he says.

But Guerra finally embraced the writer within.

"When I was younger I kept a journal, but it was nothing I pursued with a passion. I think it was something in the back of my mind," he says.

"When I got to the University of Houston full time, I realized I did not like the science map I had laid out for myself. I honestly thought about what I wanted to do and writing, as an art form

and as critique, just sort of bubbled to the surface. So I completely switched gears and started for the Daily Cougar. I ended up taking all these news writing classes and found myself swept up in the Daily Cougar," he adds.

Publishing a daily paper is difficult on a good day, and Guerra was handed more than his fair share of assignments.

"Everything just snowballed. I rose from entertainment editor, to assistant editor to editor in no time. Even when I was out of school for a semester I ran the show," he says.

During this time Guerra cut his teeth on hard news, but realized that being a little more personal and writing his opinion of bands, local and not was where his heart lay.

"I remember at one point every wall of my room was plastered with Debbie Gibson posters," Guerra says. "How can you 'objectively' report on the subjects that make ones heart swell?"

Friends who listened to the review CDs encouraged Guerra to write down the detailed thoughts he shared.

Guerra's family always supported him throughout his adolescence and into his adulthood.

"I have never officially come out to my Mom and Dad, or my brothers. I will say they have all been to my house and met my partner Scott and all love him as the family member that he is. It doesn't have to be a spoken understanding always does it? Its funny my Mom has been to South Beach and to Rich's with me," he says.

"They both love our animals, our two dogs Tangi and Brickman and our kitty Princess. We are a family through and through. Scott and I have been together for 10 years," he adds.

Does the relationship make him feel like he's dodged the dating bullet?

"Yeah, I really do. You know for a few years I was the doorman at South Beach. Almost every night I thought to myself, 'Well, there goes the 'hottest guy in the club' with another take home,'" he says. "I remember all of his take homes, but does he? I was so happy to go home every night and snuggle up to Scott. I thought all those guys tricking night after night, were sad really. I will say Charles Armstrong and Jim McDermaid were there for me like a family. When my Mom was diagnosed with cancer, they had a fundraiser to help her out set up before I could blink. Say what you will about Charles, I'll never forget that."

These days you can find Guerra writing reviews of queer concerts, local bands (gay and straight) and the occasional club column for the Chronicle's web site. He happily admits that as much as he seems to be the man about town, he



Gay scribe Joey Guerra is all smiles when profiling local and national acts, gay or straight.

is home with his partner and their pets almost every night.

"Yes, we do live in Montrose. Sometimes when we go out to dinner someone will approach and say 'Aren't

you Joey Guerra?' I think that is such a compliment, and I hope every reader out there knows I go forth and report on happenings, events and shows so you don't have too," Guerra says.

# out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



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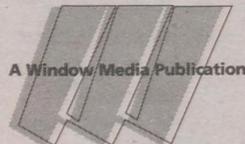
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# Forum

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## editorial

# Straight-washing of Luther Vandross

The late R&B legend never crossed over to pop because he refused to 'buy blond wigs,' but he wore a 'straight wig' to please his female fans.

By CHRIS CRAIN



FOR TWO DECADES, Luther Vandross sang the soundtrack to America's bedrooms, but as much as he touched hearts and stirred loins with music about love and loss, his own romantic

life remained mostly a mystery.

The black singer who proudly declared that he would never don a "blond wig" to achieve mainstream fame among white fans, nonetheless hid his own love life to placate his heterosexual female fan base.

That kind of study in contrasts would make for great reading, but you wouldn't know it from the obituaries and "appreciation" stories published in the mainstream press after Vandross died on July 1. With rare exception, the straight press side-stepped long-standing speculation that Vandross the "lifetime bachelor" was, in fact, gay.

The de-gaying of Vandross is only the latest example of a long-standing media tradition of glossing over the personal life of anyone who does not live a publicly heterosexual life. On the obituary page, at least, homosexuality remains the love that dare not speak its name.

WHEN NOVELIST SUSAN SONTAG DIED last December, the mainstream press published long and lavish profiles that nonetheless ignored the "open secret" of her bisexual past and long-time relationship with famed photographer Annie Leibowitz.

The straight-washing of gay artists continued in late May, when filmmaker Ismail Merchant died. Despite a 44-year relationship with James Ivory that was both professional and romantic, the mainstream press stuck to the heterosexual storyline. Does anyone doubt an epic romance that produced so many film classics would have been the subject of fawning tributes had the couple been male-female?

Criticism from this publication of the Merchant obituaries proved too much for Hank Stuever, a usually funny, very gay

entertainment columnist at the Washington Post. Stuever whined at us "grippy gay media watchdogs" for pointing out the glaring omissions in the Sontag and Merchant posthumous coverage, and he offered a piece of parting advice:

"When a gay (or gayish) celebrity croaks, call your local obit desk ... and give the editors a big ol' gay heads up to make sure they know," Stuever wrote, "especially if you can point them to any previously published references by the decedent about his or her extra-fabulous time on Earth."

How's that? Stuever challenges the gay press to come up with "previously published references by the decedent" about being gay, as if an obituary were merely a collection of statements by the dead person about their own life. Would that famous people could so completely control their press coverage! Of course, the press regularly reports speculation about the private lives of the famous, in life and death.

Even so, Stuever ought to be blushing now. It seems his own newspaper published an obituary of Vandross that reported — "eleventyseven" paragraphs from the lead — that there were rumors not only that Vandross was gay, but that he had AIDS.

Just in case the Post computers don't come enabled with browsers containing the Google search engine, here's a "big ol' gay heads up" that there's even more out there on whether Vandross was a homo.

In Craig Seymour's biography of Vandross, "Luther: The Life & Longing of Luther Vandross," the author asks the singer about the gay rumors but doesn't get a straight answer (pun intended).

"You're trying to zero in on something that you are never gonna get," laughed Vandross. "Look at you, just circling the airport. You ain't never gonna land."

Let it be noted that in the history of humanity, no straight man — and certainly no straight African-American man — has ever refused to say whether he's straight or gay.

Give the Post credit for at least noting the speculation, one step better than his obit in the New York Times, which waxed on in the lead that Vandross "spun

romance into hits" but about his own romantic life noted cryptically, in the article's final sentence: "Mr. Vandross is survived by his mother."

But the F-minus goes to the Associated Press, which cheerfully reported that Vandross' weight "fluctuated so much that rumors swirled that he had more serious health problems than the hypertension and diabetes caused by his large frame." Can you say "AIDS," everyone?

What's more, AP reported that Vandross, "the lifelong bachelor, never had any children, but doted on his nieces and nephews. The entertainer said his busy lifestyle made marriage difficult; besides, it wasn't what he wanted." Can you say "gay," everyone?

IF AP CAN'T MANAGE TO SAY THE "G word," Answers.com and Wikipedia can. The exact same information — in the exact same words — is reported on that site under a section of Vandross' bio titled "Sexuality" that deals expressly with rumors that the singer was gay.

Wikipedia reports that Vandross was asked about being gay on the BET show "Journeys in Black," and refused to answer the question.

Does any of this "prove" Vandross was gay? Maybe not, but it's enough to make it into stories about his life.

Of course Vandross is partly responsible for the lack of real evidence here, but so is the mainstream media, which interviewed Vandross countless times in his career without ever reporting (or even asking?) anything about his romantic life.

The same could be said about Sontag and Merchant, who managed public careers of almost a half-century each while dodging almost any coverage of their personal lives.

The truth is that the mainstream press is afraid to ask famous people if they're gay, and even more afraid to print their responses. And when the famous person dies, the same lily-livered editors claim that the public record is, tragically, too skimpy to merit mention in post-death coverage.

Luther Vandross talked often in interviews about his failure to crossover to mainstream pop stardom, putting it down to his refusal to "buy blond wigs" and "walk differently." But he was willing to lead on his largely female fan base, wearing a "straight wig" as it were, and hiding his own romantic life.

He built his entire career "spinning romance into hits" and yet kept his own romances almost completely hidden. That storyline was surely deserving of more coverage than it got, and didn't even require answering the question that Vandross so rarely got asked.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of the *Houston Voice* and can be reached at [ccrain@houstonvoice.com](mailto:ccrain@houstonvoice.com).



## viewpoint JASMYNE CANNICK



Before you blame Terry McMillan's husband for coming out, consider that we all created the 'down low.'

# Stella should find a new groove

AUTHOR TERRY MCMILLAN HAS FILED for divorce from her 30-year-old Jamaican husband Jonathan Plummer, who inspired the 1996 novel "How Stella Got Her Groove Back." McMillan, 53, says she decided to end her six-year marriage after learning her husband is gay and accuses him of using her to gain U.S. citizenship.

It's starting all over again. I can hear it now.

"All the good men are taken or gay."

McMillan's troubles are sure to spark the next "down low" alert for black women and men — gay and straight alike, and spark a new wave of anti-gay stereotypes among heterosexual black women.

Seldom admitted is the fact that most women have no problems with the

"Jacks" (from "Will & Grace") of the world. In fact, it's been a growing trend for women to have gay male friends.

No, the problem lies with the "Omars" (HBO's "The Wire"). The men who women find themselves attracted to but the feeling isn't mutual. The men who cannot be "clocked" at first glance.

But what about McMillan's soon to be ex-husband?

Born and raised in Jamaica, which is known for its homophobic culture, he can never return home for fear of being murdered, now that it's public knowledge that he's gay.

Gays of Caribbean descent have been fleeing their native countries for years for fear of being viciously beaten or mur-

dered. Deeply religious and conservative, Jamaicans simply do not tolerate "batty boys" and "sodomites."

Some of our most beloved reggae recording artists spew lyrics about killing gays over their hypnotic beats.

IT'S NOT THAT FAR-FETCHED TO believe that Plummer did marry McMillan to gain U.S. citizenship, so he could live long enough to see his 25th birthday and beyond. Still, I am more inclined to believe that Plummer married McMillan for different reasons.

Many gay men and lesbians get involved with someone of the opposite sex in the hope of curing themselves from their "sinful" and "wicked" ways. In fact, heterosexual family members and friends often encourage it.

It's very possible that Plummer did love McMillan, but realized that he wasn't "in love" or being true to himself, so he decided to break free. That, coupled with living in a country that doesn't murder gays on site, probably gave him enough strength to come out.

WHATEVER THE TRUE STORY, Plummer will be the one blamed by the public's eye, but people should be so quick to vilify all gay men.

McMillan's husband is of Jamaican descent, but Americans have shown themselves to be not so accepting of gays, as evidenced by the last presidential election, when George W. Bush used gay marriage as a wedge among African-

American voters.

If I weren't already out as a lesbian, I probably would never come out, considering today's climate.

With everyone so quick to jump on the bandwagon bashing the "down low," there are very few voices speaking on why the "down low" even exists.

It's assumed in our society that you are straight and anything different means you are not normal. We encourage safe sex and HIV testing, but not the disclosure of sexual preferences if it's anything other than heterosexual.

The "down low" exists because of every hateful comment ever made about gays in the workplace, at the dinner table, in line at the grocery store, at the nail shop, on the courts and everywhere else.

For every "sissy," "faggot," "bull dagger," "batty boy" and "sodomite" that fell off of someone's lips within earshot of others, another person plunged deeper and deeper into the closet.

We created the "down low."

McMillan's situation is unfortunate. But I have no doubt that she will get her groove back, write a book about it and sell the movie rights.

@ Jasmyne Cannick is a board member of the National Black Justice Coalition and co-producer of "Noah's Arc," a new cable series on black gays. She can be reached via [www.jasmyneconnick.com](http://www.jasmyneconnick.com).

## viewpoint MICHAEL ALVEAR



Given the time gay men spend at the mirror, the lavatory signs on Air Head airlines would say "Preoccupied."

# Fly the fabulously gay-friendly skies

WITH MOST MAJOR AIRLINES ON THE brink of bankruptcy and theme airlines sprouting up like mushrooms, I've been peddling to investors the idea of a gay airline.

Here's my blueprint. First, we'd need a name and tag line reflecting the passion of the airline's patrons. My recommendation: "Air Head. Our Service Will Blow You Away."

The changes would be noticeable right away, starting with on-time departures. There wouldn't be any, for starters. All that rushing around to get to the gate on time? Gone.

The estimated time of departure would refer to the approximate time the pilots would be getting out of the shower. Air Head, like its customers, would be fashionably late.

The seat selection process would change, too. It wouldn't be about window or aisle as much as hot or not. Air Head's Web site would show photos of booked passengers so you can make seat selections based on their looks. That way you'd up your chances for a lay-over.

SECURITY GUARDS WOULD BE renamed "social security guards" to reflect the gregarious nature of the airline's passengers. They'd frisk us, then put their hands against the wall and say, "Your turn." No reason to ask if there's a pistol in their pocket or if they're just happy to see you. The answer is yes.

Screeners at the X-ray machine would

be trained as club doormen instead. They'd be dressed in black, wear earpieces and let you through the velvet rope once they see your name on the list.

We'd spice up the in-flight magazines, too. Aisle after aisle, you'd hear flight attendants ask, "Excuse me sir, would you like to read Time, Newsweek or Inches?"

And enough with the Muzac. How about six channels of head-banging house music? Giant stereo speakers would line the exit doors in case the understandable need to look down on people as you dance takes over.

Of course, you couldn't have that kind of music without mile-high party favors. That's why we'd introduce a complimentary "SkyBump." It would add another 36,000 feet to your high.

You could do your Skybumps in peace, too, because there'd be an in-flight back room. Naturally, it would be pitch-black with no seats and grubby walls. And if enough passengers partake, well, then every Air Head jet, from the large 757's to the gigantic airbuses would be considered "puddle jumpers."

WE'D ALSO UPDATE THE EMERGENCY exit instructions. Superbly choreographed evacuation strategies will make you hope for a mid-flight engine failure to try out the moves.

Air Head would have the most politically correct lavatories on the planet. There'd be four: male, female, male-to-female and female-to-male.

Given the amount of time gay men would spend looking at themselves in the

mirror, the signs on the lavatories wouldn't say "Occupied." They'd say "Preoccupied."

I know I don't need to say this, but flight attendant uniforms would be so skimpy you could fax them into the plane. For once, let the customer be the one to say, "No shirt, no service!"

One of the great innovations I'd bring to the market is a software program allowing you to know more about the plane's crew. Every seat would be equipped with online profiles of the flight staff.

No point in hitting on them if they're hitched — or worse — straight. We could have a "hot or not" button beside each profile and vote the losers off the plane, to be replaced with cuter stewards at the next stop.

Air Head would be the first airline to prohibit carry-ons. No, not suitcases. Rants from the people sitting next to you. Some people just carry on forever if you don't bury your head in a book and pretend not to hear them.

I've shopped the concept to Wall Street with no luck. They all have the same objection: The FAA does not allow mirrors except in the bathroom.

"For heaven's sakes," one investor at a high-flying firm told me, "You can't have a gay airline without mirrors glued to the back of every chair!"

@ Atlanta-based Michael Alvear is the author of the biography, "Alexander The Fabulous: The Man Who Brought the World to Its Knees." He can be reached at [mikealvear@mac.com](mailto:mikealvear@mac.com).

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**Ellen in the dark**  
Ellen staying up late?  
Lauer wins in court  
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## bracing for change

LAMBDA LITERARY FOUNDATION LOSES KEY STAFF, SUSPENDS OPERATIONS

By RHONDA SMITH

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THE LAMBDA LITERARY FOUNDATION lost its longtime executive director, Jim Marks, on July 1. Lisa C. Moore, the editor of the Lambda Book Report, also resigned.

The departure of Marks, 55, appears to be the result of a shakeup in the ranks of the Washington-based organization that for years has led efforts nationwide to publicize the work of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered authors.

After the foundation's formation in May 1996, Marks served as executive director for all but 18 months.

Moore, who also is the founder of RedBone Press, which focuses on the work of gay writers of color, returned a call but declined to comment about the shakeup. She also is working to organize Fire & Ink, a four-day writers' festival for gay people of African descent that is scheduled to be held Oct. 6-9 in Austin, Texas.

"The bottom line is finances," said Katherine Forrest, one of six board trustee members for the Lambda Literary Foundation, which publishes the Lambda Book Report, the James White Review and sponsors the annual Lambda Literary Awards, a centerpiece of the foundation.

"Both of the publications have been operating chronically in the red, really, since they left the umbrella of the Lambda Rising bookstore," about nine years ago, said Forrest, a spokesperson for the six-member board. "We're talking about nine or 10 years that it's just been sputtering along."

Before his departure Marks said the foundation was enjoying a great year.

"From my perspective, we'd had our best year ever this year, financially," he said. "Our revenue was up about 25 percent for the first five months of this year. Over the past 12-month period, from June 15, 2004 to June 14, 2005, our gross was a little bit over \$75,000, and our net would have been about \$55,000."

The organization is "a little bit over a \$200,000-a-year business," Marks added.

The Lambda Literary Foundation operated primarily based on subscriptions to the Lambda Book Report, Forrest said, as well as on funds generated from the annual Lambda Literary Awards ceremony, recently held in New York, and individual donations.

Forrest said there has been an "ongoing, chronic problem" with the Lambda Book Report's ability to publish in a timely manner. It was supposed to be available monthly, but often was late coming out. Marks said he and others there were making plans to publish the Book Report less often than monthly, about every two months. The James White Review was published quarterly.

"It's been obvious for some time that the Lambda Book Report needed to revitalize itself," said Deacon Maccubbin, the D.C.-based owner of the Lambda Rising chain of bookstores in Washington, Baltimore, Rehoboth Beach, Del., and Norfolk, Va., as well as the Oscar Wilde Bookshop in New York City.

Maccubbin founded the Lambda Book Report as well as the Lambda Literary Awards, two of the Lambda Literary Foundation's flagship initiatives. He said the Lambda Book Report is a publication that the producers can be proud of because it looks great and has a wealth of information.

"But it needs to be more timely — especially in this age," he added.

During the past few years, Maccubbin said Lambda Book Report issues were skipped or late getting on newsstands. To some degree, he said, this hurt its credibility.

As for the timeliness of the magazine, Marks said there was little complaint among the foundation's membership, but he admitted irregular publication dates affected newsstand sales and subscriptions. He points to the on-time distribution of the last two monthly issues as proof that "we'd been making progress."

He blamed the Lambda Book Report's problem on a two-year period of struggles to get a permanent editor in place.

The foundation's trustee board is comprised of Marks, Forrest, an author based in San Francisco, Jim Duggins, a retired academic who lives in Palm Springs, Calif., author Karla Jay, who lives in New York, Don Weise, a New York editor at Carroll & Graf, and Nick Apostol, Marks' partner. Trustees serve three-year terms.

Marks said a plan was presented to him by the board on June 3 that would stop the organization's membership program, one of the primary fund-raising arms of the group. He said that the current slate of 1,400 members each pay \$35 a year or more, and a twice-a-year direct mail campaign solicited funds over and above those dues.

"I didn't see how the organization would be feasible without the membership program and without the magazines," Marks said, so he submitted his resignation.

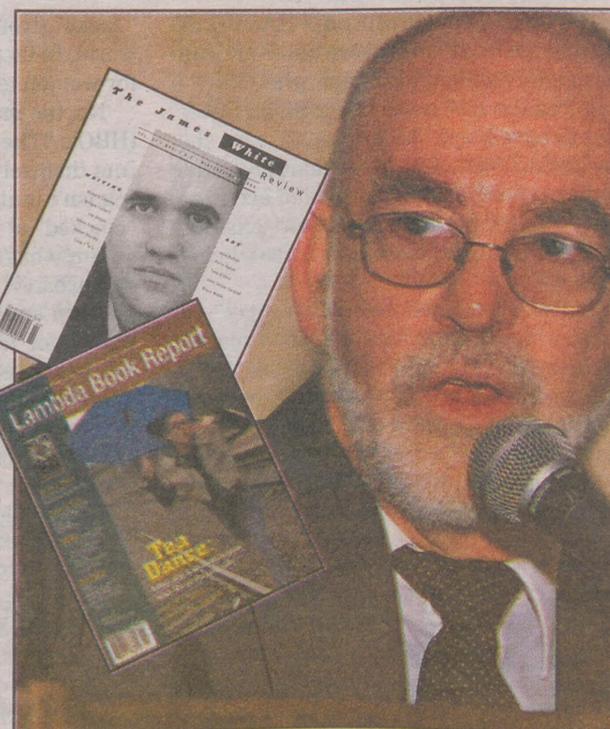
THE LAMBDA BOOK REPORT IS VIEWED AS THE premier review for information on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writings. The James White Review is specifically geared toward gay male readers.

Forrest said the foundation's trustee board suspended publishing the Lambda Book Report and the James White Review but not permanently.

"We honestly are examining the viability of both publications," she said.

And though they may return, it is likely that they will be much different than they are today.

One of the options the foundation's board is considering,



Jim Marks, the longtime executive director of the Lambda Literary Foundation in Washington, D.C., is scheduled to step down from that position on July 1, along with two other editors at the organization. The foundation's trustee board agreed to accept Marks' resignation and indefinitely suspend publishing the Lambda Book Report, a monthly magazine about books with gay authors and themes, and The James White Review, a quarterly journal aimed at gay male readers. (Marks' photo by Robert Levy)

Forrest said, involves discussions with "Books to Watch Out For" writers Carol Seajay and Richard Labonte, who have been central figures in the gay literary world for many years. Books To Watch Out For is an online column that Labonte, who lives in Canada, and Seajay, who resides in San Francisco, compile.

FORREST SAID THE LAMBDA LITERARY AWARDS and its showcase author readings would not be suspended.

"The Awards, in newly designed form, will come under the creative direction of executive producer Ben Hodges, whose exciting work was on view at the most recent New York City Lambda Literary Awards," the foundation's board trustees said in a written statement.

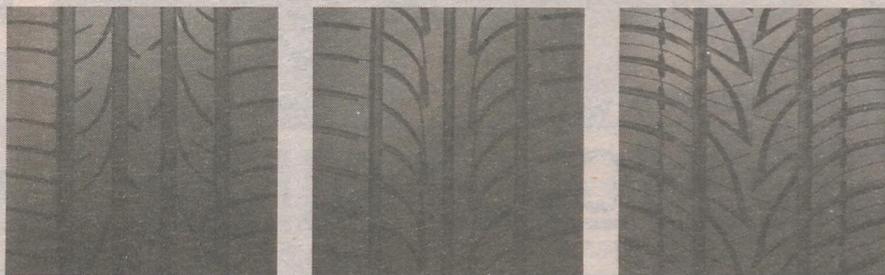
Forrest also said it is not clear yet whether the Lambda Literary Foundation's headquarters will continue to be based in Washington, D.C.

"Everything is up for discussion and decision making," she said. "Frankly, we want to take the time to make the very best decisions we can."

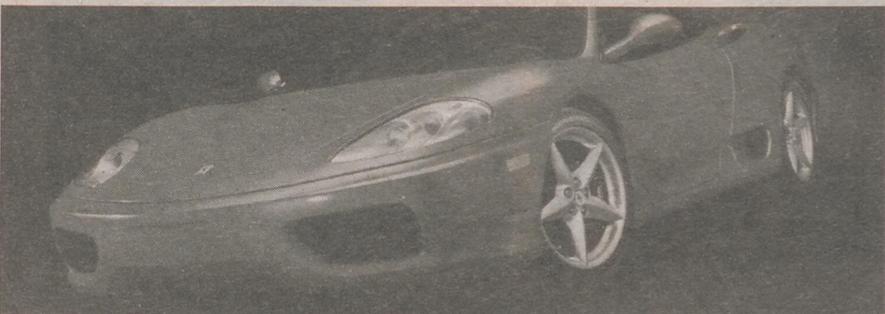
**GAY IN IRAQ:** A new book explores the life of a gay servant in Iraq from 1928 to 1981. **Page 15**

**NIGHTLIFE:** A Phantom comes to town, benefits a plenty and a Sky Box party for Janine Brunjes. **Page 17**

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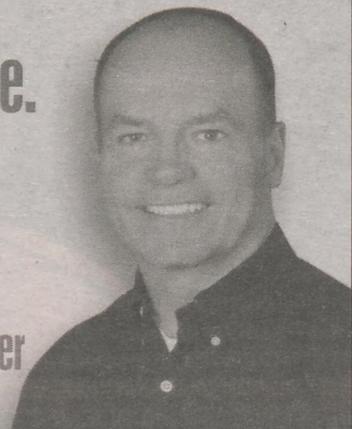
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## television BRIAN MOYLAN



Bravo is home to shows like 'Being Bobby Brown' that satisfy a need to watch people with bigger problems than our own.



R&B singer Bobby Brown shows us everything that's wrong with reality TV. (Photo courtesy of Bravo)

## The end of reality

I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A NEW entry to the gay lexicon. Whenever a friend or loved one starts getting annoying or otherwise acting the fool, just say, "Mary, stop being Bobby Brown."

"Stop 'Being Bobby Brown'" could also be a slogan for a campaign to end the newest excessively voyeuristic celebrity reality show that airs on Bravo Thursdays at 10 p.m.

This show, whose cameras follow the former R&B singer and the husband of gay icon Whitney Houston, epitomizes everything that's wrong with reality television. In a world where there are hundreds of channels on an ever-increasing dial, all those venues need cheap, ratings-grabbing programming to fill up the dead air.

Therefore, we get the celebrity train wreck genre. Pioneered by Anna Nicole Smith for E! and perfected by "The Osbournes" on MTV, these shows give viewers a look into the messy lives of famous or, rather, infamous people. There may be something comforting in seeing that rich and successful entertainers have the same (if not worse) problems that we all have, and apparently more time to wallow in the mess called their lives.

Brown doesn't really do anything that is really shocking. In an early episode, he has to go to court on charges that he hit Houston but, other than that, he and Whitney and their entourage of hangers on just try to figure out ways to pass the time.

It's just as boring as real life. But then Brown opens his mouth and lets us into the dirty details of his marriage with Houston. A particularly memorable instance in the

second episode gives a whole new meaning to the term "bathroom talk."

You can see the desperation in Brown's behavior on the show. He really wants to revive his career and get the public interested and when his actions (like rubbing Preparation H under his eyes in public) don't work, he turns to words as well.

We all need to turn off this dreck. It's fun, mindless and trashy, but tuning in to Bobby Brown is just rewarding his bad behavior.

MAYBE IT'S ALSO TIME TO GIVE Bravo, a de facto gay channel thanks to all its homo-friendly programming, a rest. Not only is Brown stinking up its roster, but it's got salon show "Blow Out" on Tuesdays at 10 p.m. and "Sports Kids Moms & Dads" on Wednesdays at 10 p.m.

I'll admit to a bit of an obsession with "Blow Out," which centers on the life and antics of Jonathan Antin, a self-obsessed hair stylist and owner of the Jonathan salons in West Hollywood and Beverly Hills, Calif. Both salons boast a number of gay employees who are featured prominently on the show.

It's amazing that someone who is such a narcissist that he brings a camera crew to his therapy sessions continues to be successful in the world.

"Sports Kids," produced by World of Wonder, a documentary company started by gay filmmakers Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, is just as bad. It's hard to sit by and glibly grin while obsessed parents behave in ways that will rack up the therapist's bills later in life.

Maybe Jonathan's shrink will let them bring cameras and they can make a show out of it.

Instead, we must end this now. Show television executives that they need to stop "being Bobby Brown." To be fair, there are some quality reality shows out there like CBS's "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race" and MTV's "Real World." But these B-list celebrity freak-fests need to stop cloying to our baser desires and capitalizing on the desperation of others.

### **i** MORE INFO

'Being Bobby Brown'

Bravo  
Thursdays at 10 p.m.

'Blow Out'

Bravo  
Tuesdays at 10 p.m.

'Sports Kids Moms & Dads'

Bravo  
Wednesdays at 10 p.m.

## books JOHNNY HOOKS



Social changes in Iran during 20th century do little to advance station in life of a gay servant in 'The Quince Seed Potion.'

## Perils of unrequited love

IRANIAN-BORN NOVELIST MORTEZA Baharloo writes about exotic foods and wine in tones that border on the divine in the debut novel "The Quince Seed Potion."

When one of them, the quince seed, is properly harvested and prepared, it is supposed to cure any ailment or unwanted condition. It may even cure Sarveali Jokar, the cruelly misnamed "Tall Cypress of Ali," of his lust for men and enable him to sexually satisfy his henna-haired cousin, who becomes his whore of a wife.

Sadly, Sarveali never gets his chance to find out. His life of servitude to the mighty Shirlu khans goes from bad to excruciating.

The novel takes place from 1928 to 1981 in Iran and encompasses that country's ever-changing history. In the first section, "Serving the Khans: Empire of Iran," Sarveali is born breached, and his mother dies in childbirth. The midwife, desperate that the child live lest she not be paid her commission or worse, be killed, inserts a live chicken into the baby's rectum to induce breathing.

His father, Zofali, shows no interest in Sarveali and dies when the child is near age 6. His uncle, the cruel Barat-Ali, claims the child and takes him to live with him and his family.

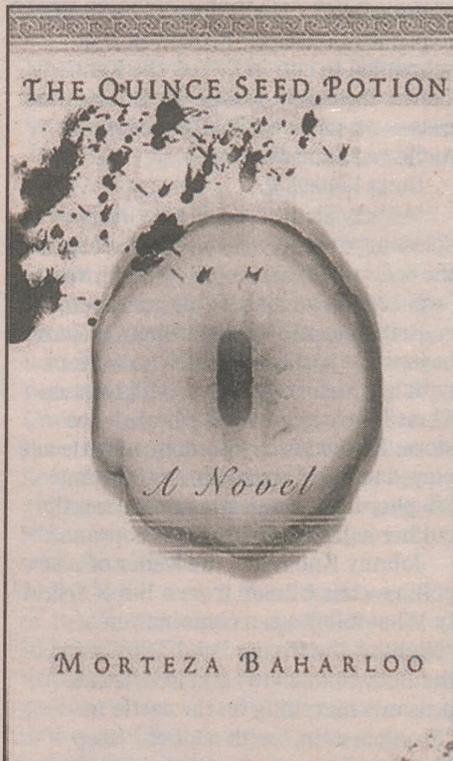
Sarveali is forced to be a servant for Barat, his pregnant wife and their child.

Sarveali is raped by his uncle and sold into indentured servitude. He serves the young Teimour Khan, youngest of the Khans. Nearly the same age as Sarveali, Teimour is tortuous and he is ambivalent to all of Sarveali's attempts to serve him well.

Eventually, Sarveali falls in love with Teimour, though the love is unrequited.

THE SAD TALE TAKES READERS ALONG as Sarveali grows from into a small, simple young man who constantly follows his master, trying to hide his never-ending tears and find a way to receive even a cursory happy glance from Teimour.

In "God Cocktail," the second part of the novel, Sarveali is married to a young cousin who promptly gives herself to Teimour but refuses Sarveali's advances. His only solace comes at night as they lay side-by-side masturbating to thoughts of the same man: Teimour. Eventually Teimour disappears, leaving them both behind.



Angered by unending taunts, Sarveali murders his wife in an unexpected act of rage. While in prison, he is introduced to opium. The novel recounts his downward spiral of addiction.

The Quince Seed Potion continues to play out against the background of Iran's tumultuous modern history. The novel depicts the gorgeous richness of traditional Iranian culture, something western readers rarely glimpse.

But Sarveali remains illiterate, completely bewildered by politics, totally ignorant of world affairs and untouched by the Islam of the imams. His world is limited to his own station in life, entirely focused on the worship of the Shirlu khans, who instill in him what little pride he has. He makes his way through changing times as best he is able.

THE FINAL SECTION TAKES PLACE from 1969 to 1981. In "Rapture and Decay," Iran sees the eventual downfall of the feudalistic society of old Iran and the rise of the Islamic Republic. But Sarveali's station in life never changes.

The novel has moments of two other tales of changing times: "Gone With The Wind" and "Dr. Zhivago." But in the end, Baharloo fails to find resolution for poor Sarveali.

He remains rambling through the once great grounds of the Khan's ancestral home, longing for his beloved and dead Teimour. The reader is left to wonder why, because the author offers no real point to justify the tale of all of Sarveali's suffering.



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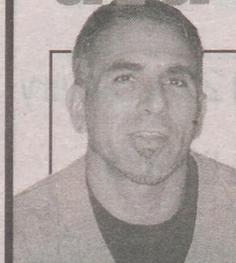
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**dvd STEVE WEINSTEIN**



With his latest masterwork, 'A Dirty Shame,' out on DVD, gay director John Waters is still as raunchy and cutting-edge as ever.

# No shame in his game

THESE DAYS, "HAIRSPRAY" IS PLAYING to packed houses on Broadway. It is scheduled to run in D.C. at the Kennedy Center from July 13-Aug. 21. But has success — or, more pointedly, acceptance — mellowed John Waters?

Don't believe it. "A Dirty Shame" extols the virtues of splashing (turned on by having food splat on the body), adult babies (an apparent Waters favorite) and compulsive masturbation.

British comic Tracey Ullman plays a beyond-uptight housewife who works with her husband (a surprisingly game Chris Isaak) at the local convenience store. The owner is her mom, a battle-axe played to nasty perfection by Suzanne Shepherd, a veteran who most recently cut her acting fangs on "The Sopranos."

Johnny Knoxville, the leader of a sex cult, rescues Ullman from a life of frigidity. What follows is a combination of "Night of the Living Dead," "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" and lederhosen peasants marching on the castle in "Frankenstein," with a lot of "Deep Throat" thrown in for good measure.

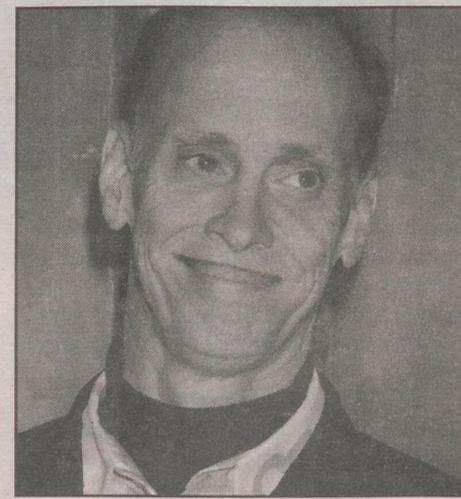
The Motion Pictures Association of America gave the film an NC-17 rating, which effectively killed any chance of it being widely released in theaters. On DVD, you won't find it at Blockbuster Wal-Mart.

But this represents only the latest skirmish in Waters' long-running feud with ratings boards and censors.

What these blue-nosed biddies don't understand is that, at bottom, Waters' films are profoundly more moral than the cynical crap churned out by Hollywood studios. Waters himself insists that "A Dirty Shame" was not motivated by the Bush-Ashcroft crackdown on sexual freedom.

"Any political commentary was purely accidental," he recently said. "It takes at least two years and even three from the time when I write my movies" until they are released. "So I thought it up a long time ago," he added. "Janet Jackson hadn't happened."

EVEN SO, HE ADMITTED THAT PERHAPS he might have been "subliminally" commenting on the current administration's



Some of John Waters' best films are now available on DVD. (AP Photo/Jennifer Graylock)

policies. In the film, the sex addicts are pitted against the "neuters." An entire neighborhood is taken over by the sex addicts. Waters, however, keeps his moral compass. He said the film is an implicit criticism of sex addiction.

"This movie is about limits," he said. "Aren't sex addicts zombies? They wake up every day and decide to have sex all day and night. In P-town every day, people are into crystal and sex. Any kind of addiction eventually becomes boring."

The movie, like every one of Waters' movies, was filmed in his beloved Baltimore. Waters divides his time between a house in East Baltimore, Greenwich Village and Provincetown. High on the heels of the hugely successful staged musical version of "Hairspray," Waters is working on another Broadway show. This time, he will help adapt '90s "Cry-Baby," which starred Johnny Depp.

Waters has gone far since the days when he and his motley crew would break into homes to film or scavenged dumpsters looking for props and costumes.

While filming "A Dirty Shame," his location scout had no trouble getting neighbors to cooperate.

"It's amazing, because I thought they'd be pissed with adult babies around," Waters said. "On the third day of shooting, in broad daylight with schools out, Johnny Knoxville was committing cunnilingus on Tracey Ullman. They were really good sports!"

New Line is offering a boxed set of Waters' films. It includes "Hairspray," which made Rickie Lake a star; "Pecker;" "Pink Flamingos," "Female Trouble," "Desperate Living" and his magnum opus, "Polyester." The films offer an overview of the career of a man who has made Baltimore as familiar to cineastes as Woody Allen's Manhattan.

**i MORE INFO**  
 'A Dirty Shame'  
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## nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



As the dog days of summer roll in  
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# Are you hot? Cool off inside!

HOUSTON WE HAVE A PROBLEM! I think you know what it is. This heat!

This week HoVo on the Go-Go looks for things to do inside to cool your jets and calm your nerves.

HE'S BACK. "THE PHANTOM OF the Opera" is here, not inside your mind but at the Hobby Center. So much can be said about this enormous and phabulous production. If you haven't seen this, don't delay as it will sell out. The story was adapted from Gaston Leroux's classic novel of mystery and suspense by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

The production is directed by the famous **Harold Prince** and stars **Gary Mauer** as the masked man and **Marie Danvers** as Christine. "Phantom" traces the tragic love story of a beautiful opera singer and a young composer shamed by his physical appearance into a shadowy existence beneath the majestic Paris Opera House.

Consider our own pride parade chandelier that hung at Montrose and Westheimer and marvel at these stats from the show — **35,000 beads** hang on the replica of the Paris Opera which weighs in at **1,000 pounds** and stands 10 feet tall. You'll also be treated to one life size elephant, **230 costumes** and **160 wigs**. "Phantom" runs through July 31.

The Hobby Center is located at 800 Bagby. For tickets and showtimes, call 713-629-3700 or visit [www.broadway-acrossamerica.com](http://www.broadway-acrossamerica.com). \$21.25 to \$71.25.

HOW ABOUT SOME LOCAL TALENT to keep the monster heat at bay? On **July 8, Miss Aurora Briar**, a contestant for the upcoming **Miss Mint Julep Pageant** invites you to Keys West, 817 West Dallas. Her "A Salute to Showtunes" event starts at 7 p.m. and benefits **The Montrose Clinic**.

Dial 713-571-7870 or visit [www.keyswest.com](http://www.keyswest.com) for more info.

ATTENTION ALL DIRECT-TV subscribers. HotGG was shocked when we were flipping channels over the long holiday weekend to find **LOGO**, the much heralded and delayed queer channel from MTV. But there it is, on channel 263 (right next to the Soap Channel, no need for flipping!) So far the fledgling network has been running a lot of familiar queer-centric films, including "The Hunger," "Priscilla" and "Six Degrees of Separation" with a few 30 minute reality shows thrown in and an **Indigo Girls** documentary that seems to be on a loop. Still it's nice to see here

in Houston.

IF YOU MUST BE OUTSIDE AT LEAST be by the water. **Bering Omega Volunteer Social Committee** presents "The Bering Omega Summer Social."

The Volunteer Social Committee invites all volunteers, staff, board members and friends of Bering Omega to attend. This splashy event is for everyone, but if you are looking for a way to help those in need, this is an incredible organization. **July 9 from Noon to 5 p.m.** at volunteer **Brian O'Leary's house**, 701 Garden Oaks Blvd. Bring your swimsuit, towel and appetite for great barbecue. To keep the kids entertained, they are providing a bouncy moonwalk. At 2 p.m. the little ones can enjoy a fun-filled activity with Arts Alive!

But don't worry, there will be plenty of fun for the adults too. They're serving hot dogs, burgers, various snacks as well as soda, beer, wine and frozen margaritas. When you RSVP, please answer to the question "Are you bringing kids?" This will help them a bit in the planning. All attendees please be aware that there will be no life-guard on duty. Guests use the pool at their own risk. All children under 12 years old must be accompanied by an adult in the pool and the parents/guardians are expected to supervise their children at all times at this event. For more information call **Jennifer Sullivan** at 713-524-9304 x104 or visit [www.evite.com/bpoleary@houston.rr.com/bocs-social](http://www.evite.com/bpoleary@houston.rr.com/bocs-social). To **rsvp**, email **Brian O'Leary** at [bpoleary@houston.rr.com](mailto:bpoleary@houston.rr.com).

IN OTHER POOL NEWS, REMEMBER **Rich's** is throwing a pool party every Sunday during the summer. Lay by the pool and get in the hot tub. Complimentary food and lockers are provided. Register to win a free cruise from **Aquafest GLBT Cruises**. Also sip on \$3 frozens and \$2.50 domestics. Enter thru Patio doors 2:30 p.m. 18 and up to party, 21 plus to drink. [www.richs-houston.com](http://www.richs-houston.com) or 713-759.9606.

MORE TO DO AT KEYS WEST THIS weekend. HotGG received an email from our pal **Rocky Atwood**, a familiar man about town. It seems he's putting together his first show. Atwood teams up with **Don Gill Productions** for "Loaves and Fishes: An evening of Music and Song" to raise money for the **Metropolitan Community Church Food Pantry**. Atwood will be one of the MC's (and who knows what

else.) **Sunday July 10** at 7:00 p.m. Bring your checkbooks and or non-perishable food items and make this event a winner. 817 West Dallas.

FINALLY ANOTHER DE MEDICI event. Talk about hardworking, this boy is wearing the city out — keep it up! We need his energy, his wit and I need his new business partner's phone number. Hello **Martin Castillo** I'm talking to you! On **July 12** starting at 5:45 p.m., Medici and Castillo Public Relations and Events with **Mark Wood**, president of **Houston Stonewall Democrats** will be hosting a Sky Box party at the **Toyota Center** for 100 people to honor of **Janine Brunjes**, president of the **Hollyfield Foundation**. **Aqua Fest Cruises** is giving away a cruise at halftime plus lots of other goodies will be provided like a chance for a fan to win a picture taken with the **Comets** at a practice session

## HoVo on the go-go

by Cindi of **Hollywood Portrait Studios**. After the game roll over to **Berry Hill** on Montrose to launch their **Ladies Night** with cool décor and DJ. Admission to the Sky Box party is \$35 and the after party is free.

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If you have any club announcements or events, email them to [jhooks@houstonvoice.com](mailto:jhooks@houstonvoice.com) or call 713-529-8490. See you on the Go-Go!

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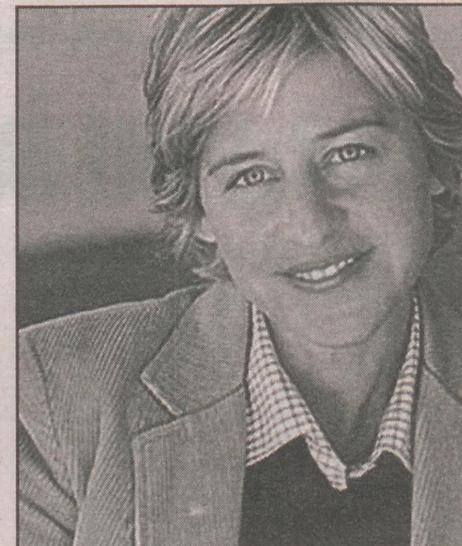
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**dish** There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

# Dancing in the dark?

ABC eyes nighttime show for Ellen, Lauper wins suit against landlord and Roy Horn's case is closed



Life is good for **ELLEN DEGENERES**. Not only does she have a hit daytime talk show, a handful of Emmys and new girlfriend **PORTIA DE ROSSI**, but her name is being bandied about as the first woman to host a late-night talk show.

The New York Post's Page Six reports that DeGeneres has been talking to ABC about doing a show that would take the place of "Nightline" at 11:30 p.m. during the week after its venerable host **TED KOPPEL** retires in December.

The network's news division has the first crack at the open slot, but Page Six's spy says that if they can't come up with something, DeGeneres would step in with a new show to replace both "Nightline" and **JIMMY KIMMEL**'s struggling talk show that currently airs after it.

"There have been meetings with DeGeneres going on for a while," the source says. "If news can't come up with something, this is something they are exploring as a possibility."

A spokesperson for DeGeneres says that any negotiations are "news to Ellen" and a rep from ABC said the rumor is "total baloney."

Makes sense, since DeGeneres recently told People magazine that she's signed on the dotted line for six more years of her highly rated daytime talker.

"I could see doing it longer," she told them. "At some point the dancing isn't going to be cute anymore. Like, when I have a walker."

### Paying the rent

For years, Dish has loved **CYNDI LAUPER**, the gay icon and civil rights supporter, but now she is starting to hate her: Do you know the diva only pays \$988.56 a month in rent? Try finding an efficiency in Dupont for that much.

But no, she only pays that much for a four-bedroom apartment. In Manhattan. On the Upper West Side!

Well, she had to go through plenty of legal wrangling to get it, according to the New York Times.

In 1992, the owners of the Apthorp, the building where Lauper lives with her husband (actor David Thornton), rented an apartment to Shlomo Baron, who signed a lease stating that he wouldn't be using the home as his primary dwelling. That freed the apartment from its rent stabilization, and the Apthorp raised the rent from \$507.85

Ellen DeGeneres' name is being bandied about for a nighttime talk show, which would make her the first female to have such a job.

to \$2,400. The building pulled such tactics with several apartments.

Baron then sublet the place to Lauper, charging \$3,250 a month. In 1996, Lauper and her husband sued Baron for gouging on the rent and a court ruled that since he never occupied the apartment, his tenancy was "illusory" and that the apartment should still be subject to rent regulation.

In 2000, the couple sued the building to have the rent reinstated at \$507.85. Last Thursday, the New York Court of Appeals ruled that the rent should be rolled back to \$988.56.

### Unsolved mystery

The Associated Press finally got its hands on the official report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture about why **ROY HORN**, the magician who was one half of the flamboyant, gay-vague **SIEGFRIED & ROY** act, was attacked by a tiger during their show in Las Vegas in October 2003.

The report, which contains the Mirage hotel's internal investigation, the work of the Las Vegas Police Department, and witness testimony, was issued in September. And the reason it gives for Horn being attacked: Well, they don't know.

The results were inconclusive but some of the suggested causes and urban legends about the attack were debunked. No, it was not an audience member with big hair. No, it was not a terrorist attack. No, it was not a mind-altering smell sprayed on the tiger.

Guess we'll never know.



Cyndi Lauper



Roy Horn

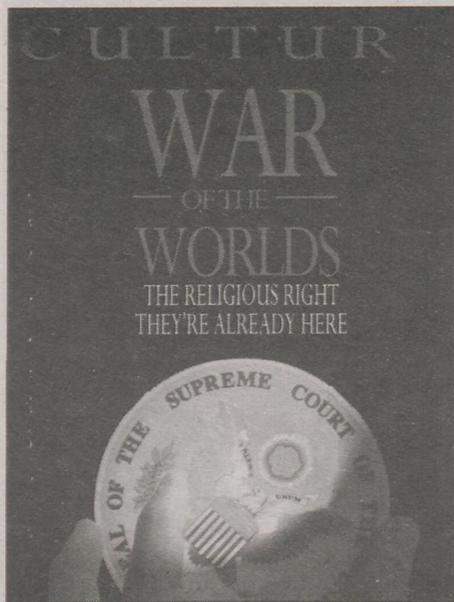
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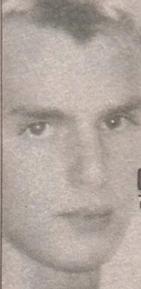
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## bitch session



Why is it that the men who say they are tired of the bars are the men who make the bars tired in the first place?

EVER NOTICE THAT THE GUYS WHO complain about hot guys being shallow are only interested themselves in guys much hotter than they are?

THE REASON I STOPPED TALKING TO you when you said "five inches" was because the picture obviously showed a "four incher." I'll date small guys, but I don't date liars.

THE MAYORS WHO ILLEGALLY married gay couples should get into trouble for it. They broke the law. Would we appreciate it if local politicians decided to defy anti-discrimination or hate crime legislation?

FACE IT. I'M BETTER LOOKING THAN Clay Aiken and you can't have me.  
**BITCH BOY RESPONDS:** Talk about chinning a low bar.

FOR THOSE PEOPLE WHO THINK that "falling out" is just a cute way of saying they did too much GHB. Wake-up, it's no different than an overdose!

THE GUY WHO THINKS HIS FRIENDS got syphilis by having safe sex needs a reality check. Syphilis is like any other STD; you get it by having unsafe sex.

WE MOVE INTO DYING OR DEAD neighborhoods and bring them back to life. When we're almost done, the "progressive breeders" move in and undo everything we have accomplished. We can't marry, but we can drive up real estate and make the bitches pay way more than any intelligent person would. Ain't life grand?

IF YOU THINK I'M HOT FOR BEING 42 and you want to hit on me, don't start the conversation with: You look hot for being 42.

I AM A GAY MAN WHO LIVES A perfectly normal life, and I take pride in who I am. I don't find it necessary to go clubbing every weekend or screw anything that moves. I am appalled that the gay culture has to be about sex, drugs and

clubbing. No wonder heteros want to shut us down.

**BITCH BOY RESPONDS:** Some people, even some gay people, just can't stand it if someone somewhere is having a good time.

I AM NOT IN THE CLOSET. I JUST think being a homosexual is normal, and I don't need to "come out." Come on, how stupid is it for a heterosexual to have tell his friends he's straight? I don't see the difference.

SEN. SAM BROWNBACK OF KANSAS is probably anti-gay because kids teased him about how gay his last name sounds.

WHO SAID I USE STEROIDS? THIS ASS and six-pack abs are all-natural. Don't hate me because I'm beautiful.

WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY, FRUSTRATED or just feel inferior, bitch back!

EVERYONE SAYS THEY'RE STRAIGHT, but how come I see them and hundreds of other shirtless boys out at the gay clubs?

HOW COME I CAN'T DONATE BLOOD? Because some damn gays don't wear condoms?

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THEY'RE FROM out of town, back off! That's how new diseases spread.

TO THE GUY WHO COMPLAINED THAT there aren't enough country-and-Western gay bars: The same people who listen to country music voted for President Bush. That's why!

TO THE QUEEN WHO PONDERES THE intelligence of gay people joining organizations that don't want us: I am in the Army and every day I change straight people's views about what a gay man is. Maybe more of us should get out in the world and show everyone that we are just like them.

SO WHAT IF I'M 25 AND DON'T WANT to date a 45 year old? Why don't you sleep with a 65 year old, and then call me an age snob!

IT'S FUNNY HOW FROM THE BACK you can't tell the difference between a femme and a twink. They both have hairless bumps for buns, a bleached-out product-coated coiffure, mince when they walk, titter when they talk, and scream when disturbed. Ain't it great we have diversity?

WHY ISN'T SOMEONE EDITING THESE bitches. There are so many grammar errors such as the inappropriate use of question marks in a declarative sentence? There are also exclamatory sentences that fizzle out because there's no...

**BITCH BOY RESPONDS:** Oops!

**Editors' note:** These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch? Call 1-800-858-8088 or e-mail: [bitch@expressgaynews.com](mailto:bitch@expressgaynews.com)

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