

## Fantastic fantasy

Cirque du Soleil's 'Alegria' is stunning entertainment not to be missed.  
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## INSIDE



Members of the Montrose Softball League start the new season with opening ceremonies and an afternoon full of games.

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At a meeting in Houston this month, Coca-Cola shareholders will consider an anti-gay proposal by stockholder Hou-Yin Chang.

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Everything from the cast to the wardrobes shine in the Mae West-powered 'Dirty Blonde.'

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# TX gay divorce reversed

Judge dismisses filing by two Beaumont men after state attorney general intervenes

By PENNY WEAVER

BEAUMONT — A Texas district court judge has reversed his ruling on a gay divorce request after the state's attorney general intervened in the case.

Judge Tom Mulvaney, who presides over the 279th District Court in Beaumont, the seat of Jefferson County, last month granted a divorce decree to two men: Russell Smith, 36, and John Anthony, 34. The two obtained a civil union in Vermont last year and attempted to have it dissolved in Texas.

Last week, Mulvaney set aside his earlier order granting divorce and ordered a new hearing on the case. On Monday, the judge dismissed the divorce filing after Smith requested his petition for dissolution be discharged or withdrawn.



Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott intervened last week after a judge granted two Beaumont men their petition for dissolution of a civil union they obtained in Vermont last year.

A spokeswoman in Mulvaney's office said Thursday that the judge granted Smith's notice of non-suit, or withdrawal of the case, the same day it was filed.

"There are no matters before the court on this issue," the spokeswoman said. "It's similar to a dismissal. On their own, they're withdrawing their suit."

After Mulvaney initially granted the decree last month, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott intervened and said the court could not grant a divorce where a marriage never legally was present.

On March 27, Abbott filed a petition asking that Mulvaney set aside his March 3 ruling granting a divorce for Anthony and Smith.

"Texas law does not provide for a dissolution of a civil union, and a divorce cannot be granted where a marriage never existed," Abbott said.

"Texas law does not provide for civil unions, nor does it recognize civil unions established in other jurisdictions," the attorney general wrote in his petition to the court. "Likewise, Texas law does not provide for the dissolution of civil unions established in other jurisdictions."

Please see DIVORCE on Page 5

# Gays face difficult decisions at tax time

Unable to file as 'married,' partners must decide who claims what on IRS form

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

Like many Americans, Mitchell Katine pays a professional to prepare his federal tax return each year.

"My taxes are too complicated for me to do them properly," says Katine, an attorney who lives in Houston with his partner of three and 1/2 years and their two children.

Still, Katine's return may be simpler than many other gay and lesbian couples, at least in terms of how to reflect his relationship.

"I'm the only one working, so I am the only one that files a tax return at this time," Katine said.

Katine's partner is a stay-at-home dad, so he doesn't have to file an income tax return. That means the couple doesn't have to decide who would claim as dependents the two children both fathers legally adopted —



Despite relationships that are just as financially intertwined as those of many heterosexual spouses, gay couples have no way to reflect their reality on tax returns, where they have to file as 'single.' (Photo illustration by John Nail)

they go on Katine's return.

But gay couples in which only one partner works still face complicated tax questions, like whether the working partner can claim the other as a dependent.

And as the annual April 15 tax deadline

looms, dual-income gay couples find themselves faced with difficult decisions about which partner should claim the assets and responsibilities that in actuality they share.

Please see GAY TAXES on Page 4

## around houston

### Entire run of 'Big Voice' benefits PFLAG/HATCH

"The Big Voice: God or Merman?," a new production by a gay couple, is now playing in Houston. A portion of all proceeds from the play's entire April 4-19 run will benefit PFLAG-Houston (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) and the PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation. The opening night of the production, which is Friday, April 4, is a special event dubbed PFLAG Night. Since its inception in 1999, the PFLAG/HATCH scholarship organization has awarded more than \$200,000 to college-bound gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teens. PFLAG-Houston works with families, educators, community and religious groups and others to broaden the understanding and acceptance of gays. In "The Big Voice," creators Jim Brochu and Steve Schalchlin tell the story of an encounter with a woman named Annette, who cancelled her own suicide after seeing their musical, "The Last Session." Also part of the storyline, a young boy's first transcendent spiritual experience happens at a matinee of "Gypsy" starring Ethel Merman. Not a musical about Merman per se, the "musical solo for two" is a profile of two lives: those of Schalchlin and Brochu. Media reviews of this performance have been glowing. Praising Schalchlin and Brochu, the LA Times said, "The lingering afterglow suggests that the biggest voice in question belongs to neither God nor Merman, but to both performers and their witty, inspiring confessional."

### **i** MORE INFO

"The Big Voice: God or Merman?"  
April 4-19  
7:30 p.m. Tues., Wed., Thurs. and Sunday  
8 p.m. Fri. and Sat.  
4 p.m. Sat. and Sun. matinees, April 6 and 19  
Tickets: \$30  
Stages Repertory Theatre  
3201 Allen Parkway  
713-527-0123  
www.stagestheatre.com  
www.thebigvoice.com

### Spring Fling benefits Houston gay youth

The annual PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation (PHYSF) dinner, the group's major annual fund-raiser, is set for next week. PFLAG Houston and H.A.T.C.H. (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals) jointly created PHYSF, which offers a scholarship program to assist worthy youth in the Houston area in pursuing a college education. The scholarship program is for lesbian, gay bisexual or transgendered students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement while in high school or college. In addition to helping provide for higher education, PFLAG and H.A.T.C.H. leaders hope that scholarship recipients will provide positive role models for other youth who cannot be open about their orientation. The program was originated in 1994 by PFLAG-Houston, which was able to grant one four-year scholarship with a total value of \$4,000,

according to the group's Web site. The number and total value of the grants have increased each year. In 1998, H.A.T.C.H. combined its new program with PFLAG's ongoing effort and PHYSF was formed. In July 2002, a total of \$73,500 was awarded in college scholarships. The 2002 scholarships ranged in amount from \$10,000 over four years to \$2,000 over two years. The application deadline for the PHYSF program this year is May 1. An application form is available on the PFLAG-Houston Web site.

### **i** MORE INFO

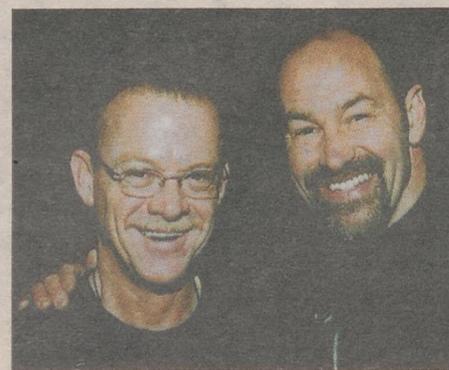
PHYSF Spring Fling Dinner  
6:30 p.m. Friday, April 11  
Warwick Hotel • 5701 Main St.  
Tickets: \$100 per person, or \$150 for VIP tickets  
713-864-3135

PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Fund (PHYSF)  
P.O. Box 667010 • Houston, TX 77266  
713-942-7002

PFLAG-Houston  
713-467-3524 • www.pflaghouston.org

### Night In Black Leather raises nearly \$13,000

The annual Night In Black Leather, presented by Don Gill Productions, this year raised about \$13,000 for its beneficiary, the Houston Buyers Club. The annual fund-raiser this year was held on March 22 in memory of the late Carolyn "Cuervolyn" Roberts and the late Creath Robinson, both longtime support-



This year's NIBL kick-off party held on Friday, March 21, at Keys West featured Dr. Tony Mills (right) as the special guest speaker. Montrose fund-raising leader Don Gill (left) emceed the annual event. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

ers of the event. According to Don Gill, emcee for the night, this ninth annual NIBL raises the total amount of money garnered for charity to more than \$82,000 over the years. The last NIBL that benefited HBC raised about \$14,000, Gill said. "It would have been nice to do that again, but with the economy the way it is, I was happy to get to \$13,000," Gill said. "I have been told that this was the best production that NIBL has ever had. Held at Rich's club, the event featured a wide range of entertainment, a silent auction and plus a special guest, International Mr. Leather 2003 Stephen Weber. Gill noted that Weber's IML sash was misplaced after the event, and asked that anyone who might find the sash call Gill at 713-521-0911. Entertainers who donated their time and talent to NIBL 2003 included Jules, Andy Clements, Whorehouse Girls, Johnny Montgomery and Regina Dane.



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Maundy Thursday Service  
April 17 - 7pm

Good Friday Service  
April 18 - 7pm

Easter Sunrise Service  
April 20 - 6:30am

Easter Sunday Service  
April 20 - 9am & 11am

local news

# Montrose Softball League opens new season



With blue skies and sunshine conducive for outdoor sports, members of the Montrose Softball League held opening ceremonies for the 2003 season on Sunday, March 30, at PJ's Park in Spring. Local entertainer Marsha Carlton sang the National Anthem to open the event. Throwing out the ceremonial first pitch was Houston gay political activist Clarence Burton Bagby, who also is president of the board of directors for the Houston GLBT Community Center. Softball players and fans of all ages participated in the opening ceremonies, which were followed by an afternoon of games. This year, 21 teams are participating in the MSL spring season. The regular season ends on June 8, followed by

playoffs. Formed in 1979 as part of the Montrose Sports Association, MSL became an independent organization and renamed itself in 1983, according to the group's Web site, www.montrosesoftballleague.com. This is the league's 23rd year serving the gay male and lesbian adult softball community of greater Houston. The league operates as a non-profit organization with league funding generated via player and sponsorship dues. MSL is a member of the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance, and teams winning their respective divisions (B, C, and D) earn the right to represent both MSL and the City of Houston at the Gay Softball World Series each year in August. (All photos by Dalton DeHart)



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**APRIL 16 DECISION:** Coca-Cola shareholder Hou-Yin Chang of South Carolina has proposed an anti-gay measure that Coke stockholders will consider during a meeting in Houston this month. Page 6.



**EDITORIAL:** The anticipated U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Texas sodomy law challenge, a case that started with Houstonians Tyrone Garner and John Lawrence, should be about equality, not sex. Page 12.



**GAY TRAPEZE ARTIST:** Among the cast of Cirque du Soleil's entertaining 'Alegria' is Gaston Elie, who has realized a lifetime dream with the troupe. Page 15.

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## national news

## Domestic partner benefits create 'tax hit' for couples

GAY TAXES, continued from Page 1

## Gay couples not 'married'

Gay single people don't face any different issues when filing their income taxes than other singles, according to Marta Shen, a CPA and senior financial advisor with the Atlanta-based firm of Shen, Clarke & Associates, a financial advisory branch of American Express Financial Advisors, Inc.

"They are equivalent to straight single tax filers — there's no difference there," said Shen, whose client-base is more than 50 percent gay.

But gay couples must confront a variety of questions that their married counterparts don't face.

Couples who receive domestic partner benefits will find themselves paying more taxes than if they were married, and must decide if the benefits outweigh the costs. Couples who own a home together must decide who gets to deduct the interest paid on their mortgage.

Couples who share a savings account have to determine who claims the interest income. Couples who are both legal parents to their children must figure out who should claim the kids as their dependents, and there are myriad other issues.

"The negative impact is that a gay couple has to do a lot more tax planning in advance," said Harold Lustig, president of San Francisco-based Lustig Financial Services and author of "4 Steps to Financial Security for Lesbian & Gay Couples."

The 2000 Census documented 594,391 households led by same-sex "unmarried partners," and gay activists claim the number is a vast undercount of gay couples in the country.

But despite clear evidence that gays are forming families, the federal government still offers no legal recognition for the relationships.

Gays are not allowed to marry anywhere in the U.S. And while gay partners can be just as financially intertwined as many heterosexual spouses, the Internal Revenue Service uses marriage to determine your tax filing status, the basis on which the income tax you owe is calculated.

"In general, your filing status depends on whether you are considered unmarried or married," the IRS explains in Publication 501, "Exemptions, Standard Deduction and Filing Information."

"A marriage means only a legal union between a man and a woman as husband and



Financial advisors **Marta Shen** and **Harold Lustig** said gay couples could benefit by not filing joint tax returns if they plan carefully.

wife," the publication warns.

Even if gay couples consider themselves married, they shouldn't try to submit a married tax return, according to Eric Erickson, spokesperson for the IRS field office in Atlanta.

Tax returns include your Social Security number and Social Security information includes your sex. "Basically, we do a check with your Social Security number, and it's going to come up [that both filers are the same sex]," Erickson said. "We would catch it and your return would be rejected."

The Internal Revenue Service can't independently make changes to tax filing status, Erickson noted.

"Every piece of the tax law has been written by Congress," he said. "We are only here to enforce it."

## Tax disadvantages for gay couples

Being unable to acknowledge relationships on tax forms is just one of the many types of discrimination gay couples face because they can't marry, according to Evan Wolfson, executive director of the Freedom to Marry Collaborative, a national group lobbying for equal marriage rights.

"Marriage is the gateway to a vast array of legal and economic privileges that cuts across virtually every area of life," he said.

One major way that the tax code clearly discriminates against gay couples lies with the taxation of domestic partner benefits, according to the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay political group.

"As a growing number of employers offer domestic partner benefits, gays and lesbians are discovering a hitch — domestic partner benefits, unlike health benefits provided to

married heterosexual couples, are taxed as income," HRC notes on its FamilyNet Web site.

With most health benefits, the employee pays part of the cost and the employer pays part of the cost. Unlike with spouse benefits, the employer's contribution towards DP benefits is taxable income for the employee.

For example, if a company contributes \$3,000 per year towards spouse benefits for a straight employee who earns \$30,000 a year, the employee is still taxed on \$30,000.

But if the company contributes the same \$3,000 to domestic partner benefits for a gay employee who earns the same salary, that employee will be taxed on \$33,000.

"The tax hit is significant enough that many people who are eligible for domestic partner benefits don't take advantage of them," said Lara Schwartz, senior counsel for HRC. "It's a very real disadvantage."

HRC is lobbying for federal legislation to solve the problem, said Barbara Menard, deputy political director for the Washington-based advocacy group.

Sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), H.R. 935 would change tax laws to treat domestic partner benefits like spouse benefits. It currently has 30 co-sponsors and is pending before the House Ways & Means Committee.

Meanwhile, gay couples also need to be aware of other ways they can be hurt by the tax code because their relationships aren't treated as marriages, such as estate taxes, real estate transfer taxes and capital gains taxes, Schwartz said.

Older gay couples may be particularly hard hit. "For example, on the sale of a home, under federal tax code a single person is entitled to up to \$250,000 in gains on the sale tax-free, but a married couple gets twice that," Schwartz said.

"For a gay couple that has lived in a home for a very long time and is planning on using [the income from the sale] as retirement savings, that lower threshold can absolutely create a tax hit," she said.

## Possible perks for partners

Despite tax disadvantages on issues like domestic partner benefits, not filing as a married couple actually offers some significant possibilities for gay partners to reduce the amount they owe, according to financial advisors Shen and Lustig.

"On the tax side, I think it is better to be gay — if you know what you are doing," Shen said.

As an "overall strategy" for gay couples, "the person who is making the most should deduct the most, and whoever is making less should claim as much of income as possible," she said.

The key to saving money is to look at the couple's taxes as a whole, so that the total paid by both partners is less, Lustig agreed.

"You have to look at the pool of money as our money, and the tax paid as our taxes paid," he said.

Lustig advocates a strategy called "bunching" — where the person with the higher income itemizes deductions, taking all of them, and the person with the lower income takes the IRS' standard deduction.

But making such a strategy work requires planning. For example, the partner who plans to claim the mortgage interest deduction has to be named on the mortgage, and if both partners are named, the one who plans to claim the deduction should write the checks, Lustig said.

And if couples are making charitable donations, those checks should also be written by the partner who will itemize deductions, he said.

Gays can also find ways to lower their taxes when it comes to claiming dependents, Shen and Lustig said.

In gay families in which only one partner is legal parent to their children — because second-parent adoption or joint gay adoption isn't allowed in their area — there is no choice in who can claim the child as a dependent.

But if both partners are legal parents to the child, "the person with the bigger tax problem should take the child as a dependent if they meet the rules of dependent deductions," Lustig said.

The rules for claiming someone as a dependent can also provide opportunities for gay couples in which only one partner works, although Lustig strongly recommended seeking professional tax help before trying to claim your partner as a dependent, due to the complexity of the law.

The IRS lists five tests to determine if someone can be claimed as your dependent, including that you must have provided more than 50 percent of their support and they must not have a gross income of \$3,000 or more during the year.

One particular part of the tax code raised issues for gays, Shen said — a clause mandating that "a person does not meet the member of household test if at any time during your tax year the relationship between you and that person violates local law."

## Common tax questions facing gay couples

Note: These answers are a general guide. Every gay couple's individual circumstances are different. To see how these issues will impact your individual situation, consult a tax advisor.

*I receive health insurance through my partner's domestic partner benefits. Do I have to pay taxes on the benefits, or does my partner?*

Your partner will have to pay taxes on imputed income for the DP benefits that her company provides.

*My partner and I own our home jointly. Who can deduct the mortgage interest? Do we have to split it, or can one of us take the whole deduction?*

If the mortgage is held jointly, technically the person who pays is the person who gets to deduct.

However, there is a taxpayer ID where the mortgage interest is reported on form 1098 and that person is the "primary" person on the mortgage and person the IRS "connects" with the mortgage. If the person that is not the primary takes it, it's best to have an attachment to both returns explaining it.

Offentimes, certified public accountants will look at it both ways, i.e. what the ramifications would be if one partner (usually the one that makes more) takes it or if they split it, and what percent each should take to make it the most beneficial.

*My partner and I have a joint savings account that earns taxable interest. Who claims the interest as income on our taxes?*

Again, there is a "primary" person who the IRS connects the interest to who gets the 1099-INT. Usually, it's best to have the partner earning less to report since it'll be in a lower tax bracket.

*My partner and I are both legal parents of our child. I'm the birth mother and she adopted our child through second-parent adoption. Which one of us can claim the child as a dependent? Or can we both?*

Unfortunately, there can only be one exemption made on one child, therefore you're going to have to decide who that will be. Both of you have the ability to claim the child as long as the other five requirements of dependency (provide more than 50 percent of the support, less than \$3,000 in income, citizenship, relationship/member of household, not filing jointly) are met. It would make sense for the one in the higher bracket to claim the child.

*I work outside of the home, and my partner is a stay-at-home parent. Can I claim my partner as a dependent on my taxes?*

Most accountants will agree with this as long as the five dependency tests above are met.

*I work outside of the home, and my partner, who has HIV, receives disability checks. Can I claim him as my dependent?*

It depends. If the five tests above are met, then usually you can claim him as a dependent. The big question is if it will jeopardize any benefits, like Medicare, Medicaid and/or SSI. That's a question that is best left to an attorney specializing in this field.

Source: Marta Shen, senior financial advisor with the Atlanta-based firm of Shen, Clarke & Associates, a financial advisory branch of American Express Financial Advisors, Inc.



## local news

## Men reportedly will not pursue divorce further

DIVORCE, continued from Page 1

Under Vermont law, a civil union is legal between two members of the same sex, but a full-fledged marriage must be between a woman and a man.

"Because these two men were never married under either Vermont or Texas law, they cannot legally petition for divorce under the Texas Family Code," Abbott said. "The court's final decree of divorce is void as a matter of law."

Angela Hale, a spokeswoman in Abbott's office, said part of the reason for the attorney general's involvement is: "We don't want to see a precedent set."

Beaumont attorney Ronnie Cohee, who represents Smith, said that even though Texas law refers to a husband and wife when talking about marriage, state law refers to "parties" when addressing dissolution.

Lee Taft, director of the South Central Regional Office for Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, which works for equal civil rights for gays, said any comment he would have on the case would be speculative. Lambda is not involved in the proceeding.

"At this point, it's my understanding that the clients have made a decision not to pursue this," Taft said. "There isn't really a substantive issue to discuss."

"I don't know how the attorney general was procedurally invited into the issue," he added. "This is not a Lambda case. I'm not familiar with the details of it."

According to a press release from Abbott's office, Mulvaney reconsidered his decision and concluded that the attorney general "intervened and presented a legal argument opposing the granting of a divorce, arguing that this court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. It is this court's opinion that this case should be re-litigated, particularly with respect to the legal issues of subject matter jurisdiction and the Full Faith and Credit Clause."

So, two days after Abbott intervened,



Lee Taft, regional director of the Dallas-based Lambda Legal office, said Thursday that although Lambda is not involved in the Beaumont case, he was told that the two men have decided not to pursue the issue further.

Mulvaney vacated his initial order and ordered a new trial.

Reached at his home Tuesday, Anthony

declined to comment. Smith's attorney, Cohee, was in court Thursday and did not immediately return a telephone message. The spokeswoman for Mulvaney said the judge could not comment further on the case, other than to confirm that it has been dismissed as per the petitioner's request.

Smith, who petitioned for the divorce, said getting the divorce in Texas was expensive and strenuous. But getting the union dissolved in Vermont would have required Smith or Anthony to live in that state for at least a year before a final divorce hearing.

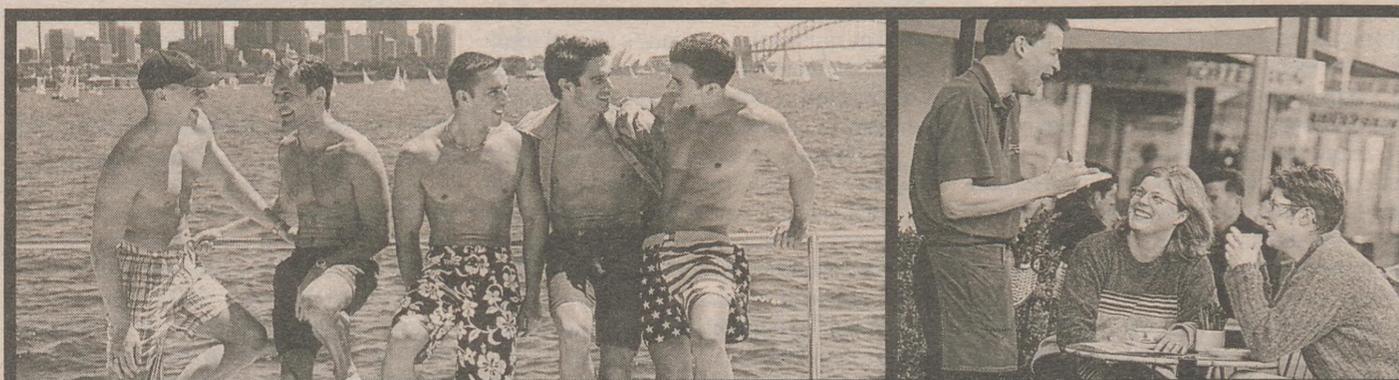
Smith said he had to get a legal divorce for financial reasons. The couple did not

file joint income tax returns, but they did have joint auto and life insurance. The two also ran several businesses together and the division of their assets and properties was done by agreement.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

 MORE INFO

Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund  
South Central Regional Office  
3500 Oak Lawn Avenue, Suite 500  
Dallas, TX 75219-6722  
214-219-8585 • www.lambdalegal.org

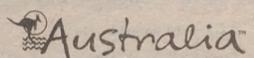


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Spirit of Australia



Judge Tom Mulvaney, who presides over the 279th District Court in Beaumont, last month granted a divorce request from two men. He set aside that ruling last week.

Both packages include roundtrip air from Los Angeles departing April 28-August 28, 2003. Higher rates for other dates apply. Price is per person based on double occupancy. Add-on fares available from other cities. Must purchase by August 28, 2003. Seats limited and may not be available on every flight. Hotel subject to availability. US/foreign taxes of approximately \$97, including September 11th Security Fee, are additional. After ticketing, no change is allowed to outbound sector; inbound may be changed for \$300. Cancellation and other restrictions apply.

## national news

## Coke urged to drop gay-friendly employee policies

Atlanta soft drink giant asks shareholders to reject proposal from S.C. man

By JENNIFER J. SMITH

A South Carolina man wants Atlanta-based Coca-Cola to change its gay-friendly policies for its 55,000-person workforce and end its support for the "homosexual lifestyle."

Hou-Yin Chang, a resident of Orangeburg, S.C., who owns 49 shares of Coca-Cola stock, proposed a shareholder resolution to be voted on at the company's April 16 annual meeting in Houston. The measure is one of eight put before shareholders.

Chang's resolution "recommend[s] the shareholders request the Board of Directors to amend the company's corporate, diversity and equal employment policies to exclude reference to sexual orientation, and cease support of homosexual lifestyle and other deviant lifestyle behaviors opposed by the majority of people."

Chang said the company's performance has been hurt by its gay-friendly policies.

"What we have seen for the past couple of years of Coca-Cola performance is the way they have insulted shareholders, most of whom belong to middle America — people who fear and understand God and

believe in the traditional family," he said. "We are concerned that companies are putting the lifestyle of Sodom and Gomorrah on their agendas."

Coke recommends that shareholders reject Chang's proposal, according to Ben Deutsch, director of marketing communications.

"The Coca-Cola Company is committed to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce to benefit and grow our business, and to ensure that our company is the best place possible to work," Deutsch said. "We do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation."

Chang, like any shareholder owning more than \$2,000 worth of stock for more than a year, may submit a resolution to be voted on during the company's annual meeting. If a majority of shareholders agree, Coke's board of directors will take it under advisement, according to the company.

If Chang's proposal fails to garner a majority vote, but does gain three percent of the total votes, it can be resubmitted for the company's 2004 annual meeting, according to Racquell White, a Coca-Cola media manager.

Chang said he also wants Coke, which employs 5,000 people in Atlanta, to discontinue its corporate sponsorship of the Atlanta Pride Festival. Instead, the company should sponsor AtlantaFest, a gospel festival, and more NASCAR events, "because people at those events share our values," he said.

Coke should also discontinue offering



Hou-Yin Chang, a South Carolina resident who owns 49 shares of Coca-Cola stock, proposed a shareholder resolution asking the company to rescind policies that 'support [the] homosexual lifestyle.' (Photo courtesy Chang's Web site.)

domestic partner benefits, which the company initiated in 2001, Chang said.

Since submitting the resolution in February, Chang has received 10 letters, evenly split between supporting the proposal and criticizing him, he said.

Chang's approach is similar to that used by gays shareholders, who use their stock in companies to advocate for gay-friendly policies, according to Shelley Alpern, vice chair for the Equality Project, a non-profit organization lobbying for gay equality in the workplace.

"There has been a tiny handful of reso-

lutions like this over the past three years, and they never do well," Alpern said. "They have never lead any company to rescind their non-discrimination policy."

Kim Mills, education director for the Washington, D.C.-based Human Rights Campaign, called the resolution "wrong-headed."

"We don't think it will pass and it's not binding," she said.

Coke rates a 71 out of a possible 100 from HRC on its approach to gay issues, Mills said. The company offers domestic partner benefits, a non-discrimination policy and a gay employee group, but still has "a ways to go because they don't have a non-discrimination policy that covers gender identity and they don't offer diversity training that covers sexual orientation or gender identity," she said.

Coke offers general diversity training that "does not specifically mention any single group," White said.

In 2001, the company fought off a shareholder proposal to dilute the company's domestic partner benefits by excluding an anti-gay resolution from proxy materials sent to shareholders.



## MORE INFO

The Coca-Cola Company  
P.O. Box 1734 • One Coca Cola Plaza  
Atlanta, GA 30301 • 404-676-2121  
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## legislative news

### Nashville council defeats bias measure for gay city workers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Metro Council defeated a measure that would have extended non-discrimination protections to gay city workers, according to the Tennessean. With the council vote tied 18-18, Howard Gentry, the city's vice mayor, broke the deadlock and voted against the bill. "In my research I have not determined that there have been adequate number of complaints on Metro government on behalf of employees of Metro government to justify passing a law against discrimination when discrimination hasn't been proven in Metro government," Gentry said, according to the newspaper. The bill was a more limited version of a measure that would have extended citywide housing and employment protections to gays in public or private sectors. That measure was withdrawn in February after two months of debate. "I don't think government should enter the bedroom," said Council member Bettye Balthrop, who voted against the bill, according to Tennessean. The measure needed 21 votes on the 40-member council to get to a required third vote. It passed its first reading March 18 on a 17-16 vote.



Nashville Vice Mayor **Howard Gentry**, in a rare vote, broke a deadlock on Tuesday when he voted against a bill prohibiting anti-gay bias among city workers.

### House panel in Minn. considers complaint against lawmaker

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — The state House Ethics Committee formally accepted charges Monday alleging Rep. Arlon Lindner (R-Corcoran) brought disrepute to the House when he made remarks later called anti-gay and racist by Democrats. The panel set a hearing for April 7 in which its four members will determine whether to dismiss the complaint or send it to a full hearing. The announcement came as Lindner's attorney, James Anderson, made clear his plans to use the hearing to draw more attention to the bill Lindner was promoting when he offended colleagues. Lindner's bill would remove state civil rights protections for gays. Anderson said Democrats filed the ethics complaint to frighten conservative lawmakers away from Lindner's bill. Lindner recently questioned whether gays were persecuted by the Nazis. "We think denying the Holocaust is so outrageous and so ahistorical that we'll have no difficulty showing he brought the House into disrepute," said House Minority Leader Rep. Matt Entenza.

### Colo. bill would strip medical bias protections from gays

DENVER (AP) — State representatives have removed a provision protecting gays from discrimination by health care workers. Rep. Don Lee (R-Jefferson County) took a routine measure dealing with agency regulations and amended it to remove protection for gays under rules set by the Medical Services Board. It was approved by the House last week. Lee argued that gays don't have legal claims against discrimination now and the rules would create a special protection for them. Senate Bill 88 passed on a 34-29 party-line vote, with a lone Republican, Rep. Gregg Rippey of Glenwood Springs, siding with Democrats. An angry House Minority Leader, Rep. Jennifer Veiga (D-Denver), said Lee's approach also would allow for discrimination against people who are older, believe in a certain religion, belong to an ethnic group or have a physical disability.

### Gay-inclusive hate crime legislation gains support Ark.

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Proponents of hate crime legislation pending before a House committee say the measure would help track the crimes in the state, one of only five states with no hate crime laws on their books. The state also ranks near the bottom in reported hate crimes. Sen. Tracy Steele (D-North Little Rock) has proposed a bill that would impose "restorative measures" on defendants found guilty of a hate crime. The bill would apply in the cases of a defendant who is convicted, or who pleads guilty or no contest, to crimes that deprive a victim of major life functions in crimes motivated by race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability. Under the bill, a judge could include "restorative measures" in the sentence, including counseling and educational classes. The bill passed the Senate earlier in March and a House committee is expected to take it up soon. In Arkansas, only three law enforcement agencies representing 81,000 residents participated in the FBI's voluntary hate crime reporting program in 2001, the most recent year for which data is available. The state reported three hate crimes in 2001.

### Lawmaker seeks support for gay marriage ban in Ohio

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Sen. Lynn R. Wachtmann (R-Napoleon) is seeking support for legislation that would outlaw same-sex marriage in the state, similar to one passed in the House last year, according to the Gay People's Chronicle. That measure was later defeated in the Senate. Wachtmann is recruiting co-sponsors while seeking to fast-track the measure. The previous bill would have blocked all domestic partner benefits and voided custody and visitation orders and financial benefits granted outside the state. If Wachtmann's bill is assigned a number, it stands a good chance of being passed in the legislature this year, as the House is more conservative this time around and the Senate leadership is more sympathetic to the measure, according to the Chronicle.

From staff and wire reports

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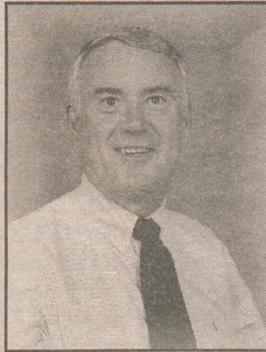
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## around the nation

### Palm Beach schools ban bias against gay students

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The Palm Beach County School Board voted 5-2 on March 24 in favor of adding sexual orientation to the school system's non-discrimination policy for students, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported. "It took a long time, but the school Board made the right decision, and we are ecstatic," said Jamie Foreman, president of the Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, which lobbied for the policy. The school board rejected similar policies in 1991 and 1999, saying that gay students were protected under general anti-bias rules. During a public comment session before last week's vote, speakers favoring the pro-gay policy outranked opponents three-to-one. Those who argued against the measure said it would encourage homosexuality. "If you really care about the gay students, you would warn them about the disease and destructiveness that come with this lifestyle," said Chris Nick, a Lake Worth resident.



Tom Lynch, Palm Beach County School Board Chair, was one of two board members who voted against a gay-inclusive bias policy covering students, though the measure passed 5-2. He said existing policies would cover harassed students.

### Fla. lesbians file lawsuit over retirement community

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A university English teacher and middle school librarian complained March 31 to Leon County officials that their efforts to obtain housing at the Westminster Oaks Retirement Community was denied because they are lesbians. "They said, 'if you say that you're cousins or if you say that you are sisters' ... well we're not cousins and we're not sisters," Joy Lewis said. "We haven't lived our lives with tiny lies or big lies." The San Francisco-based National Center for Lesbian Rights filed the complaint claiming Westminster officials violated the Leon County Fair Housing Code when it denied housing to the couple, who are otherwise qualified to live there. Lewis, 62, and Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, a 63-year-old English professor at Florida State University, have lived together for 13 years. Their original application was rejected in 1999. They were placed on a waiting list on their second try while the company's board of directors reviews a policy that excludes non-related people from living in their facility.

### Calif. Supreme Court gets Berkeley Boy Scout case

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The California Supreme Court said it will review the city of Berkeley's decision to discontinue free berthing at a public marina for a group affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America. The justices agreed during their private conference March 26 to hear the Sea Scouts' challenge. The scouts are fighting a 1998 city decision that made their nonprofit group ineligible for free docking because of its membership and leadership policies against gays. The Sea Scouts stopped receiving free marina access after Berkeley City Council members passed a 1997 ordinance prohibiting the city from subsidizing groups that discriminate. In their appeal, the scouts maintain that if Berkeley is going to provide free berthing to nonprofits, it cannot deny free access to nonprofits whose views run counter to those of City Hall. But a lower appeals court dismissed that argument, holding that "Berkeley's actions have not required appellants to stop discriminating" against gays.

### Mo. court ruling may help gay families

COLUMBIA, Mo. — A recent court ruling involving a heterosexual couple could set an important precedent for gay families, according to attorneys and activists. Last month, St. Louis County Circuit Judge John R. Essner allowed Steven Gain visitation rights with the child he parented for nine years as his own. The child was born in 1989, 10 years after Steven and Terry Gain married. When the couple split up in 2001, Terry Gain attempted to deny her husband visitation rights, revealing that the daughter was not biologically his. But preventing the daughter from visiting the man she thinks of as her father would be too painful, the judge ruled. "It's just not fair to the girl to have to suffer this additional grief," Essner said. The case marks the first time that a Missouri court has recognized the rights of a non-biological parent without declaring the biological parent unfit, according to the Columbia Missourian newspaper. "This gives the opportunity for people in nontraditional relationships, such as gays and lesbians, to make legitimate requests for visitation," said Ken Jones, editor of Missouri Law Weekly.

### Border Patrol employee sues over alleged transgender bias

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A Border Patrol specialist who underwent sex-change surgery has sued the government, alleging discrimination. Tracy Nichole Sturchio, formerly known as Ronald Sturchio, claims in an U.S. District Court civil rights lawsuit she was harassed and discriminated against because she is a "transgender citizen." Her lawsuit says that she can't wear a dress to work or use the women's restroom, and has been subjected to sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The lawsuit seeks \$500,000 for compensatory and punitive damages, along with an unspecified amount for mental anguish and emotional distress. Sturchio has been employed by the Border Patrol since 1991, and has worked at the Spokane office since July 1998. The defendants are Attorney General John Ashcroft, Border Patrol Chief Gustavo De LaVina and Michael J. Garcia, commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Both sides declined to comment on the case.

From staff and wire reports



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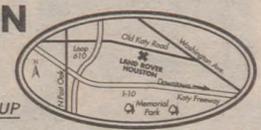
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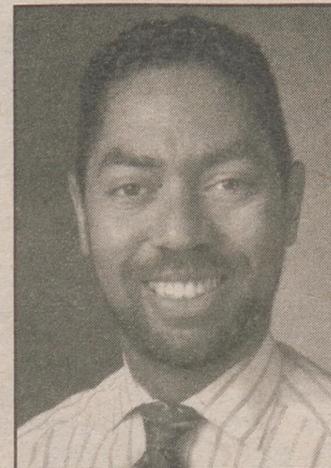
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## medical report

### Gay, bisexual men continue using spermicide despite risks

ATLANTA — Up to one-third of gay and bisexual men continue to use nonoxynol-9 during anal sex, despite repeated warnings that the spermicide doesn't prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and may boost the risk of HIV infection, according to a new study by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. It's clear that the facts about the risks of nonoxynol-9 "had not reached or impacted many men," study co-author Gordon Mansergh, a behavioral scientist at the CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, told Gay.com UK. Last September, more than 80 medical professionals and health advocacy organizations spoke out against the popular spermicide citing evidence that the thin layers of the rectum are more susceptible to toxic damage from the spermicide. Nonoxynol-9 is often used in sexual lubricants, gels and condoms. In the CDC study, 573 gay and bisexual men from San Francisco were interviewed in the fall of 2001. Sixty-one percent of those surveyed said they heard of nonoxynol-9. Of those men, 83 percent said they'd used nonoxynol-9 products during their lives, and 67 percent — or one-third of all men surveyed — did so during anal intercourse within the past year. The findings of the study appear in the April 2003 issue of the journal AIDS.



Christopher Harris, former president of the Gay & Lesbian Medical Association, warned that gay men should stop using products that contain nonoxynol-9 because it can cause harm to the rectum, increasing the chance for HIV transmission.

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### Advertising campaign by Calif. gay center targets smokers

SAN JOSE, Calif. — The city's Billy DeFrank Center launched a print ad campaign featuring local people in an attempt to curtail smoking among gays, according to the San Jose Mercury News. A \$260,000 grant from the American Legacy Foundation paid for the campaign, dubbed "Cigarettes are My Greatest Enemy." "Some people are outraged — they view the campaign as too negative because it doesn't try to encourage smoking cessation from a more positive perspective," Patrick Soricone, DeFrank's executive director, told the newspaper. "They're pretty hard-hitting ads, and they are getting people's attention, so that's a good thing." Tobacco use among gays is nearly three times greater than the general population, in part because gays are heavily targeted through advertising, said David Martinez, tobacco education specialist at DeFrank. The ads feature people describing a personal obstacle they overcame, along with their commitment to quitting smoking.

### Older brothers increase likelihood siblings will be gay, study says

SYDNEY — Boys with a statistical average of 3.5 older brothers are twice as likely to be gay as boys with no older brother, according to a study by Ray Blanchard, a psychologist at the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health in Toronto. The study, first published in a specialist journal, Archives of Sexual Behavior, and later in New Scientist, was reported by Agence France-Presse. A boy with four older brothers was three times as likely to be gay as boys with no older brother, according to the study. Blanchard, in the past, found a strong link between homosexuality and older brothers in a group of 302 gay white men. Later studies took the idea further, according to New Scientist, suggesting that the link is present across cultures. "If Blanchard is right, then clearly, as average family size decreases, so will the incidence of male homosexuality," according to New Scientist.

### HIV counselors go online in new Mich. prevention campaign

FERNDALE, Mich. — The Midwest AIDS Prevention Project launched a new program — SexEd4U — in which trained HIV counselors join America Online chat rooms to reach men seeking other men for sex, according to the Detroit News. "This creates a safe haven for dialogue for people who want to remain anonymous," Michael Odom, the program's creator and director, who also serves as one of a handful of monitors for the chat rooms, told the newspaper. "Chat rooms are becoming the meeting places for gay men that bathhouses and bathrooms used to be." The project is the first in Michigan and is modeled after others in Boston and Miami, he said. Odom said he talked with some 72 people in January.

### Microbicide research receives boost from Gates Foundation

SEATTLE (AP) — The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gave \$60 million Monday to help scientists develop a cream or gel that prevents sexual transmission of the AIDS virus among women in developing countries. The foundation made the donation to the International Partnership for Microbicides in Silver Spring, Md. It is one of the largest the foundations made for global health initiatives and is a massive investment in the field of microbicides, which the foundation and IPM said is largely ignored by major pharmaceutical companies. Microbicides are gels, films, sponges and other products applied topically to help prevent sexual transmission of HIV. There are more than 50 microbial substances under development, said Zeda Rosenberg, IPM's chief executive officer. Although years of testing remain, it's possible that a microbicide could be available by the end of the decade, she said.

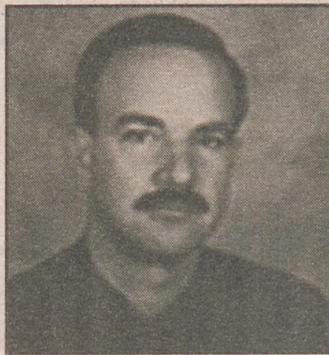
From staff and wire reports



## police beat

### Top gay cop in Los Angeles suspended after molestation allegation

LOS ANGELES — Gay deputy LAPD Police Chief David Kalish was relieved of duty following a five-month internal investigation into allegations he molested a male youth in the 1970s, according to the Los Angeles Times. In a civil claim filed Oct. 7, a man alleged that Kalish “harassed, sexually molested and assaulted” him. Kalish was assigned to paid leave pending a decision expected in a few weeks by prosecutors on whether to file charges. Kalish was a police officer at the time of the alleged abuse, when he participated in a program for people ages 14 to 21 aimed at at-risk youths. Prior to the selection of William Bratton as LAPD chief last year, Kalish was considered to be one of the leading candidates for the job. Gay groups charged that Bratton improperly handled Kalish’s suspension, but Bratton said anyone under similar allegations would be treated the same.



David Kalish, a Los Angeles Police Department deputy chief, is on paid leave as prosecutors decide whether to file charges against him in a 20-year-old incident of alleged molestation. (Photo by AP)

### Trial opens for confessed killer of gay Dutch politician

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — The man who confessed to killing gay Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn told a panel of judges March 27 that he acted out of concern for the country’s Muslim minority. Volkert van der Graaf, 33, appeared in court for the first time since he was charged with the assassination. He repeated his confession and pleaded guilty to illegally possessing firearms and sending Fortuyn threats before the attack. Van der Graaf was arrested minutes after Fortuyn was gunned down in a parking lot outside a radio studio May 6, just days before general elections. Fortuyn was running for prime minister on an anti-immigration platform. Van der Graaf said he followed Fortuyn’s career and was concerned he was using “the weak parts of society to score points” and gain political power. Van der Graaf is charged with premeditated murder and faces up to life in prison if convicted.

### Three sentenced in separate cases for knowingly transmitting HIV

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Two men and one woman charged with violating their states’ laws against knowingly transmitting HIV were sentenced last week. Aaron Dahlberg, who faced 25 years in prison for felony transmission of HIV in Iowa, was sentenced March 28 to three years probation after pleading to a lesser charge of willful injury. He was accused of lying to another man about being HIV positive before they had consensual sex. In South Dakota, one man and one woman were sentenced March 25 to serve jail time for intentionally exposing others to HIV. William K. Jenigen, was sentenced to 45 days in jail and five years probation. Nichole White Bear Claws was sentenced to three months in jail and five years probation. The cases are the second and third prosecutions under the law since it was enacted in 2000. “Now having our third case, I would expect that future cases would be more scrutinized by our judges and that harsher sentences would be imposed,” said Mark McNeary, Brown County State’s Attorney. Jenigen and his then-partner, Jay L. Woods, were both charged last May. Woods’ trial date is not set.

### Killer of Calif. gay couple gets 29 years to life

REDDING, Calif. (AP) — A white supremacist who admitted killing a gay couple was sentenced March 27 to 29 years to life in prison. James Tyler Williams, 32, will serve the sentence after he completes a 21-year federal sentence for fire bombing three synagogues and an abortion clinic. Williams was sentenced after pleading guilty in the July 1999 shotgun slaying of gay couple Gary Matson, 50, and Winfield Mowder, 40, as they slept in their home. Williams’ brother Matthew committed suicide in jail while awaiting trial in the same killings. The two were arrested six days after the killings while attempting to pick up a package they ordered with one of the victim’s credit cards. A month before, the brothers set fire to the synagogues and an abortion clinic in suburban Sacramento. Both entered guilty pleas in that case and were sentenced to federal prison in November 2001.

### Fla. man pleads guilty to bias crime in beatings of gay men

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — A man pleaded guilty March 31 to beating three men out of anti-gay bias as they left a Gay Pride party last year and now faces up to 30 years in prison. Devin Scott Angus, 21, is set for sentencing April 21. “I hope he gets some prison time, plus counseling,” said Stephen Hair, one of Angus’ three victims. Hair and two friends were leaving the party when Angus confronted them, yelling an anti-gay slur before punching and kicking them, police said. One victim suffered blows to the back of the head that opened his scalp. Hair suffered a skull fracture, a cracked sinus and a broken front tooth. Authorities have not identified another man who participated in the attack, said Pam Bondi, spokesperson for the Hillsborough County state attorney. Angus is currently free on \$6,000 bail.

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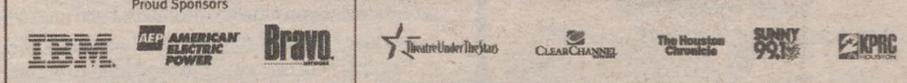
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Issue 1171

# Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

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## editorial

# Sodomy fight is about equality

Those who see the Texas sodomy case as a vehicle for sexual liberation should look elsewhere. Our movement should advance equality, not sex.

By CHRIS CRAIN

**T**HE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM about last week's oral argument in the landmark lawsuit challenging the Texas "homosexual conduct" law is that a majority of the Supreme Court will vote to strike

down the statute. Three of the nine justices (Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and David Souter) aggressively challenged the constitutionality of the law, which criminalizes sodomy for same-sex partners only, and another (John Paul Stevens) voted more than a decade ago to strike down the sodomy law in Georgia.

Only one more vote would amount to a majority, and even neutral observers like longtime New York Times correspondent Linda Greenhouse reported that Justice Sandra Day O'Connor — who unlike Stevens voted to uphold Georgia's sodomy law in the infamous 5-4 *Bowers vs. Hardwick* decision — seemed to be looking for some way to strike down the Texas statute.

But if O'Connor has her way, the court will likely be taking "the easy way out," striking down the Texas law for violating the Constitution's guarantee of "equal protection under the law." The laws of only three other states, which also criminalize homosexual sodomy without any similar prohibition against heterosexual oral and anal sex, would also be unenforceable under such a ruling.

But relying on "equal protection" to strike down the Texas law would leave on the books the sodomy laws in another nine states, because they ban oral and anal sex for gay and straight sex partners alike.

To knock out all 13 laws, the court would have to conclude that the Texas law violates the "fundamental right to privacy" that unmarried adults have to decide, in the privacy of their own bedrooms, to engage in consensual sex. That would mean overturning the 1986 holding in *Bowers vs. Hardwick*.

Justice O'Connor is famous for frustrating advocates of all stripes by deciding cases on as narrow a basis as possible, ostensibly to preserve for the court the ability to consider new facts and circumstances down the road. That bodes poorly for a vote from her on an expanded "fundamental right" that covers private sexual choices, including sodomy.

She is also no fan of *Roe vs. Wade*, the controversial ruling that the decision to terminate

a pregnancy was protected by that "fundamental privacy right," though she begrudgingly upheld the precedent several years ago as a settled issue that shouldn't be reopened.

If Justice O'Connor won't avail herself of the prerogative to change her mind (and her vote) in the *Bowers* case, then Justice Anthony Kennedy is the only likely candidate to create a majority on this "broader" ruling on the Texas sodomy law.

He gave no particular indication in the oral argument last week that he is prepared to do so, and the historic opinion he authored seven years ago in *Romer vs. Evans*, which struck down an anti-gay amendment to the Colorado Constitution, was based on equal protection, not the "right to privacy."

**BUT ARE WE REALLY WORSE OFF IF THE Supreme Court won't go so far as to declare that there is a fundamental right to make private sexual choices?**

As appealing as such a ruling might be to gay and lesbian Americans, who are regularly subjected to grief and discrimination for our private sexual choices, there isn't a strong anchor for such a ruling in the text of the U.S. Constitution. In fact, that document says nothing at all about a right to privacy, except against having our homes searched without justification.

That's why *Roe vs. Wade*, which snatched the issue of abortion from consideration by the elected branches of government, remains so controversial today. There may come a happy day when homosexuality has reached such broad acceptance that a judicially imposed right to make private sexual choices will be accepted by the public and will not galvanize the opposition, but that day surely has not arrived.

It is the case, as noted, that only an expanded "right to privacy" will strike down the sodomy laws in those nine states that criminalize oral and anal sex for gays and straights alike. Also left intact would be laws against "fornication" (extramarital sex of any type), which are still on the books in a surprising number of states, although they have not been used as widely as sodomy laws to stigmatize gays in custody battles and the like.

But on the other hand, a ruling by the Supreme Court that the "fundamental right to privacy" extends to all private sexual choices may not be nearly as useful to the broader movement for full equality and gay civil rights.

IN THIS RESPECT, IT WAS THE LAWYER for the state of Texas, Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal, who really got it right. At the very end of his folksy but otherwise abysmal performance before the Supreme Court last week, Rosenthal warned the justices that striking down the state's sodomy law might result in a parade of horrors that includes the legalization of gay marriage.

The state of Texas and its advocates on the Supreme Court, most vocally Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Antonin Scalia, searched high and low last week for any rational justification for treating homosexuals and heterosexuals differently under the state's sodomy statute.

The best they came up with is the proposition that a majority of citizens, acting through their government, is entitled to impose "moral judgments" through laws. "You can make it sound puritanical," Scalia acknowledged from the bench, but that doesn't make it unconstitutional, he said.

Pressed to come up with other justifications, Rosenthal could offer only the preservation of families and procreation, but those claims withered under the scrutiny of Justice Ginsburg, who pointed out that the same year (1973) that Texas criminalized homosexual sodomy, it decriminalized adultery and fornication. For the knockout punch, she noted that Texas places no sexual restrictions on heterosexuals who cannot have children or on gays who wish to serve as foster parents.

If the majority of the court sides with Justice Ginsburg, and concludes that "morality" and "family values" aren't justifications for treating gay couples differently from straight couples, then you can wave goodbye to the only serious justifications ever given for marriage laws that discriminate against same-sex couples.

And don't look to tradition to support such "morality laws," though Justice Scalia offered it up last week. Justice Stevens shot back that there was a long history of laws against interracial marriage before the Supreme Court's landmark case of *Loving vs. Virginia*, which struck them down on equal protection grounds in 1967.

Paul Smith, the top-notch advocate for the two Houston gay men challenging the Texas sodomy law, also noted that a history of official discrimination didn't save laws criminalizing interracial cohabitation, which the court has also struck down.

The Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, which has done a generally excellent job in the Texas case, has been too shy about acknowledging the implications for gay marriage in an equal protection victory in the Texas sodomy case. If we believe in our own equality, we shouldn't play cute and disingenuous, suggesting even out of court that sodomy laws and marriage laws aren't related.

All in all, a strong ruling that vindicates our right to equal treatment from our government, grounded in the actual text of the Constitution, is worth far more than an extension in the court's troubled jurisprudence on the "right to privacy," however good such a victory might feel today.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of Houston Voice and can be reached at ccrain@window-media.com.



**viewpoint** ELLEN FELDMAN



If we are going to wear chains, let them be harnesses of the leather and metal variety, not psychic boundaries from our true selves.

# Sunny thoughts at a Black Party

AM SITTING ON THE BACK OF THE padded banquet at the Roseland Ballroom, scene of the annual Black Party in New York. I am propped up against the wall. My husband is sitting between my legs rubbing my feet while I rub his forehead.

We are both pretty much blissed-out, and we are watching the "bees" — our word for the rhythmic swarm of humanity that is trooping before us. My husband moved in with me after I took him to his first Black Party (did I find the right man for me or what?), and we have declared it to be our anniversary.

I'm considering visiting my friend Kenny ("Ooooh, I just love straight people!") down in the ladies room, which is filled with many gents and only a few ladies tonight. But my thoughts have caught a wave, so to speak, and my mind is surfing through an idea.

I'm meditating on being happy with one's self and the teachings of Quentin Crisp. Yes, I have a little chemical wax on my board, but the thoughts are my own.

Suddenly, sitting next to us are two matching mustachioed muscle men trying to get into two matching metal harnesses. The harnesses are very complicated. My mind is still hanging 10, but we try to help. This is a not-uncommon good-Samaritan action at the Black Party.

I used to have a little joke with myself: There are two rules to happiness. One,

never do anything with your life that would make a good opera; and two, never put food in your gym bag. Both are recipes for disaster.

I'm beginning to believe that Rule No. 3 should be to keep your costuming simple. ("Sweetie, I don't think that goes over your head.")

MR. CRISP WOULD BE VERY PROUD OF me. His philosophy, which I embrace, states: Find out who and what exactly you are and be it completely. He always thought it was a good thing to get famous for being what you are.

He would approve of my writing a gag hag column. "Do you like my gardenias?" I ask of the men on the dance floor. "They're my signature." Nearly everyone stops and takes a whiff.

Mr. Crisp is one of my heroes and mentors. I say "is" rather than "was" even though the marvelous gentleman has passed away, because I keep him with me like many other ghosts. I believe that his philosophy transcends lifestyle choice, and is a universal.

He tells us that the limits we know to be our own are comfortable, not imprisoning. He spoke of the chains we forged for ourselves as being light; as opposed to the heavy chains society hangs on us.

Meanwhile, our friends are getting nowhere with the chains forged by leatherman. "No! I'm positive that abso-



lutely no part of this thing goes around your knee. Now let me undo it so you can stand up."

IT TAKES A HUGE AMOUNT OF discipline to stay in your "forgery." The person you have created holds your personality and represents yourself to the world.

As every drag queen knows, there is no affectation without effort. You have to be completely committed to the idea of being yourself and throw all your resources toward that goal.

"These are really gorgeous, guys, they must have cost a fortune."

It can be painful when others don't understand your quest. "Hey, watch out for that spike there." It can mean sacrifice; there will be no easy way out.

"You know, Love, you're not going to be able to go the bathroom without taking this all off." But in the end, it is how you bring your true self to the people who can

appreciate you. "Oh man, did that guy seriously cruise you or what!"

No matter how difficult it is to reinvent yourself to suit your own design, the truth is, there is just no joy without it. No one can ever be happy living someone else's life. "Oh, no thank you for offering, Love, but it's just a waste of good drugs on me."

Our new, beautifully armored friends have kissed us goodbye and danced off into the swarm. I'm beaming at them with auntie-like pride. They wanted to present themselves as something special to the people they care about, and they have succeeded.

I helped, which is, after all, a representation of my persona. And now, I think it's time my man and I start dancing again.

@ Ellen Feldman lives in New York City and can be reached at [ellen.feldman@radiangroupinc.com](mailto:ellen.feldman@radiangroupinc.com).

## Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



## on the record

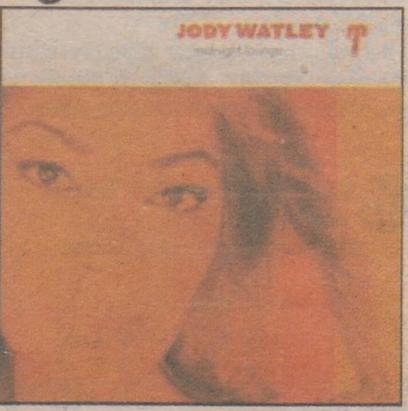


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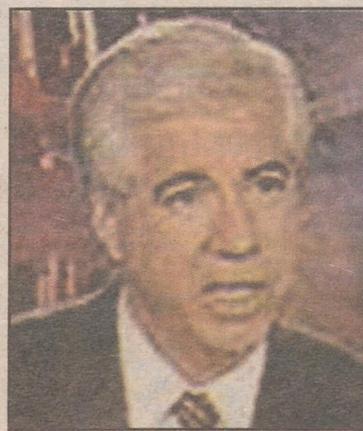
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"If anything, we're helping to improve this part of the neighborhood," **John Logston**, general manager of Flex, a Columbus, Ohio, bathhouse, which has spent some \$250,000 on renovations to an abandoned movie house but faces opposition from neighborhood activists who argue "that type of environment isn't good for the community" (Columbus Times-Dispatch, March 4)

"My mother is totally cool about my being gay; she's very supportive and very OK about it. My girlfriend and I are even allowed to sleep in the same bed when we are at the house, which is weird. Because when my mother and stepfather visit us, we don't let them sleep together — because it's creepy and weird. We have very impressionable animals."

Comedian **Suzanne Westenhofer**, in the first national broadcast TV appearance of a comedian who introduced herself as an out lesbian (CBS' "Late Show with David Letterman," March 18)

"We are writing history, though we still don't know whether anyone will read it. Sometimes we don't know how far to go, or whether we aren't going far enough."

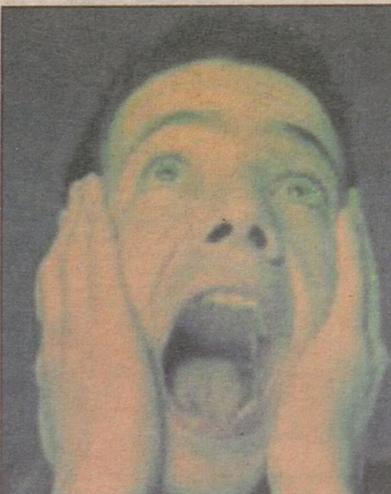
**Nelson Joel Valdez**, a volunteer at an AIDS prevention center in Havana, Cuba, who helped develop a television ad featuring two men and a transvestite exchanging condoms (South Florida Sun-Sentinel, March 16)

"It's not me being a pain-in-the-ass activist, as seen by the university. This is our life. This is our home, and this is a big deal."

**Carolyn O'Laughlin**, a residence hall director who resigned her position after being threatened with disciplinary action unless her partner moved out of O'Laughlin's quarters in an on-campus, single-sex dormitory (The State, East Lansing, Mich., March 18)

"America's homosexuals might better spend their time telling Leann Rimes that she's just too young to settle for dance-music diva-dom, or getting Richard Gere to do more musicals. Whom I'd really like to hear from are the country's heterosexuals: Are they all this stupid?"

Film critic **Wesley Morris**, arguing that the recent Cuba Gooding Jr.-Horatio Sanz comedy "Boat Trip" contains outrageous stereotypes of everyone, not just gays (Boston Globe, March 21)



"It's an issue that's even foreign to gay people. Transgenders are not always gay." **Michael Slaymaker**, a gay activist in Orlando, Fla., on why an anti-discrimination ordinance passed last November did not include "gender identity" as a protected category (Orlando Sentinel, March 24)

"Of course, everyone knows by now. We're at war — that's my boyfriend and me, of course, not Iraq."

British gay comedian (and Sean Hayes look-a-like) **Simon Happily**, who recently split with his partner of seven years, doing emcee duties during Comedy Camp night at the London's Bar Code (March 25)



**DINING:** The top menu item lives up to delicious expectations at Thelma's Bar-B-Que. **Page 20.**

**THEATER:** A talented cast and notable costuming help make 'Dirt Blonde' a must-see story of diva Mae West. **Page 19.**



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PAGE 15

# Out on the Bayou

## Pure

### Cirque du Soleil's 'Alegria' a must-see for gay Houstonians

By DON MOSER

**I** DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CIRQUE du Soleil's "Alegria," but I sensed from the beginning that something very special was happening here. I was elated to attend a performance by the troupe. For years I had heard and seen the news about Cirque du Soleil, this French Canadian, award-winning conglomeration of acrobatics, dance, music, and street theater under a big top, but never had I witnessed the entertainment. A mobile of circling birds overhead greeted me upon entering the contoured boutique and concessions tent. Their fanciful images and shadows helped ready my imagination for what was to come in the big top. After very friendly ushers helped me to my seat, I watched the lighting operators scale their ladders to man hi-tech equipment for the coming light show. The circular center stage had an inclined back area in which the musicians played, and a catwalk above capped the performance space. As events came and went, the layout of the performance area played a crucial role, with entertainers using the configuration to maximum visual effect.

I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE show in detail, even if I wanted to. Suffice it to say that if you have never seen Cirque du Soleil, you will be utterly amazed. I have seen quite a few live performances in my time, but I have never experienced such a confluence of imagination, skill, talent and fun.

The costumes were works of art; the music most original and mood enhancing; the clowns and attendants funny in a street theater way. But the performing artists were pure entertainment. From the Fast Track trampoline act to the Synchronized Trapeze to the Contortionist to the Flying Man to the Russian Bars and the Manipulation streamers...each of the 11 or so acts was awe-inspiring.

All in all, about 50 artists performed that night, and I thought to myself, "How is it possible to create such events where superlatives were not enough?"

To help me better understand the incredible creativity, dedication and organization involved in producing such a

Please see **ALEGRIA** on Page 16



All photos by  
Kimberly  
Thompson

# out on the bayou

## Gay trapeze artist flies with Cirque du Soleil

ALEGRIA, continued from Page 15

spectacle, the circus's public relations firm here in Houston arranged an interview for me with Gaston Elie, an openly gay trapeze artist with this elite circus.

Reggie Lyons, the company's traveling publicist of four-and-a-half years, escorted me through the ultra-modern circus camp to the multi-national kitchen for the meeting. Elie, a third generation trapezist from Argentina, arrived in great spirits, and I soon learned about his career and the art of trapeze.

Beginning at the age of 8, Elie performed with several circuses worldwide before realizing his dream: to perform with Cirque du Soleil. At the age of 29 and now in the prime of his performing life, Elie displayed the congenial professionalism of an artist at

ease with himself and with success.

I asked him what physically and mentally was important to be one of the best on the trapeze, and fortunately, he replied in one of the four languages he speaks that I can understand.

"Your wrists and stomach muscles must be especially strong," Elie explained. "We perform 10 shows a week and two rehearsals, so you have to have that strength. Mentally, you are two people: First, you're thinking about executing the trick well with your partner, and second, you must perform for the audience. If a mistake is made, sometimes that is the harder of the two."

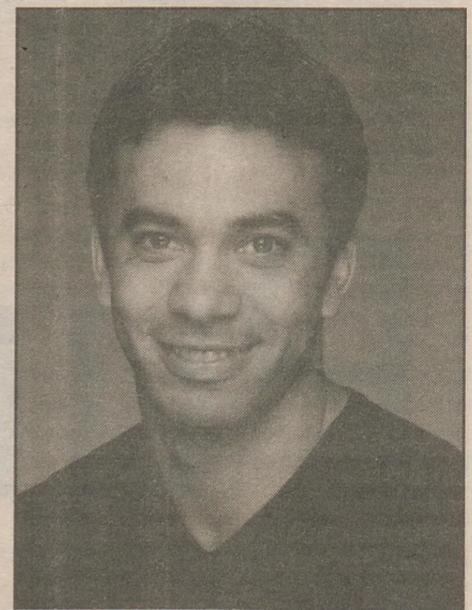
Regarding his performance that night, I asked Elie which part was the most difficult.

"First, our act in 'Alegria' is intentionally choreographed to get the audience to swing with us," he said. "We want to see members in the audience rock back and forth in their chairs. The most difficult part is the finale, because we are tired to begin with and it has several difficult moves to create excitement."

Since Elie's performance occurred at the beginning of the production, I asked him if he is involved any more with the two-hour production.

"Oh, yes. All of the artists play several roles and duties after their moment in the spotlight," Elie said. "I assist with the placing of hoops and helping out with other acts as well."

Finally, since it was close to midnight



Gaston Elie, a gay trapeze artist who performs in 'Alegria,' said that working with Cirque du Soleil has been a lifetime dream.

by now, I asked Elie about his career and his family.

"I was performing with my family in Argentina when I saw a Cirque du Soleil performance in Montreal in 1992," he recalled. "The new techniques I saw inspired me to work towards joining this circus. It was very hard and expensive. I had to move to Montreal to study with the

best trapeze coach in the world, in my opinion. My parents are very, very proud of me and have supported me all the way.

"And, by the way, American audiences are the best," Elie said. "Please encourage your readers to come to 'Alegria,' Cirque du Soleil."

You heard the artist. Do everything possible to see this marvelous production.

### **i** MORE INFO

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## Brideshead revisited, again

Producers of new gay movie try to line up two hot studs for lead roles

MANY GAY TELEVISION AFICIONADOS — or those with VCRs — will remember the miniseries "Brideshead Revisited," a tale about a common youth in the 1920s who falls in love with his aristocratic Oxford roommate and his roommate's sister.

The 1981 drama, based on the novel of the same title by Evelyn Waugh, was infamous for its homosexual content. It also made a star out of **JEREMY IRONS**, who portrayed the commoner.

Regardless, Hollywood has its hands on the material and is planning to adapt this modern classic for the big screen, according to the London Daily Express.

"We've got the pick of all the best young actors in the world for the two main characters," producer Douglas Rae told the paper. "The ideal casting would be **COLIN FARRELL** and **JUDE LAW**. They are two of the most beautiful looking men in the world."

The article — we all know that the British press is so sensationalistic it would make **JERRY SPRINGER** blush — makes it seem like the two have already signed up for the movie and are in wardrobe fittings right now, but Rae's statement is more of a wish list than reality.

Gay men everywhere wish Law and Farrell would star in an adult movie, too. But that doesn't mean it's actually going to happen or that the actors themselves will be interested in tackling the roles.

With or without Farrell and Law, Rae is still optimistic about his new project. But most producers usually are.

"I was one of those people who grew up with the [television] version," he says. "I think that more than 20 years later, there's room for a new generation of people who never saw the movie."

That may be true, but few will head to theaters if they cast **PETER FALK** and **JASON ALEXANDER** in the film's lead roles. Farrell and Law are a whole different story, but let's wait to see who signs on the dotted line before getting behind this picture.

**DIEHARD FANS OF THE COMIC BOOK "SUPERMAN"** are a bit peeved about a new script that was floated on the entertainment gossip Web site aintitcoolnews.com.

The script, written by J.J. Abrams, attributes Superman's powers to the blue and red battle suit rather than to his alien origins. It also depicts Lex Luthor as a member of the CIA and portrays Jimmy Olsen, Clark Kent's nerdy sidekick, as a gay man.

Dorks — er, fans — have even created an Internet petition to stop these changes, especially Olsen's homosexuality, from showing up in the movie.



Take **Anthony Andrews** (left) and replace him with Jude Law. Then replace **Jeremy Irons** with Colin Ferrell, and you'll have the new cast of 'Brideshead Revisited.' Maybe. (Photo courtesy of PBS)

"Jimmy Olsen is not gay. Or, at least, he's not out of the closet," the petition, written by an anonymous creator, reads. "Being a dork does not make one gay."

Thank goodness that's true, or all the people who have nothing better to worry about than whether Jimmy gets turned on by a man in tights would be heading to Blake's after signing this petition.

Initial speculation has linked **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE** to the Olsen role, and the singer is slated to play a gay con man on "Will & Grace" in the next few months. This additional gay role might make the sex symbol even more attractive to his substantial gay male following.

There have been talks about the creation of a new "Superman" movie for years. We've already seen Batman, Spiderman, Daredevil and a whole pack of X-Men, but there still isn't a man of steel in sight.



Justin Timberlake

But again, viewers should wait until the ink is dry on this deal before drooling all the way to the box office.

@ Send comments, suggestions to editor@houstonvoice.com.

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## television BRIAN MOYLAN



HBO brings back 'Def Poetry Jam,' focusing on the works of spoken word artists with many different voices.

# Full body slam

IN A WORLD WHERE REALITY TELEVISION sitcoms like "Everybody Loves Raymond" and war-related news dominate the airwaves, HBO's "Def Poetry Jam," which returns for its third season Friday, April 4, takes viewers in a different direction.

Already spawning a popular Broadway version and a touring company of the concept, "Jam" brings the voices of underground poetry slam masters to a mainstream audience. The power is not always in the words carefully wrought and delivered to the expectant audience, but in who utters them.

Many of the artists on the show are people of color, and several in the upcoming season, such as Alix Olsen, Nikki Giovanni, and Staceyann Chin, are lesbians.

Chin, who took time out from appearing in the cast of the Broadway version of the show and from filming several segments for television, told Houston Voice this week that a diversity of voices was the goal of "Def Poetry Jam" producers when deciding on the lineup.

"They were looking for people who were out there making a lot of waves with their work," she says. "I think they were looking for particular faces so that the group they put forward is as inclusive as possible.

"I cover so many of the bases, I'm half Chinese, half black, from Jamaica, and I'm queer," she notes. "If you want diversity, stick me in the foreground."

The show features poets and celebrities — such as Caroline Kennedy, Jewel, Amiri Baraka, Benjamin Bratt, muMs (who played Poet on gay favorite "Oz"), and noted spoken word performer Maggie Estep — Chin still worries about tokenism.

"I think that everybody who is involved in anything where they're trying to be diverse, especially in the climate of a very straight, white world, we all feel like the token," she says. "I try to remind myself though that, even if I am a token, it's an opportunity to add some color and some diversity and sexuality to a picture that has been not that for so many years."

THE CELEBRITY SIDE OF BEING ON television is not always easy for Chin, who moved to New York City because she says it's illegal to be gay in Jamaica. She came to the city to find anonymity and to be out and proud. Issues she faced after arriving here pushed her to use poetry to express herself.



Award-winning slam poet Staceyann Chin always receives attention, but her identity as a queer of color on 'Def Poetry Jam' sometimes takes the spotlight — sometimes to her chagrin. (Photo by Will Hart/HBO)

"I was dealing with being a new immigrant, and I moved here to be an out queer person of color," Chin says. "Then I realized being a black woman is as much a 'handicap' in America as being a lesbian in Jamaica.

"I had a lot of shit to say, basically," she says. "So much of how I exist has to do with language."

It's that language and getting her message to the public that drives Chin to do what she does on stage and television.

"What's great about being on TV is that it helped my career," she says. "But I don't want it to be about me. I want it to be about the ideas."

And if you like her ideas, please let her know — in the proper way.

"I'm moved when people tell me my work moved them. But I don't like when people say, 'Oh, you're Staceyann Chin and you're the best poet,'" she says. "The people who understand my work are the least inclined to yell my name in the street. They understand that it's not about my autograph, it's about making those feelings your own and sharing them with others."

### **i** MORE INFO

'Def Poetry Slam'  
Fridays at 12:30 a.m.  
HBO

## theater DON MOSER



Cast, costuming are just two of the highlights of this play focusing on the irrepressible Mae West

# 'Blonde' is a delight

I THINK CONTEXT IS VERY IMPORTANT, so as I sat down to write about Stages' new production, "Dirty Blonde," I was listening to Three Doors Down's song, "Loser," and had just finished reading Judith Thurman's article in the current New Yorker about artist Vanessa Beecroft's bulimia exhibition, "The Wolf at the Door." How those influences play into this review, I'm not exactly sure, except that a famously sexy female performer, Mae West, and a couple of her obsessed fans are the illuminating context for "Dirty Blonde."

Stages Repertory Theatre has mounted yet another must-see play for Houstonians. Claudia Shear, whom you might know as the screenwriter for several well-received films like "Living Out Loud" and "It Could Happen to You," received Tony and Drama Desk nominations for Best Play for this superb work about Mae West's life and career, told by way of two lonely, admiring fans. Laura Josepher, back in Houston for her third Stages' production, directed this two-hour time capsule, noting that her research revealed West to be one of the best and earliest feminist icons for her use and command of sexuality.

In fact, "Sex" was the name of West's first play, one that was shut down by authorities soon after opening and landed the budding actress/songstress/comedienne/writer in the slammer for a few days (she got no answer upon asking the judge how she could spend her nights). Scathing repartee with innuendo was and is the trademark of West, and no "dame" since could possibly match her mentally (Sarah Bernhardt, though, comes to mind).

Undaunted and even encouraged by the "Sex" brou-ha-ha, West created "Diamond Lil," a huge Broadway hit that established her image as a sex symbol in the American public's mind. From that stage success came the film, "She Done Him Wrong," starring the then-unknown Cary Grant, a film credited for rescuing the near bankrupt Paramount Studios. West worked in radio and television for many years before writing her autobiography, "Goodness Had Nothing To Do With It," finally settling in a Hollywood apartment for her retirement.

It is in that very same apartment that many of the finest moments of "Dirty Blonde" are enacted. That setting, her family mausoleum in Brooklyn's Cypress Hill Cemetery, and a number of vaudeville stages account for most of the locations of this play that alternates between the present and the past of a great career. Actress Susan Oltmanns-Koozin captures that Mae West in the past and embodies Jo, the infatuated fan, in the present. Her voice intonations, body movements, and interactions with a variety of male characters had to transcend decades of time, and she met the demands incredibly. Many moments during her performance had me literally in the room with the real Mae West, and it was only applause that brought me out of the reverie.



Susan Oltmanns-Koozin stars as Mae West in Stages Repertory Theatre's must-see 'Dirty Blonde.'

Accompanying Oltmanns-Koozin in this stage creation of an American icon are the immensely versatile Jeffrey Gimble and Philip Lehl, both of whom play at least a half dozen assorted men in West's life and career. Most intriguing, though, is Gimble's portrayal of Charlie, a young film archivist who is solidly obsessed with this sex goddess, to the point of visiting her grave every year and secretly wearing one of her gowns.

Gimble's range with this character along with the others is wonderful to witness. Lehl plays everything from a grandfatherly Joe Frisco to the very witty drag queen Eddie Hearn. Every new character — and there are several — seem to be an entirely different person.

Outside of a well-written play, strong direction and wonderful enactment are the elements of stage and costume design. It is amazing how Stages' creative staff can fabricate moments of time and many different places so economically, and make the suspension of belief so easy.

Costume Designer Andrew Cloud is responsible for a great deal of that magic, having begun costume research back in November and creating 27 renderings that Costume Shop Manager Brooks Ashley and staff brought to material life. West was and is noted for her larger-than-life persona, and as Josepher states, there is little chance of overdressing her.

If for nothing else, the enjoyment of the costuming would be reason enough to see "Dirty Blonde." That costuming coupled with a gilded vaudeville stage arch, an upright piano for the songs and thickly cushioned furniture round out a stage design wonderfully convincing and enjoyable.

By all means, go see "Dirty Blonde." For as Mae West so naughtily expressed: "Too much of a good thing is wonderful."

### **i** MORE INFO

'Dirty Blonde'  
Through April 13  
7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays  
8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays • 3 p.m. Sundays  
Tickets: \$32-\$42 • Stages Repertory Theatre  
3201 Allen Parkway at Waugh Drive  
713-527-0123 • www.stagestheatre.com

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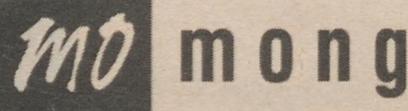
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**dining** J.A. CHAPMAN

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**Thelma's does BBQ right**

THELMA'S BAR-B-QUE HAS BEEN GETTING quite a bit of press lately. From a profile on PBS in January to glowing reviews in publications all across the country, it's the latest darling of barbecue cognoscenti and foodies. So I figured I should head over to the little red-trimmed house in the sketchy Third Ward neighborhood and see what the fuss was all about.

My first visit was at lunchtime. Thelma's sign isn't real big, but I knew I was in the right place because the house was surrounded by cars. I had to park way up the street, and the intoxicating smell of barbecue smoke filled the air as I walked back toward the screened porch that proved to be the entrance.

"Keep the door closed!" someone hollered from behind the counter. I obediently complied, got in line, and took a look around the joint. Thelma's was packed with a mix of downtown workers and folks from around the neighborhood.

The dining room is small, holding about 12 tables of different types and sizes. A jukebox dominates the back wall, and the relish bar and a table with water and tea flank the door. With this many people, it's a challenge to get around. But the crowd is friendly. Eating well will do that to people.

IT'S A PRETTY BASIC SETUP. YOU order, pay, and get your number. Someone comes out from the kitchen carrying Styrofoam containers and calls out numbers to deliver the food. Since this was my first visit, I figured I should try the sliced beef brisket. I ordered a one meat dinner (\$6.75), which meant I got the sliced beef and two sides. I settled on cole slaw and potato salad.

Contrary to what I'd been hearing, the service was pretty quick. I had to wait about 10 minutes at peak lunch hour for my food. And what a pile of food it was! A mountain of sliced brisket swam in a tangy-sweet vinegar-based barbecue sauce. Two huge scoops of cole slaw and potato salad filled the other two sections in the box. A little plastic baggy of thick sliced white bread came on the side. I could hardly wait to dig in.

After one bite, I could see why people were raving. Smoky, and oh-so-tender, the brisket practically melted in my mouth. The occasional charred outside piece provided a nice crispy contrast. If I had one complaint, it would be that there was too much sauce. I kept trying to brush it off to better taste the meat. Perhaps I'll order it on the side next time.

The side dishes held their own. The potato salad was mustardy and smooth, while the cole slaw was crunchy with just the right amount of sweetness. I'd ordered iced tea as well, which they warned me was already sweetened. They were right - it was sweet and lemony, tak-

**Thelma's Bar-B-Que**  
1020 Live Oak  
Houston, Texas 77003  
(713) 228-2262

ing me back to those warm summer days when I was a kid. It seemed like just the right drink with Thelma's barbecue.

MY NEXT VISIT WAS A FRIDAY NIGHT for dinner. If the neighborhood feels questionable during the day, it's a bit more so at night. We didn't worry about safety, though, as there were four police cars parked out front. I've always maintained that cop cars outside mean good, reasonably priced food inside, so we decided this was an exceptionally good sign.

This time I wanted to try the chicken and my friend wanted to try the ribs. Unfortunately, at 7:45 p.m. on a Friday, they were both gone. Lesson: go at lunch, or get there early for dinner if you want your choice off the menu. We both decided to try the catfish dinner (\$6.95).

The restaurant was busy, but not packed, with a slightly different crowd than at lunchtime. There were two tables of police, a couple of families and some college-age friends out for dinner. We had plenty of opportunity to study the clientele, as our two catfish dinners took 45 minutes to arrive.

The catfish was worth the wait. Cornmeal breaded, crunchy on the outside and steaming hot and tender on the inside, it was a joy to eat. This is how fried catfish should taste. I can't say as much for the sides this time, though. My friend enjoyed the ripple-cut fries, but my green beans and dirty rice were rather average. But with three huge catfish fillets to devour, it wasn't like we went hungry.

Thelma's is a friendly, down home kind of place, where Thelma herself makes the rounds in the dining room, making sure everyone is happy. The next time you're in the mood for barbecue, go pay Thelma a visit. You're in for a treat.

**Thelma's Bar-B-Que**  
1020 Live Oak  
Houston, TX 77003  
713-228-2262

Food: ●●●●●  
Service: ●●●●●  
Value: ●●●●●  
Scene: ●●●●●

● = Stay home and eat cereal  
●● = Well, if you really must  
●●● = Fine for all but the finicky  
●●●● = Worth more than a 20-minute drive  
●●●●● = As good as you'll find in this city

# community calendar

## SATURDAY, APRIL 5

**Houston Buyers Club.** Free BIA (Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis) the first two Saturdays of the month. Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Houston Buyers Club, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 604. 713-520-5288. [http://www.houstonbuyersclub.com/bia\\_testing.html](http://www.houstonbuyersclub.com/bia_testing.html)

**Houston Outdoor Group.** Breakfast at Le Peep's. Also, Bayou Bend day trip is planned. Contact Howard and Terry, 713-528-6174. Bonsai Show is April 5 and 6; contact Ray Gonzales at 713-522-7809. HOG: 713-KAMPOUT.

## EVERY SATURDAY

**All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual.** 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-3409 or 713-861-9149.

**After Hours.** KPFT 90.1 FM. 1-4 a.m.

**Dignity mass.** 7:30 p.m. for gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 11 p.m.-2 a.m. at Viviana's. 713-830-3000.

**Gay & Lesbian Breakfast Club.** 9:30 a.m. 281-437-0636.

**Houston Wrestling Club.** Practice. 1:30 p.m. 713-453-7406.

**Lambda Center.** Alcoholics Anonymous. 11:30 a.m. Eye Opener Group, 8 p.m. Saturday Night Live, 9:30 p.m. Willing Ones Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. [www.lambdahouston.org](http://www.lambdahouston.org).

**Q-Patrol.** Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: [qpatrolinc@aol.com](mailto:qpatrolinc@aol.com)

**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.** Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in, noon-5 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## SUNDAY, APRIL 6

**PFLAG Houston.** Monthly general meeting, 2-4:30 p.m. Topic: Corporate GLBT Employee Organizations. Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas Ave. [www.pflaghouston.org](http://www.pflaghouston.org).

## EVERY SUNDAY

**Bering Memorial United Methodist Church.** Services at 8:30 & 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 713-526-1017.

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Services at 11 a.m., for children at 10:50 a.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808. The center also has commitment ceremonies, metaphysical bookstore and classes.

**Community Gospel.** Service at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School for children 10 a.m. 713-880-9235 or [www.communitygospel.org](http://www.communitygospel.org).

**Community of Kindred Spirits in Beaumont.** Worship at 6 p.m. 1575 Spindletop Ave., Beaumont, Texas. 409-813-2055. E-mail: [cksrev3@netzero.net](mailto:cksrev3@netzero.net)

**Covenant Church, Ecumenical, Liberal Baptist.** Service 9:30 a.m. & education hour 11 a.m. 713-668-8830.

**Emerson Unitarian Church.** Adult education, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. Lunch at noon. [www.emersonhou.org](http://www.emersonhou.org).

**First Congregational Church (Memorial).** Service at 10 a.m. Christian Education, 11:30 a.m. 713-468-9543 or [fcc-houston.org](http://fcc-houston.org).

**First Unitarian Universalist Church.** Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch at 10:30 a.m. 713-526-5200. [church@firstuu.org](http://church@firstuu.org).

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 9 p.m.-midnight at Club Inergy. 713-830-3000.

**Gay Bowling Leagues.** 7 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

**Gay Catholics of St. Anne's-Houston.** 5 p.m. worship service. Dinner and social. [alexcam@wt.net](mailto:alexcam@wt.net). 713-623-0930.

**GLOBAL.** Gay Lesbian Or Bisexual Alliance. University of Houston GLBT student group meeting, 2 p.m. at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.uh.edu/~global](http://www.uh.edu/~global). E-mail: [global@bayou.uh.edu](mailto:global@bayou.uh.edu).

**Grace Lutheran Church.** Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.

**Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club.** Practice from 4-6 p.m. For more information, log on to [www.roughnecksrugby.org](http://www.roughnecksrugby.org).

**Houston Tennis Club.** 9 a.m.-noon. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. [houstontennisclub@aol.com](mailto:houstontennisclub@aol.com)

**Lambda Center.** Alcoholics Anonymous. 9:30 a.m. Came to Believe Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. [www.lambdahouston.org](http://www.lambdahouston.org).

**Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church.** 10 a.m. service. 3333 Fannin, Suite 106. 713-528-6756.

**Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church.** Services at 9:45 & 11:15 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 281-298-2780.

**Resurrection MCC.** Services, 9 and 11 a.m. Children and Youth Sunday School, 10 a.m. Children's service, 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.

**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.** Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 7:45 a.m.; Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 8:55 a.m.; Education hour, 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist, 11 a.m. 713-528-6665.

**Sunday Brunch.** For HIV-positive men. 11 a.m. Riva's, 1117 Missouri St. Paul, 713-880-0690. e-mail: [PoznBuff@aol.com](mailto:PoznBuff@aol.com).

**The Women's Group.** Meeting and discussion. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.

**Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation.** Adult discussion, 9 a.m. Service, 11:15 a.m. 281-277-8882. [www.tuuc.org](http://www.tuuc.org).

**Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County.** 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

**Unitarian Fellowship of Houston.** Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in, 2-6 p.m. • GLBT Community Church with Rev. Melissa Wood: Bible study, 10-10:45 a.m., worship 11 a.m. [www.geocities.com/glbtc](http://www.geocities.com/glbtc) • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## MONDAY, APRIL 7 EVERY MONDAY

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

**Free HIV Testing.** Houston Area Community Services. 9 a.m.-noon at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25<sup>th</sup> St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight. Keys West. 713-830-3000.

**Frost Eye Clinic.** Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

**Gay Bowling Leagues.** 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

**Gay Fathers/Fathers First.** Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Tom, 713-726-8736. [www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/](http://www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/)

**Grief & Divorce Support Groups.** 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, ext. 208.

**Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club.** Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to [www.roughnecksrugby.org](http://www.roughnecksrugby.org).

**Kolbe Project.** Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.

**Lambda Center.** Alcoholics Anonymous. 8 p.m. Beginners' Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. [www.lambdahouston.org](http://www.lambdahouston.org).

**Montrose Clinic.** Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. Spanish speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer. 713-830-3050. Grupo de Apoyo para Latinos gay y bisexuales VIH positivos. Lunes 6:30. Para mas informacion llama al 713-830-3025.

**Queer Voices Radio Show.** 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • American Veterans for Equal Rights, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## TUESDAY, APRIL 8

**HAMS.** Motorcycle riders' social, 7 p.m. Mission Burritos, 2245 West Alabama. [www.hamsclub.org](http://www.hamsclub.org).

**Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents.** Support group. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St. [www.hglp.org](http://www.hglp.org).

## EVERY TUESDAY

**Bering Support Network.** Lunch Bunch Gang, 11 a.m. 713-526-1017.

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

**Free HIV Testing.** Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25<sup>th</sup> St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight at Club Houston. Also 4-8 p.m. at 611 Club, 611 Hyde Park. 713-830-3000.

**Gay youth.** New program for young gay males, ages 18-29. 7 p.m. 614 Avondale. 713-533-9786.

**GLBT Pentecostals.** Bible study, prayer, 7 p.m. in the Heights. For info: 936-931-3761; e-mail: [www.Wgb1947@cs.com](mailto:www.Wgb1947@cs.com).

**Houston Women's Rugby Team.** No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

**Introduction to Buddhism.** All welcome at 634 W. Temple in the Heights. 7 p.m. Carlton, 713-862-8129.

**Rainbow Ringers.** Free C&W dance lessons. Brazos River Bottom. No partner needed. Beginner 2 Step, Waltz, Shuffle & Swing. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming Out Group, 7 p.m. • Pride Committee general meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

**Houston Area Bears.** Business meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bibas. HAB: 713-867-9123.

## EVERY WEDNESDAY

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; SOM Discussion & Exploration, 7 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

**Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA).** 8:15 p.m. meeting. Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond Ave., Room 15.

**Bering Memorial United Methodist Church.** Support Network Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Various support groups, 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.

**Bible Study.** Noon & 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal. 713-526-6665.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJ's; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

**Free HIV Testing.** Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon. 713-873-4157.

**Gay Bowling Leagues.** 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

**Houston Pride Band.** Open rehearsal, 7-9 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-528-4379.

**Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club.** Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to [www.roughnecksrugby.org](http://www.roughnecksrugby.org).

**Houston Tennis Club.** 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. [houstontennisclub@aol.com](mailto:houstontennisclub@aol.com)

**Spiritual Uplift service.** 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in, 2-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## THURSDAY, APRIL 10

**Lesbian & Gay Immigration Rights Task Force-Houston.** Meeting. 8 p.m. Chris, 713-426-3128. E-mail: [lgirtf-houston@egroups.com](mailto:lgirtf-houston@egroups.com).

## EVERY THURSDAY

**BiNet Houston.** Group for bisexuals; everyone welcome. 7:30 p.m. Hobbit Café, 2240 Portsmouth. [www.flash.net/~bihouse](http://www.flash.net/~bihouse). 713-467-4380.

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

**Community Gospel.** Service. 7:30 p.m. 713-880-9235. [www.communitygospel.org](http://www.communitygospel.org).

**Free HIV Testing.** Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25<sup>th</sup> St. Also 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Gallery Medical Clinic, 5900 North Freeway, and Club Toyz from 9 p.m.-midnight. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at The Outpost; 8 p.m.-midnight at Brazos River Bottom and Cousins; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

**FrontRunners.** Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021. Web site: <http://home.svbnet.net/larathon/houfr.htm>. E-mail: [larathon@svbnet.net](mailto:larathon@svbnet.net).

**Gay Bowling Leagues.** 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

**GLOBAL.** Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston-Central Campus. Weekly meeting, 6 p.m. e-mail: [nguyen0023@hotmail.com](mailto:nguyen0023@hotmail.com).

**Hep C Recovery.** Support group. 6:30 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

**Houston Women's Rugby Team.** No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

**Lambda Skating Club.** 8 p.m. Tradewinds Skating Rink. [www.neosoft.com/~lrsc](http://www.neosoft.com/~lrsc). 713-523-9620.

**Montrose Clinic.** Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. English speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer 713-830-3050.

**Rainbow Ringers.** Free C&W dance lessons. No partner required. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

**Recovery From Food Addiction (RFA).** Meeting for 12-step program open to all. Noon-1 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama St. RFA: 713-673-2848. [www.geocities.com/rfa7235/](http://www.geocities.com/rfa7235/). E-mail: [rfaworldservice@aol.com](mailto:rfaworldservice@aol.com).

**Spanish Charla Conversation Group.** Café Agora, 7 p.m. E-mail: [charlahouston@msn.com](mailto:charlahouston@msn.com). 713-416-7203.

**Women's Clinic.** Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000.

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Montrose Writers Project, 7 p.m. • PFLAG-Houston board meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## FRIDAY, APRIL 11

### EVERY FRIDAY

**Center for Spiritual Living.** Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

**Free HIV Testing.** Montrose Clinic. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJ's and at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

**Free HIV Testing.** Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon, 713-873-4157.

**Frost Eye Clinic.** Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

**Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting.** 7-10 p.m. 713-942-7002.

**Houston Tennis Club.** 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. [houstontennisclub.org](mailto:houstontennisclub.org)

**Kolbe Project.** Morning prayer, 10 a.m. 713-861-1800.

**Mishpach Alizim.** GLBT Jewish congregation. Sabbath services at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of each month at Baby Barnabys, 602 Fairview. Monthly study groups with Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood. Mishpach Alizim, P.O. Box 980136, Houston, TX 77098. 866-841-9139, ext. 1834.

**Q-Patrol.** Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: [qpatrolinc@aol.com](mailto:qpatrolinc@aol.com)

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Women's Game Night, 7:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. [www.houstonglbtcenter.org](http://www.houstonglbtcenter.org).

## VOLUNTEER/SELF-HELP

**Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston.** Volunteers offer a friendly ear to callers in need of information, nonjudgmental support, crisis intervention and referral services, emergency shelter and advocacy services to crime survivors who may need someone to accompany them to a hospital for medical attention or assistance in filing a police report. 713-529-3211.

**HoP-ON.** Anyone can join this non-profit moderated e-mail announcement list that helps facilitate advocacy work and organizing efforts for gay Houstonians. Quantity of postings is strictly limited. Postings include press releases and action alerts from national, state and local gay and allied organizations. For info or to join, access [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON/](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/HoP-ON/).

**Houston GLBT Community Center.** Volunteers perform a variety of critical tasks which include staffing the information desk during drop-in hours; helping with center programming and events; working on community outreach efforts, fund-raising and publicity. Card players, writers and artists in particular are needed. 713-524-3818.

**Peer Listening Line.** Youth only. Staffed by GLBT youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday. 800-399-PEER.

**Pride Committee of Houston.** Volunteers sought for Pride 2003 preparations. This is the 25th Pride celebration. [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org). E-mail: [volunteers@pridehouston.org](mailto:volunteers@pridehouston.org). 713-529-6979.

To list an event, call 713-529-8490, fax at 713-529-9531, or e-mail [editor@houstonvoice.com](mailto:editor@houstonvoice.com). Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

## appts

a weekly guide to arts & entertainment activities for gay Houstonians

## SPECIAL FRIDAY & SATURDAY, APRIL 4 & 5

**Mr. Prime Choice 2003** will be chosen this weekend. Ripcord hosts the contest, with Don Gill serving as master of ceremonies. The public can meet the contestants on Friday evening at the Ripcord. The contest is 9 p.m. Saturday. Mr. Prime Choice is for all men over age 40, and competitors are judged largely on their philanthropic efforts in the community. Ripcord, 715 Fairview. 713-521-2792.

## SUNDAY, APRIL 6

**"The Causes of Heterosexuality"** is the topic of the adult discussion with leader Ritalinda D'Andrea at Henry David Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. The interactive workshop and exploration looks at questions such as: What are the causes of heterosexuality? Is it hormonal? Genetic? Is it a "lifestyle"? Are the heterosexual's parents responsible for his or her orientation? 10 a.m. CCR Building of the Sanctuary. Henry David Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 3945 D/E Greenbriar, Stafford, TX 77477. 281-277-8882. [www.tuuc.org](http://www.tuuc.org).

## FRIDAY, APRIL 11

**Authors Dean James and Greg Herren** will participate in book signings. James is manager of Murder By the Book and a Rice University graduate, in addition to being a novelist. He is presenting his new murder-mystery, "Faked to Death." Herren is a former Houston resident who now calls New Orleans home. His novel is "Bourbon Street Blues," also a murder-mystery. 6 p.m. Murder By the Book, 2342 Bissonnet. 713-524-8597.

## MUSIC SATURDAY, APRIL 5

**Rocker Ginger Leigh** performs in Montrose. The Texas-born Leigh is a fifth-generation performer in a family full of musicians. She describes her music as pop/rock with jazz and R&B undertones. Chances, 1100 Westheimer. 713-523-7217. [www.GLeigh.com](http://www.GLeigh.com).



Ginger Leigh

## EVERY THURSDAY

**F.O.**, a Houston band, hosts open mic night from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Chances, 1100 Westheimer. 713-523-7217.

## GALLERIES SUNDAY, APRIL 6

**Montrose Clinic and Meteor** present Houston artists Joseph Culotta and John Painter for a cocktail reception and art show. Culotta is known for his mastery of various media: oils, acrylics, jewelry, design and more. Painter, a carpenter and painter by trade, portrays his primary interest in the metaphysical through his work. A portion of proceeds from the show benefits Montrose Clinic. 3 p.m. Meteor, 2306 Genesee. 713-521-0123.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 8

**"Soul Sanctum"** by featured artist Lisa Herrington is an art exhibition that begins this week. A reception with complimentary wine and appetizers is planned. 7 p.m. Mo Mong, 1201 Westheimer. 713-524-5664.

## ONGOING

**Gulf Coast Archives & Museum of GLBT History Satellite Exhibition.** The first exhibition from the GCAM collection presented at the Houston GLBT Community Center honors the NAMES Project Houston. Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818.

**Positive Art Workshop Photography Exhibition.** Artists living with HIV/AIDS created these pictures with accompanying text. Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818.

# CLASSIFIEDS

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**NEAR MED CENTER** Priv BR/BA, kit & laundry priv. quiet neighborhood. Mature, stable F preferred. Smoker OK. (713) 291-4255. Murielplace@aol.com.

**SE 610 LOOP** area. Lrg 3 BR house to shr, lrg swimming pool, bills paid. \$400/mo. (713) 941-4646.

## COMMITMENT CEREMONIES

**ANNOUNCE YOUR UNION** The Houston Voice is proud to announce the addition of a "Commitment Ceremonies" category to our Classified listings. When making arrangements for your Union, don't forget to include the most important aspect of all...announcing the date. Publishing your union is easy & simple. Call (877) 863-1885 ext 223 to put the finishing touches on your ceremony.

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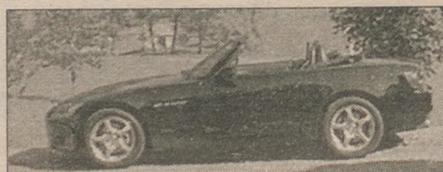
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## TRAVEL TICKETS

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Answers to this week's Q puzzle on Page 23

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## Q Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15				16				
17								18				
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51						52				53	54	55
56						57			58			
59						60						
61						62				63		

## "Surprise Ending"

### Across

- Opposed to, to Jethrene Bodine
- Hunter's favorite diet colas?
- Place where men wear makeup
- Playwright Lorraine
- Olympic award for Lauganis
- Film about the object of Oscar Wilde's affection?
- Poet Dickinson
- Kahlo's that
- Singer Fure
- Where to wear "We're here, we're queer" pins
- Composer \_\_\_\_ Carlo Menotti
- Musical about gay-bar hopping?
- "Let the Dead Bury the Dead" author Randall
- Powerful adhesive
- Gives a heads-up to
- "Two Little Girls" singer DiFranco
- Emphatic affirmative, to Gloria Anzaldua
- Film about prohibited queers?
- Bro of Jacko
- Christian of women's music
- Disney dog Old \_\_\_\_
- More up to it
- Witherspoon of "Sweet Home Alabama"
- Musical about a drag queen's feather accessory?

### Down

- Words of woe, to the Bard
- G of PFLAG
- 411
- Code-cracking org.
- Nero's land
- Artist Raven
- Kid needing a butt-whipping
- Code on many gay athletes' luggage in 2002
- Like a drag queen's makeup on a bad day
- Amy Ray's speed
- Rimbaud's "Bye-bye"
- Gets cheeky with
- "Family Ties" mother
- Cruiser calls, for short
- "Milk" director Andy
- Anthropology, to Margaret Mead
- Queen on a chess board, e.g.
- Changed from a pair to a threesome
- Novel about Jodie Foster becoming a parent?
- Black to Bonheur
- First name in drama
- They are prayed on at Metropolitan Community Church
- Tight-lipped (var.)
- Savage and others

- Took a mouthful from
- Easiness
- "Queen Christina" star
- "Claire of the Moon" writer/director Nicole
- Tom of gay porn
- K-12
- RuPaul's application
- Actor Peter of "QAF"
- Rainbow flag, e.g.
- She beat Navratilova in the 1991 U.S. Open finals
- Suffix with convert
- Encs. to Susie Bright
- Opening noted at the office
- Ward of "Once and Again"
- Leaves of grass, e.g.
- Some Julia Morgan works
- Eager for action
- Oscar winner Hilary
- Sported
- Grace Jones' "Do \_\_\_\_"
- "\_\_\_\_ there's a will..."
- Where to find Lincoln's head
- Cruising
- High place with a flat top
- Jane Spahr's last word, perhaps
- Barrie's refusals
- Flight coordinator: Abbr.
- Favorite drug of William Burroughs

Answers on Page 22

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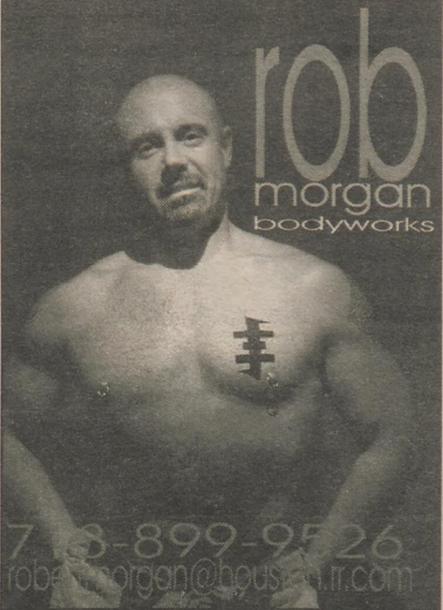
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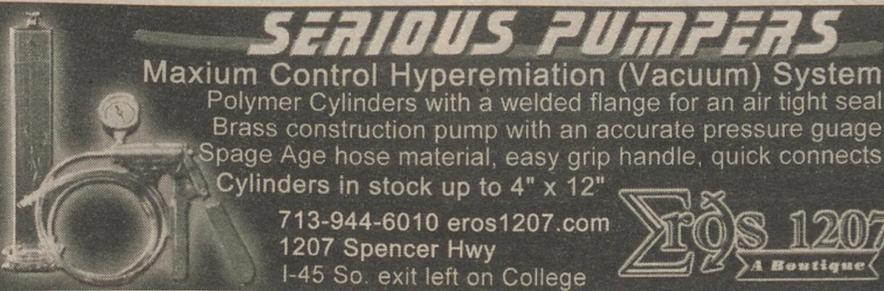
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## astrology JILL DEARMAN



# My Stars!

April 4 — 10



### ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

Darling, this is your week to live life to the fullest! Stop pussyfooting around and start having some of the adventures you've been longing for. It's time you got a life, sweetie, not an imitation of one. A Cancer finds your take-charge ways oh-so-sexy. So butch up, damn it, and indulge yourself in all the pleasures you can handle.



### TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

This is a fine time for you to get a little more innovative in your approach to your career. Neptune is getting active in your house of career and public image, so it would be wise to break some old rules and create some new ones. Start jazzing up your act. You could also try being a little more creative in bed. A Sagittarius should be plenty of help.



### GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

If you're feeling a little wild, but also a little vulnerable, it's probably because Saturn is about to leave your sign (in June) — but the hard-work cycle ain't over just yet! The day-to-day aspects of life are downright oppressive, but your love life is apt to thrive under these circumstances. You and another Gemini understand each other on a deep level. And you can go even deeper together between the sheets.



### CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

You're about to enter a period of greater stability, Cancer. It's a good time to concentrate on the details of daily life. Make sure that your job situation is as satisfying as it could be. You may make changes this week that appear small but are actually quite significant. A Taurus can change the way you look at sex, during this strange and sultry time. Don't worry so much about where you're going — just enjoy the trip.



### LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Jupiter is moving full steam ahead through your house of friends this week. Now is the time to reconnect with good pals. You can move back in time and finish a project that was once very dear to your heart. When you complete something meaningful, you'll feel as if the whole world is a better place. A Sagittarius can inspire you to have more fun. You deserve it, sweetie.



### VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

The Sun is hitting your house of joint finances now, so give a little thought to your bank balance. You need a nice wad of cash to fall back on, because you're primed and ready to start pursuing your life's dream for a living. Come up with a game plan, and put aside a few bucks to wine and dine a sophisticated Libra.



### LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

You have a very persuasive way about you now, so use it, doll. Stare into the eyes of your prey and smile. People with money will want to work with you. Hotties with great bodies and no morals will want to sleep with you. Basically, your dreams can come true. An Aries could spank you back into reality by week's end, but I doubt you'll mind that either.



### SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

This is a fine week for you to concentrate on finances. I don't mean sitting around with your bankbook and rubbing your hands together greedily. Sure, save a little dough, but enjoy your money, too. Leos want to lavish money on you, along with sexual favors. This week is full of subtle victories and sexy, glorious moments. Get back in touch with your earthy side.



### SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

This looks like an incredibly powerful week for you, Sag. The Sun in a fellow fire sign (Aries) brings you heat. You can enjoy some popularity and some scandal. Don't back away from life, sweetie. Instead, move forward with your craziest plans. Many of them may just work out. An Aquarius could become more important in your life, but don't expect any of your relationships to be predictable this week.



### CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

This is a week when the past, present, and future come together in the strangest ways. An old love, a new love, and a mysterious person who could play an important role in your future all vie for your attention. Unfortunately, you may not have the energy to deal with all this stimuli. Lie back and drink in all the emotion. In mid-April, the answers to your love questions will be clear. Stick close to a Taurus.



### AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

This is a silly, giddy, and wacky week for you, sweetie. You've known for ages that you're ahead of your time, but finally the rest of the world will find out. A mentor in your life helps you to make important connections. Return the good karma by helping someone who is young and insecure. A Leo may make a surprise pass at you. It could be so quick that you don't even realize it. Act like the wolf you are and jump on any and all who get close to you.



### PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

Your career could go through a powerful transformation this week, Pisces. You need to be the boss, not a lowly servant. Start taking charge. People will listen when you bark orders, especially if you wear something tight and sexy. A Libra gives you good business advice. But try not to sexualize every relationship, darling. Keep at least a few on the up and up. Think ahead, for once.

Jill Dearman is the author of the best-selling "Queer Astrology for Men" and "Queer Astrology for Women" (both from St. Martin's Griffin). For information on charts and consultations, call 212-841-0177 or e-mail QScopes@aol.com.

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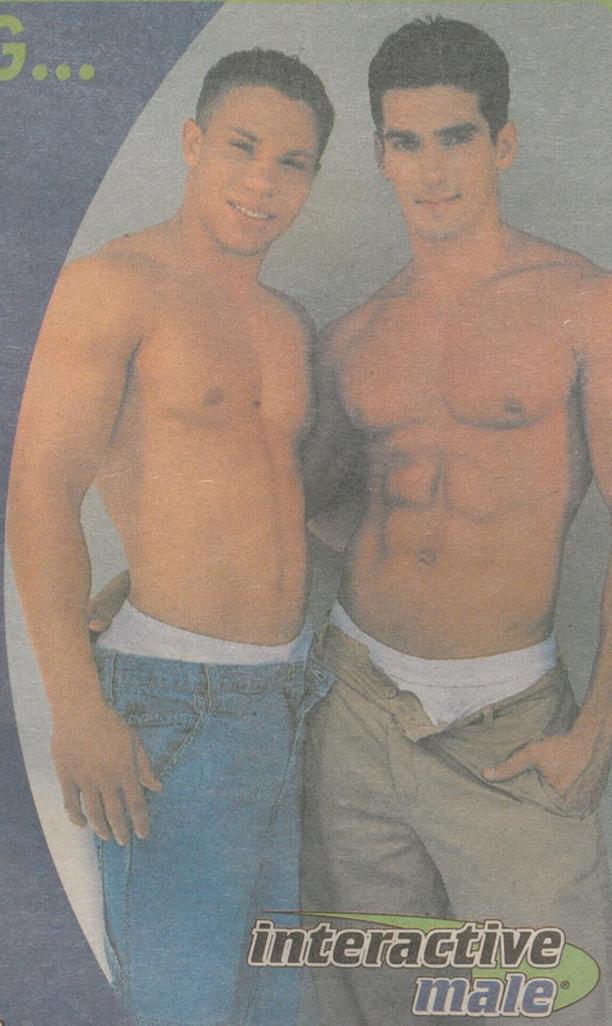
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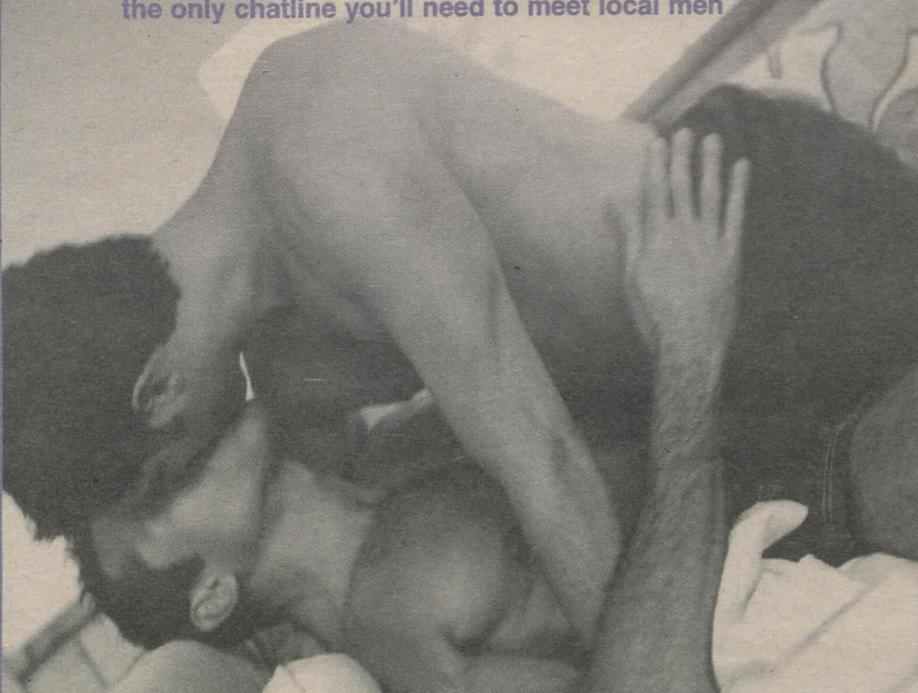
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