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## Some extra loving

Could the fight for gay marriage rights pave the way for legalizing polygamy?

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JANUARY 27, 2006

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**LAWSUIT:** Gay couple fights for marriage rights. **Page 7**



Omega House Director **Sandy Stacy** and **Fred Chalk**, facilities manager, stand in the eight-bed hospice's kitchen area, which is currently undergoing renovations.

## Omega House undergoing second phase of renovations project

Hospice kitchen to receive new cabinets, floors and appliances

By **ERIC ERVIN**

The second phase of a construction project at Bering Omega Community Services, which offers care for people with HIV/AIDS including gay men and lesbians, is in full swing with a kitchen renovation project that would carry a price tag of at least \$40,000.

Renovations started Jan. 16 at the nonprofit orga-

nization's Omega House, an eight-bed hospice for HIV/AIDS patients. Charles Lambert, who is a member of the organization's board and head of the renovations project, said the kitchen is being totally gutted and, when finished, will include new cabinets, granite countertops, floors and appliances. He said the project is expected to last about six weeks.

"It's going to be beautiful," Lambert said. "This will be not only a more functional kitchen, but one that will be something we can all be proud of."

"It only reflects the quality of care our residents get at Omega House."

Please see **RENOVATION**, on Page 4



Judge **Samuel Alito** (right) and Sen. **Jim Bunning** (R-Ky.), talk on Capitol Hill Jan. 24 after the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to approve Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court. (Photo by Dennis Cook/AP)

## Gay groups cautious about Alito filibuster

Democrats fear backlash over 'obstructionist' tactic

By **LOU CHIBBARO JR.**

Seven prominent national gay rights organizations reiterated their opposition this week to Judge Samuel Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court, but only one directly asked Democratic senators to kill the nomination through a filibuster.

The reluctance of gay groups to aggressively push for a filibuster was in marked contrast to feminist and abortion rights groups, such as the National Organization for Women and the Feminist Majority, which told senators a filibuster was the only means left to defeat the Alito nomination.

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**news**  
**W. Jeffrey Campbell** to help raise awareness for National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.  
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**music**  
 The latest musical offering will have you 'Desperate' for more tunes by the industry's best artists.  
**PAGE 17**



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## local news briefs

### Lesbian announces bid for Texas House seat

Lesbian activist Dot Nelson-Turnier has announced her candidacy for the District 150 seat in the Texas House of Representatives.

"I think that anytime an openly gay candidate runs against a right-wing conservative candidate, it is a fight on behalf of the entire GLBT community," Turnier said.

Turnier, who is co-founder of the Lone Star Democratic Club, believes her career in international banking and as a small business owner gives her a solid understanding of economics and finance from a local, global, corporate and small business owner perspective.

As a former board member of nonprofit organizations that work with the homeless, Turnier said she is keenly aware of the struggles of working-class Americans to simply maintain their current standard of living.

While in college, she was president of her school's Women's Association and active in the Gay Student Association. Turnier was also a member of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Presbyterians for Lesbian & Gay Concerns.

More recently, she served as a board member and treasurer for the Astraea Lesbian Foundation and founded the National Organization for Lesbians of Size.

As a political activist, Turnier believes that the best solutions for society come from people with diverse ideas.

"Texas faces many of the same challenges that our nation faces — increasing poverty, greater stress on public services, deteriorating quality of public education," she said. "Texas is below the United States average in every important indicator: We have a higher rate of unemployment, a greater percentage of uninsured, spend less per student on education, have a greater percentage of people living at the poverty level, and our median income is lower than the U.S. average."

Turnier lives in the FM 1960 area of Houston with her partner and their daughter.



Dot Nelson-Turnier said she believes her career and civic background make her the ideal candidate for the District 150 seat in the Texas House of Representatives.

### Pride Houston set to unveil 2006 logo

Pride Houston will unveil the logo for the 2006 Houston Pride theme, "Say It Out Loud!" at a special Logo Unveiling Party on Thurs., Feb. 2, at Meteor nightclub, 2306 Genesee, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The party will also include an opportunity to vote in the selection of this year's Houston Pride Parade grand marshals. Other voting times include Wed., Feb. 1, from 8 p.m.-10 p.m. at Meteor, and at the Pride offices at 1415 California on Sat., Feb. 4, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sat., Feb. 18.

Everyone will get a chance to meet the grand marshal nominees. Hors d'oeuvres will be served and there will be a cash bar. Select merchandise featuring the 2006 Houston Pride "Say It Out Loud!" logo will be available for purchase.

The nominees for the four grand marshal positions include: Will and Linda Boze and Rev. Marilyn Meeker-Williams for honorary grand marshal; Bunnies on the Bayou, Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce, Houston GLBT Political Caucus and Imperial Court of Houston for organization grand marshal; Phyllis Randolph Frye, Maria Gonzalez, Cristina Martinez and Judy Reeves for female grand marshal; and Gary Baumann, Christopher Bown, Tim Brookover, Merlin Cavallin, Jerel McNeil and Ray Ramirez for male grand marshal.

Pride Houston officials said they will again use instant runoff voting in the grand marshals election. The voting method will ask voters to choose their first choice, second choice and so forth for each position.

If no candidate receives a numerical majority in the first voting count, then the last place candidate is eliminated. The bal-

lots are examined for their second place choice and ballots are recounted. This process is repeated until a candidate receives a majority of votes.

Officials said this process will prevent the necessity of a runoff election. The winners will be announced at a special event on March 2.

For more information, call 713-529-6979 or visit [www.pridehouston.org](http://www.pridehouston.org).

### Sexual orientation DVDs offered at PFLAG Houston

PFLAG Houston is offering DVD copies of the presentation "A Biological Explanation for Human Sexual Orientation" by Dr. Cynthia Chappell.

Chappell has a PhD in Microbiology and Immunology and is a professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center's School of Public Health. She has a cross-appointment in the UTHSC Medical School.

In addition to her research and teaching, she is associate dean for academic affairs at the university's School of Public Health. Her current laboratory research is in infectious diseases, particularly human parasitic diseases.

Chappell is the author of more than 65 scientific papers and textbook chapters as well as a number of technical reports. Her interest in the biology and genetics of homosexuality stem from her involvement as a PFLAG parent.

Suggested donations are \$10. For more information, call 713-467-3524 or e-mail [voices@pflaghouston.org](mailto:voices@pflaghouston.org).



Cynthia Chappell

## national news

# Bush administration 'flags' research on gay topics

## Gay academics want NEH to return to days of equal funding

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has systematically rejected grants for gay-related research projects even when such projects are given top ratings by independent academic review panels, according to an organization of gay historians.

Officials with the American Historical Association's Committee on Lesbian & Gay History accuse the NEH of allowing Bush administration political appointees to reject funding for gay-related research in the social sciences based on politics rather than accepted academic standards.

"There has been a clear trend at NEH to give greater scrutiny and opposition to gay and lesbian related proposals," said Leisa D. Meyer, immediate past chair of the Lesbian & Gay History Committee and associate professor of history and women's studies at Virginia's College of William & Mary.



Bruce Cole

The NEH is an independent agency of the government created in 1965 to promote excellence in the humanities. The agency's website describes itself as the nation's largest funding source for U.S. humanities programs and projects, which are carried out by individual scholars or cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, universities, and public television and radio stations.

News of the NEH's reported bias against gay-related research first surfaced in a presentation by gay historian Marc Stein at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association earlier this month in Philadelphia. The academic journal *Inside Higher Education* published an article on Stein's presentation, drawing responses from as many as a dozen other gay scholars who reported being denied grants from the NEH because of alleged anti-gay bias, Stein told the Houston Voice.

Erik Lokkesmoe, NEH director of communications, did not return telephone calls seeking comment.

In an interview with *Inside Higher Education*, Lokkesmoe denied his agency has a bias against gay research projects.

"The only litmus test we have is excellence," he told the education publication.

He added the NEH welcomes gay studies scholars to apply for grants from the agency, saying they would receive "full consideration."

Stein said his own experience and reports by other gay academics who have applied for NEH grants raise strong doubts about Lokkesmoe's claims of non-bias. Stein is an American citizen who teaches history at York University in Toronto.

In his presentation before the AHA meeting, he described how he applied in 2003 for an NEH grant to study the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on sexual freedom issues, such as birth control, interracial marriage, obscenity, abortion, and gay rights issues, between 1965 and 1973.

Knowing that most of the thousands of grant applications received by the NEH are turned down, Stein said he did not think it unusual when NEH informed him it had rejected his proposal. He said he was surprised when he discovered an academic review panel gave his proposal its highest rating and recommended it.

### Politics trumps academics?

Stein was even more surprised, he said, when he learned that an NEH council appointed by President Bush overturned the recommendation of the academic panel. The council and NEH chair Bruce Cole, a Bush appointee, then turned down his grant proposal, Stein said.

He said the other gay researchers turned down for grants reported similar situations where Cole denied their applications after peer review panels gave them positive recommendations.

In his interview with *Inside Higher Education*, NEH spokesperson Lokkesmoe acknowledged that the NEH, under the Bush administration, resumed using a process known as "flagging" grant applications on certain subjects.

The "flagging" process began under the tenure of Lynn Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney, who headed the NEH during the first President Bush administration. The practice was stopped during the Clinton administration, according to Stein.

Lokkesmoe insisted, however, that the flagging process is used sparingly and that NEH's Cole "is not trying to fight the culture wars." *Inside Higher Education* quoted him as saying.

He declined to disclose the specific reasons why Cole and the NEH council rejected Stein's grant application, saying confidentiality rules prevent him from making such disclosures, *Inside Higher Education* reported.

### MORE INFO

National Endowment for the Humanities  
1100 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C., 20506  
800-834-1121  
[www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov)

## cover story

# All materials and appliances donated for kitchen

RENOVATION, continued from Page 1

Lambert, who a member of the American Society of Interior Designers, said local companies donated all of the materials and appliances for the project. He said the project, which would normally cost between \$40,000 and \$50,000, would cost Bering Omega nothing.

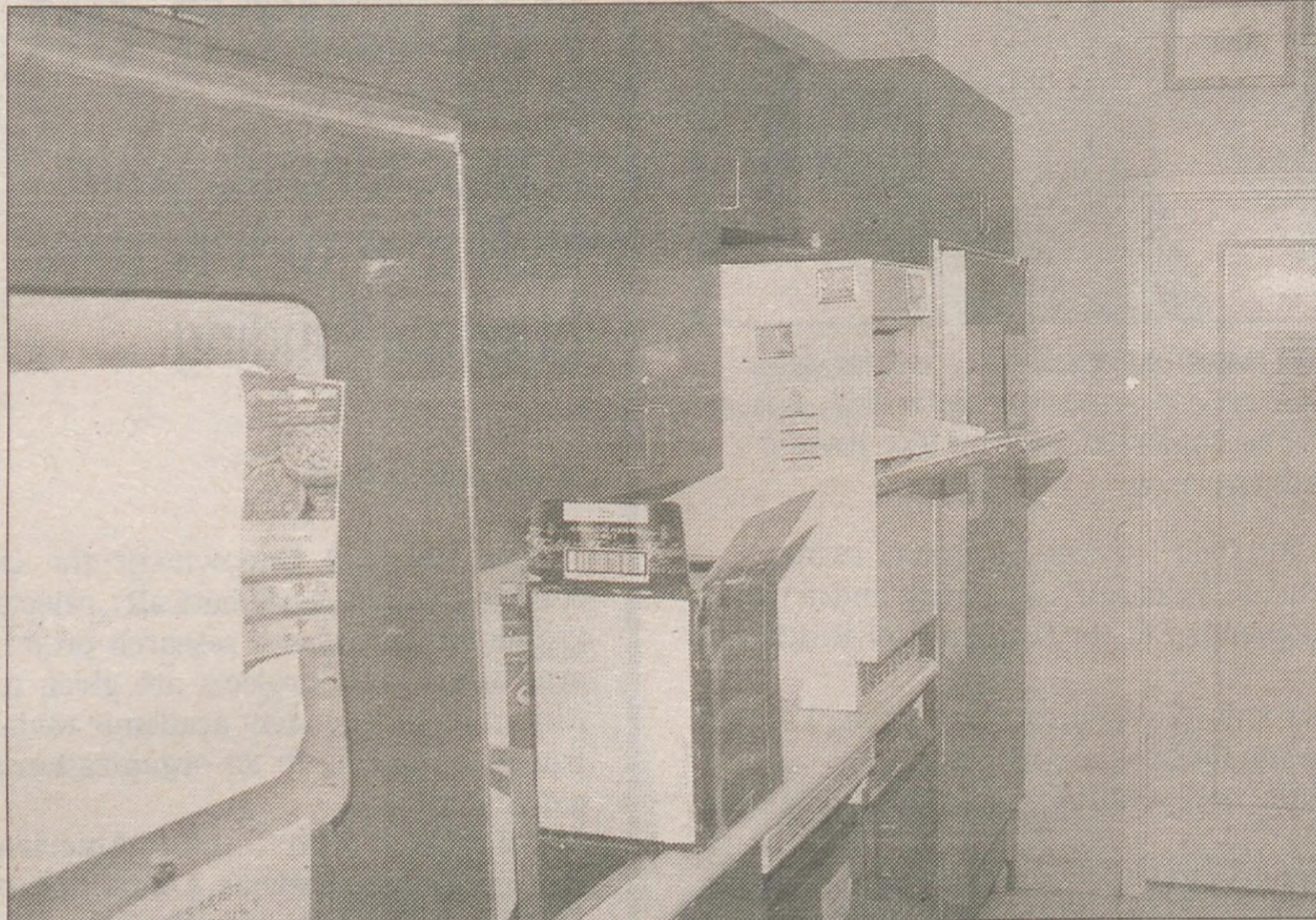
Lambert said volunteers are mostly doing the renovation project. Lambert said the organization was able to secure underwriters to cover the cost of non-volunteer workers.

When a kitchen feeds more than eight people daily, having it renovated can create problems for preparing meals, so officials with Bering Omega are seeking lunch donations. Breakfast is being donated by a local Starbucks coffee shop and dinner by Ziggy's Healthy Grill.

Fiona Dawson, director of resource development, said the hospice provides a home for people with AIDS who have been diagnosed by a doctor with less than six months to live. Dawson said the average stay for patients is around 30 days.

"Some die within 24 hours of arriving and some stay longer," She said.

But while residences live at the hos-



The Omega House's kitchen area before renovations started last week. When complete, it will have new cabinets, granite countertops, floors and appliances.

pice, the staff tries to make their stay feel as comfortable as possible. There is an on-duty nurse, and patients are totally taken care of with free room and board, medical care and counsel-

ing. There is also psychosocial and bereavement services for the resident's family.

Fiona Dawson, director of resource development, said age had started to take

its toll on the 5,000-square-foot home built in the 1920s.

"It just needed an update," Dawson said. "The kitchen is really the heart of Omega House."

This is the second phase of renovation work at Omega House. Last year, the remaining portions of the craftsman-style house were renovated, including new floorings, furnishings, lighting fixtures, windows, wall treatments and bathrooms.

"This renovation is truly a labor of love," said Dan Snare, president. "It's been said, that in the end, the most important thing to all of us as human beings is to know that we have been loved. And this is truly a partnership of love, caring and compassion of all of the people involved."

Originally founded in 1986 by Houstonian Eleanor Munger, a former schoolteacher, Omega House has provided a home to more than 700 people with HIV/AIDS. It's one of the four divisions of Bering Omega Community Services.

There is also dental services, an adult day care and financial assistance. Bering Omega's operating budget for 2005 was \$3.8 million. Funding comes from government grants, donations and fund-raising events.

# Gay rights groups believe Alito will be hostile

ALITO, continued from Page 1

"We believe strongly that he should not be on the court," said Olga Vives, who is lesbian and serves as executive vice president of NOW. "We are hopeful that everyone will come on board. It's the only winning strategy."

NOW and gay rights groups have said Alito's long record as an appeals court judge and Justice Department attorney show that, if approved for the Supreme Court, he would be hostile to gay rights and would likely vote to overturn a previous decision granting women the right to choose an abortion.

President Bush nominated Alito to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who is viewed as a moderate on the high court. Most experts predict that Alito, a staunch judicial conservative, would tip the balance on the court against gays and civil rights causes for years to come.

The Senate was expected to vote mostly along party lines to approve the Alito nomination late this week or early next week. Sources close to Democratic Party leaders predicted that Senate Democrats would not seek to defeat the nomination through a filibuster, a parliamentary tactic that uses Senate rules of unlimited debate to block passage of bills or presidential appointments.

"The main reason it won't be used is we don't have the votes to sustain it," said a Senate Democratic staffer, who spoke only on condition of anonymity because the

staffer isn't authorized to speak to the media.

Senate Democratic leaders have said publicly that mustering the 41 votes needed for a filibuster would be "difficult." The Senate has 55 Republicans, 44 Democrats and one independent, James Jeffords of Vermont, who typically votes with Democrats.

University of Virginia political science professor Larry Sabato, who specializes in American politics, said a filibuster could backfire on Democrats in this year's congressional elections because voters often perceive a filibuster as an unfair, obstructionist tactic.

## Panel OKs Alito on party lines

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 10-8 on Jan. 24 to approve Alito's nomination, with all Republicans on the panel voting in favor of Alito and all Democrats voting against his nomination.

Of the seven national gay groups opposing Alito's nomination, only the National Center for Lesbian Rights was willing to specifically call on Senate Democrats to filibuster.

The other groups — including Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, the National Black Justice Coalition, the National Stonewall Democrats, and Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays — said Democratic senators should use all means possible to defeat Alito, including a filibuster.



The U.S. Senate is expected to vote along party lines in the approval of Judge Samuel Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court.

But officials with the groups said they would leave it up to the senators to decide which tactic to use.

"What we're saying is don't take anything off the table," said Samantha Smoot, HRC's political director. "We are asking senators to make sure there is a full and vigorous debate and to leave every option open."

Asked if HRC has specifically asked Democratic senators, including Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), to wage a filibuster to block the nomination, Smoot said HRC would defer to Reid and his fellow Democrats to make the final decision.

"Our strategy is to get progressive senators — Democrats and Republicans — to

focus on Judge Alito's record and hopefully vote no on his nomination," said NGLTF official Eldie Achison. "We have talked about a filibuster, but we have not spent a lot of time on it. Our job is to really work on the 'no' votes."

Achison said NGLTF, like HRC, has asked senators to use "everything in their arsenal to defeat Alito," including a filibuster.

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said NCLR embraced the filibuster as a tactic as soon as it became clear that Democrats could not line up enough votes to defeat Alito in an up and down roll call vote.

## national news

# Waybourn retires from Houston Voice publisher

## Veteran activist leaves company he co-founded

By DYANA BAGBY

Long-time gay activist and journalist William Waybourn is retiring as president of Window Media, publisher of the Houston Voice and five other gay publications, the company announced Jan. 20.

Waybourn co-founded Window Media LLC, which publishes gay newspapers and magazines including the Washington Blade, Southern Voice and David Magazine in Atlanta, the Houston Voice and the Express Gay News and 411 Magazine in South Florida.

A statement issued by Window Media said Waybourn "intends to pursue other interests" but remains an investor in the company.

"I am grateful to the people who played such important roles building Window Media into what it is today," Waybourn said in the statement. "It's unfair that I will get much of the credit for their hard work to make our publications the best in the gay press, and the alternative press as well."

Waybourn had served as president of Window Media since 2001. He co-founded

the company with Chris Crain in 1996. Crain continues to serve as executive vice president, overseeing editorial and production.

"There would be no Window Media without William Waybourn," Crain said in the statement. "He has guided these publications and the people behind them through good times and bad."

In addition to Crain, the Window Media management team includes Mike Kitchens, COO; Steven Guerrini, executive vice president for sales; and Steve Myers, CFO.

Joining them will be Peter Polimino, who will leave his post as CFO of Avalon Equity Partners to become Window Media's president. The New York-based fund invested in Window Media in 2001.

"I look forward to building on the growth of Window Media under William Waybourn's tutelage," Polimino, who cites 20 years of media experience, said in the prepared statement.

Waybourn, a former daily newspaper editor, co-founded the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, a national group that works to elect openly gay candidates to political office. He is also former managing director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

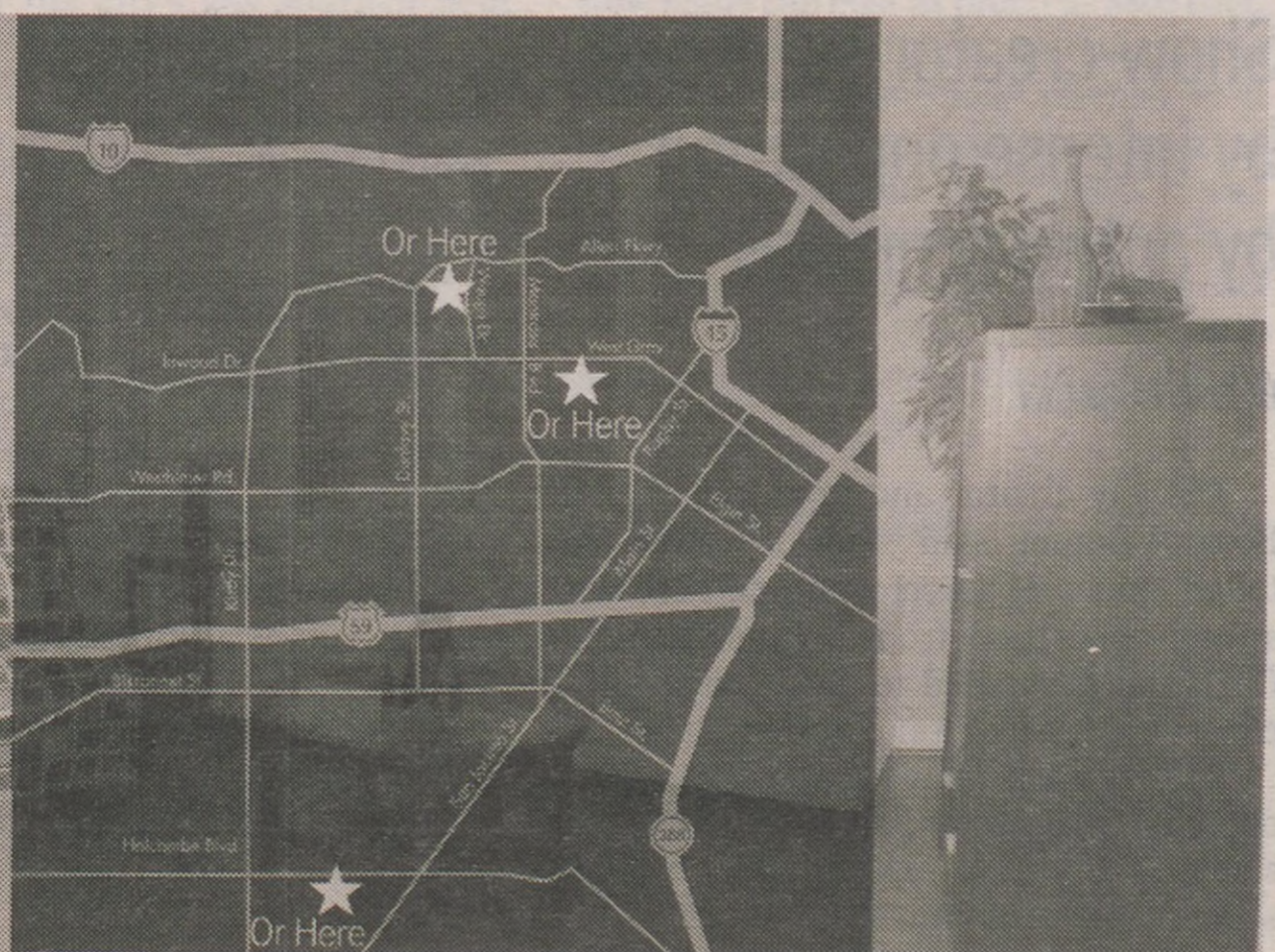
Waybourn and Window Media officials referred requests for comment to the written statement.



William Waybourn is retiring as president of Window Media, the gay media publishing company he co-founded in 1996.

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## national news

# Sharpton chides black churches over homophobia, gay marriage

## Former presidential candidate keynotes Atlanta symposium

By DYANA BAGBY

Former presidential candidate Rev. Al Sharpton fired up a crowd of some 150 people gathered at a forum in Atlanta Jan. 20, urging them to "turn up the heat" in black churches to combat clergy who preach anti-gay messages from their pulpits.

"We must have this dialogue in the black church," Sharpton said. "The black church must not be refuge for those who want to scapegoat and use violence on any community, including the gay and lesbian community."

Sharpton was a keynote speaker at the National Black Justice Coalition's summit on homophobia in the black church held at First Iconium Baptist Church in Atlanta, Jan. 20-21. He recently made a public call to challenge anti-gay sentiments among notable black clergy leaders.

"Martin Luther King said there are two types of leadership — there are those who are thermometers, who measure the temperature in the room, and those who are thermostats who change the temperature,"

Sharpton told the applauding crowd.

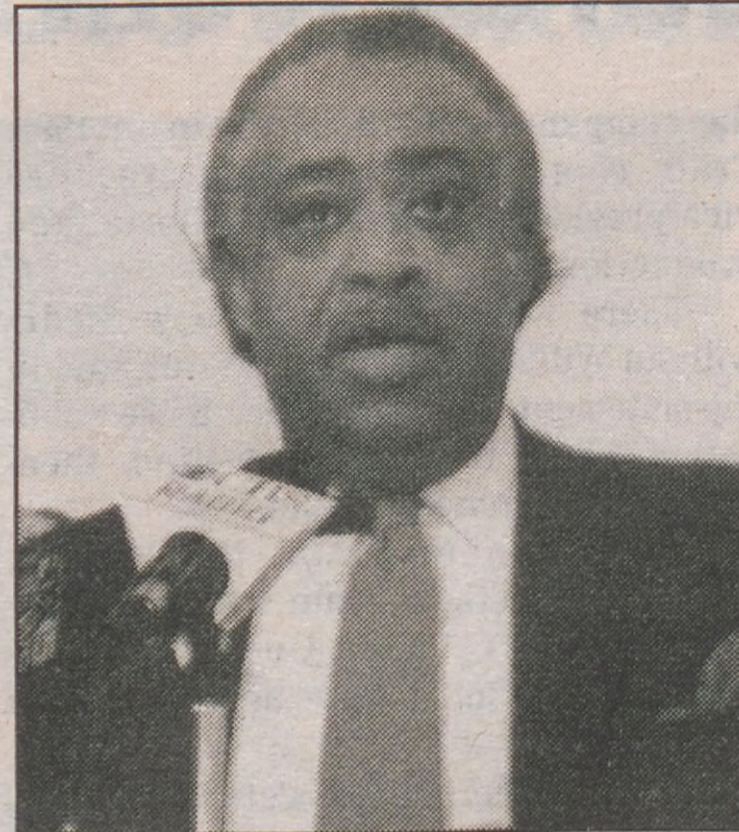
"I come to tell you to be thermostats. Turn up the heat in the black church. Make these people sweat," he said.

Sharpton said his participation in the summit, as well as his desire to urge the black church to address homophobia, came from having a lesbian sister as well as his friendship with Bayard Rustin, a gay man who worked with Martin Luther King Jr. Rustin organized the 1963 March on Washington that culminated with King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Sharpton also criticized some black churches that he said were manipulated by traditionally white religious conservative organizations to support efforts in 2004 to ban same-sex marriage in exchange for faith-based grants under President George W. Bush's administration. Sharpton criticized those moves as creating a wedge issue to boost votes for Bush's re-election.

The summit also featured Dr. Yvette Flunder, a lesbian and senior pastor of the United Church of Christ's City of Refuge Church in San Francisco. Flunder, in a passionate Jan. 21 speech that brought participants to their feet, also denounced some black pastors, especially those of megachurches, who decided to take a vocal stance against same-sex marriage during the 2004 election.

"Some people question why is it so easy to polarize the African-American church



Rev. Al Sharpton urged participants in a two-day forum in Atlanta to 'turn up the heat' on anti-gay clergy in black churches. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

around same-gender loving issues and issues of marriage? Denominations that had never written a position paper about anything — until someone [before the 2004 elections] came in and gave them some technical assistance and offered them some change," she said to much applause.

"... I believe they used the oppression of our unresolved prejudices to divide us," Flunder added.

Rev. Timothy McDonald, pastor of the event's host church, First Iconium Baptist

Church in East Atlanta, is a plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging Georgia's constitutional amendment that bans same-sex marriage.

"We believe it is time we should be talking about sexuality in the context of the church," McDonald said.

Rev. Kenneth Samuel, pastor of the gay-friendly Victory Church in Stone Mountain, told the story of a gay friend he had as a teen who committed suicide after not finding support at church. Samuel built a 5,000-member church in metro Atlanta, but once he began speaking out against homophobia, Samuel said he lost nearly half of his membership.

Earl Plante, director of development for the National Minority AIDS Council in Washington, D.C., said the NBJC's first-time meeting made history.

"When I did come out, I had to do a lot of soul searching to reconcile my gay identity with the church that certainly wasn't inclusive, or welcoming, of who I am. ... This discussion will go a long way in helping our young people," said Plante, who attended the summit.

Black ministers who have spoken out against homosexuality and gay marriage, including Bishop Eddie Long of Lithonia, Ga., and Rev. Willie Wilson of Washington, D.C., were invited to the event but did not respond to NBJC's requests, according to organizers.

# 'Book of Daniel' shelved by NBC over poor ratings

## Show creator surprised by intense opposition by anti-gay groups

By DYANA BAGBY

The gay creator and producer of "The Book of Daniel" said a lack of ratings on a tough Friday night schedule, coupled with strong opposition from a fundamentalist Christian group, led to NBC's decision to cancel the controversial drama series.

The network removed the show, which depicted an Episcopalian priest with a gay son and bisexual sister-in-law, from its schedule after its Jan. 20 broadcast.

Jack Kenny, producer of the show, told Southern Voice he was "heartbroken" it was canceled after only three episodes aired.

"We just simply didn't have the numbers," Kenny said in a Jan. 25 interview. "Friday night is a tough night to crack."

But Kenny acknowledged the campaign by the anti-gay American Family Association helped cause the cancellation when local affiliates could not get the advertising needed.

"These small-minded bigots were writing to advertisers ... [and] advertisers got skittish," he said.

"This group of self-proclaimed Christians

— and I don't believe they are Christian but actually a big fundraising organization — they saw they don't make money when they get behind something. They make money when they shoot something down. The only thing the AFA touts is its superstore," Kenny said.

The American Family Association claimed on its website that it caused the show's cancellation by bombarding the network and local affiliates with e-mails and phone calls denouncing "Daniel" for "mocking Christianity."

The show premiered Jan. 6. It was scheduled to run as a limited-run series of eight episodes, according to the NBC website. NBC also announced this week the cancellation of "Will & Grace" and "The West Wing."

The network declined comment to this newspaper on the cancellation of "The Book of Daniel."

But Kevin Reilly, NBC's entertainment president, acknowledged Jan. 22 at the Television Critics Association winter press tour in Florida that "The Book of Daniel" and the controversy surrounding the show frightened some advertisers, according to a Reuters report. But in the end, he said it was rapidly declining ratings that led to the show's cancellation.

"It's something that we anticipated going in and would be willing to weather if the audience in fact embraced the show," Reilly said. "Certainly as of Friday [Jan. 20], when the numbers [were] down again, it looks like the

show is having a hard time finding its footing."

Broadcasting & Cable, a trade magazine for television, reported Jan. 25 that Nielson ratings for the show averaged just a 2.3 rating in the 18-49 age demographic over its three week run. Each ratings point represents a percentage of television-viewing households tuned into the show.

According to Nielson ratings, "Book of Daniel" drew about 6.9 million viewers on its first night. The show's last episode on Jan. 20 attracted 5.8 million viewers and a Nielson rating of only 1.9, Broadcast & Cable reported. In contrast, "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," which airs on Tuesdays, has an average viewing audience of about 14.6 million, according to the Associated Press.

## Christianity 'hijacked'?

Kenny, a Christian, said he was surprised by the intense controversy that surrounded his show and, in fact, he expected Christians to embrace the drama that told the story of one man's relationship with his savior.

Groups like the AFA used the show as "a fundraising tool," Kenny said.

"They've hijacked Christianity. I'm more concerned about the direction of our country and can we fight these extremists. All I can say is you have to fight," he said.

The AFA, a Mississippi-based conservative group, urged its three million members to pressure local affiliates with e-



'The Book of Daniel,' featuring Aidan Quinn portraying an Episcopalian priest with a gay son and bisexual sister-in-law, became the target of wrath from the American Family Association. (Photo by AP)

mails and phone calls to drop the program before it premiered Jan. 6.

At least six NBC affiliates did not air the program Jan. 6, according to published reports. AFA also monitored and sent protest letters to advertisers on "The Book of Daniel." The show had aired Fridays at 10 p.m.

AFA said the show "reflects the anti-Christian bias which exists at the highest levels" of NBC. In an action alert to members Jan. 24, the group took credit for the cancellation.

"This shows us that we don't have to simply sit back and take the trash, but we can get involved and fight back with our pocketbooks," Don Wildmon, founder and chair of the AFA, said in the Jan. 24 statement.

## national news

# Gay groups ask court to toss out marriage lawsuit

## Activists worry federal case will undermine state efforts

By PHIL LaPADULA

Gay rights lawyers have asked a federal appeals court in California to throw out part of a gay couple's lawsuit seeking the right to marry because they fear the case could bolster efforts to add a gay marriage ban to the U.S. Constitution.

The attorneys argued that the couple lacks legal standing to challenge the constitutionality of the federal Defense of Marriage Act because they had terminated their domestic partnership registration prior to a U.S. district court's ruling in the case.

But the lawyer for the gay couple disputed that claim and contended the domestic partnership is irrelevant to the couple's claim.

After tying the knot in a private commitment ceremony in 1997, Christopher Hammer and Arthur Smelt of Mission Viejo, Calif., applied for a marriage license in 2004. When they were turned down, they filed a lawsuit in federal court.

U.S. District Judge Gary Taylor ruled against the couple, denying their requests for a marriage license and to have their relationship recognized as a marriage.

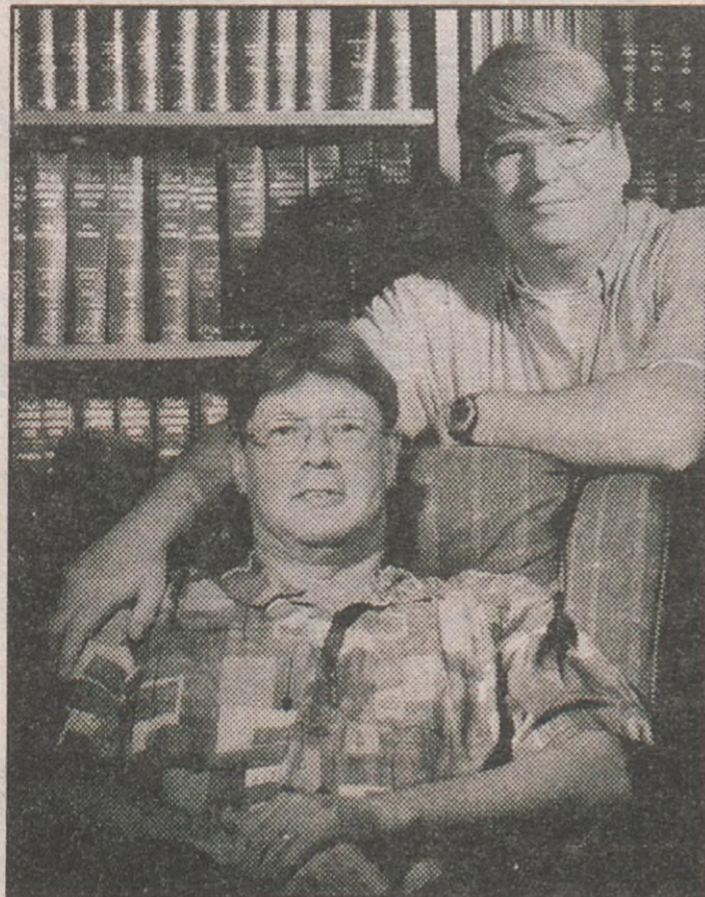
Lawyers for Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights said they are concerned the case will set a national precedent that will hurt efforts to secure marriage rights for gay couples at the state level.

Even though the federal judge upheld DOMA, which defines marriage under federal law as only between a man and a woman, lawyers representing Equality California have asked the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to conclude the judge should have dismissed the suit on procedural grounds before.

The couple has argued that DOMA violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process. The issue of whether the state of California should grant the couple a marriage license is still pending in the court.

Jennifer Pizer, senior counsel for Lambda Legal Defense Fund's western office, said the couple terminated their domestic partnership registration in December 2004, a month before a new law went into effect that granted most of the rights of marriage to registered domestic partners in California.

She said the couple's lawyer did not inform the court that the domestic partnership had been terminated before it issued a ruling.



Arthur Smelt (left) and his partner, Christopher Hammer, filed a lawsuit in federal court for the right to marry. (Photo by Matt A. Brown/AP)

### Altered documents?

But the couple's attorney, Richard C. Gilbert, said the couple never intended to terminate their D.P. registration. He said the couple, "as a civil rights protest," sent a letter to the office of California's secretary of state "demanding equal marriage rights as a condition for subsequently terminating their domestic partnership, which they would no longer need."

According to Gilbert, someone in the secretary of state's office altered documents, making it appear that the couple had terminated their domestic partnership registration. But Gilbert argued that domestic partnerships, which he described as an "insult" and "second-class citizenship," have nothing to do with the case anyway.

"You don't have to be in a domestic partnership to sue for a marriage license," he said.

He contends that Lambda Legal is using the "phony issue of domestic partnerships and spinning things to make it look like the entire case depends on domestic partnership."

Pizer acknowledged that Lambda Legal believes that "it's premature" for gay couples seeking marriage rights to file federal lawsuits. "Many state constitutions are more protective than the federal constitution, and marriage is a state law issue."

But Gilbert disagreed.

"Our case can't hurt state cases because state cases are decided under state constitutions," he said. "What kind of mentality is it to say, 'Don't fight, don't struggle?' What other group has said don't fight, we'll lose? Even if you lose you can make progress with an issue. Would Lambda Legal had said to Dred Scott, 'Mr. Scott, you're a slave, so don't sue because you're going to lose?'"

## national news

## Stock protest doesn't stop Wash. state gay rights bill

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Despite opposition from a prominent conservative minister, a bill that would outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is expected to reach a vote in the Washington state Senate by the end of this week. The measure, approved by 60-37 vote in the House on Jan. 20, passed a Senate committee Jan. 24, paving the way for a vote by the full Senate, where it failed last year by a single vote. Chief sponsor Rep. Ed Murray (D-Seattle), who is gay, said the legislation sends the message that Washington state is a "place of tolerance." The measure would add sexual orientation to a state law that bans discrimination in housing, employment and insurance. Gov. Christine Gregoire said she will sign the bill if it reaches her desk. Rev.

Ken Hutcherson, pastor of Antioch Bible Church in Redmond, Wash., on Jan. 24 urged opponents of the measure to buy and then "dump" stock in companies that back it, including Microsoft Corp., Boeing and Hewlett Packard Co.



Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire said she will sign a ban on sexual orientation discrimination into law if it reaches her desk. (AP photo)

### Ariz. wants gay dollars amid marriage ban effort

PHOENIX (AP) — Conservatives may be working to add a gay marriage ban on the ballot, but Arizona cities want to welcome more gay tourists into the state. The cities are vying for a slice of an estimated \$65 billion gay travel market. "My money spends like anyone else's," said Albuquerque resident Andee Henderson, 38, who was among the estimated crowd of 5,000 attending the Arizona Gay Rodeo Association's annual competition in Phoenix this past weekend. With an 89-page visitors and relocation guide published by the Phoenix gay chamber of commerce flying off the shelves, city leaders are planing to discuss ways to strengthen the city's gay tourism plan. Officials in Tucson, Sedona, Bisbee and Jerome say they informally angle for those visitors. But not everyone supports cities courting gay visitors. Leo Godzich, president of the National Association of Marriage Enhancement, says the cities risk destroying the Grand Canyon State's family friendly reputation by trying to wrangle in gay tourists.

discrimination. "We first believe once voters are aware of some of the discriminatory practices in the legal system, they will begin to understand over the long-term the need for legal remedies," said Rick Ridder, a consultant for Coloradans for Fairness & Equality.

### Calif. 'gay' sign proves popular for thieves

ALAMO, Calif. (AP) — Homeowners on a private road with a name some people find alluring or amusing want their expensive street signs to stop disappearing. Thieves have so far stolen four custom wooden signs from the residents of Gaywood Road in Alamo, who said the looting is no longer a laughing matter. New signs can cost as much as \$600 each, residents said. "At first, we made a joke out of it, and everybody pitched in to buy a new sign," said 10-year Alamo resident Linda Buschmeyer. "Then, it wasn't so funny the second time on. It is kind of a personal insult." Residents are responsible for replacing the signs because they live on a private road in an unincorporated area.

### D.P. benefits may be permitted even with Colo. gay union ban

DENVER (AP) — Same sex-couples might still enjoy some legal protections under a proposed amendment to the state constitution that bans gay marriage, said the leader of a group seeking to place the measure on the ballot this fall. Jon Paul, executive director of the newly formed Coloradans for Marriage, said the group is leaning toward a proposal that defines marriage as a union of one man and one woman, but does not ban legal recognition of domestic partnerships that offer inheritance rights and other benefits. That final language is expected by the end of the month. In the meantime, another group formed to fight the expected initiative began canvassing Denver neighborhoods last week to tell voters about discrimination that gay couples face in areas like property inheritance and job

### N.J. county approves D.P. benefits for workers

CAMDEN, N.J. — Domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees in Camden County now will be able to receive benefits through the county, its leaders decided late last week, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. The Camden County Board of Freeholders granted the D.P. benefits for gay workers, joining six counties in northern and central portion of the state that offer health and pension benefits to employees' registered domestic partners. "We think all of our employees should be treated equally," Freeholder Director Lou Cappelli told the Inquirer. The vote by the board was unanimous. "This is a major milestone," Steven Goldstein, chairperson of Garden State Equality, told reporters.

From staff and wire reports

## Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day seeks to close gap

Event organizers say blacks disproportionately affected by disease

By ERIC ERVIN

Local organizations hope events planned for the sixth annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day will draw attention to the disproportionate rate of HIV/AIDS cases among African Americans, including black gay men and lesbians, compared to the rest of the population.

"We need to wake up," says W. Jeffrey Campbell, community relations coordinator with the St. Hope Foundation. "Twenty-five years ago we said 'That'll never happen to us.'"

"The face [of HIV/AIDS] has changed," he says. "We make up about 12 percent of the population and we represent in excess of 50 percent of HIV/AIDS cases."

According to statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, blacks make up nearly half of the nation's AIDS cases. CDC officials report that in 2002, AIDS was the leading cause of death for blacks between the ages of 25 and 44. In the same year, blacks represented 54 percent of new HIV cases in the country.

"Statistics show that African Americans have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the epidemic's beginning," Dr. John Robertson, executive director of the National Black Alcoholism & Addictions Council, says in a press release. "If we increase the dialogue and get everyone involved, we will be able to galvanize our communities to



W. Jeffrey Campbell, community relations coordinator with the St. Hope Foundation, says the organization received a grant to specifically target black men who have risky sex with other men.

take action and stop the spread of HIV/AIDS."

The council is one of nine sponsoring organizations of the National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Campbell, who is a black gay man, is also the Houston representative for the newly formed Texas Black Gay Health Network. The network is a coalition of black gay leaders, community organizations, faith-based organizations, service providers and social groups from cities across the state formed to address health disparities among black gay men with an immediate focus on the high number of HIV/AIDS cases.

St. Hope has teamed up with the Human Rights Campaign, Abbott Laboratories, Lambda Legal and The Menil Collection for events planned in commemoration of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, which is Feb. 7. There will be community forums, workshops and HIV/AIDS testing events starting on Feb. 3.

### Healthy same-gender relationships

Lesbian gospel artist and HIV/AIDS activist Bishop Yvette Flunder, who is senior pastor of the City of Refuge United Church of Christ in San Francisco, will lead the discussion "Developing and Maintaining Healthy Same Gender Loving Relationships" Feb. 3 at The Menil Collection.

"Black men won't get tested in a high people environment," Campbell says.

But Campbell, who says he once struggled with coming out, believes more black gay men and lesbians are now getting tested.

Steven Walker, president and CEO of the Houston-based National Alliance for Black Gay Health, says his organization hopes to release a report on the infection rate of HIV/AIDS among black gay men. Walker is a member of the national steering committee for HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

### 'Arts for AIDS'

AIDS Foundation Houston is teaming up with Exclamation Dance Company to present the Mukuru "Arts for AIDS" series "Dance for Life" on Feb. 4. Poetry by African-American poet Langston Hughes will be featured and there will be performances by Kenneth Gayle and Rodney Waters.

Sonna Alton, director of community relations with Legacy Community Health Services, says the organization will canvass Houston's predominately black Sunnyside neighborhood and pass out information on HIV/AIDS prevention and care. She said there will also be HIV/AIDS testing using the OraQuick Advance rapid HIV test, which gives results in about 20 minutes.

"We did this last year and we did really, really well," says Juan Navarro, program supervisor. "We tested about two dozen."

Legacy Community Health Services, which was created last year with the merger of the Montrose Clinic and The Assistance Fund, provides primary health care, eye care, prevention education, social services and clinical research services. There is also assistance with health insurance premiums for HIV/AIDS patients.

"As always, we promote testing in general," Alton says.

Sally Huffer, community projects specialist with the Montrose Counseling Center, says officials with the facility's Risk Reduction Department will join Mayor Bill White's Task Force on HIV/AIDS in the African-America Community Feb. 7 for a media conference at the YMCA on Martin Luther King at Yellowstone.

Huffer said officials will then provide HIV/AIDS education sessions and testing from noon-2p.m. at the Bonita Street House of Hope in the city's Acres Homes neighborhood, another predominately black area.

Huffer says the center is also trying to coordinate HIV/AIDS testing at Texas Southern University, but an exact time has not been set. The center plans to raise awareness during the entire month of February, which is Black History Month.

### MORE INFO

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day,  
Feb. 7

2978 Rainbow Drive, Suite A155  
Decatur, Ga. 30034  
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www.blackaidsday.org

National Alliance for Black Gay Health  
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# out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Members of the Illumination Project Committee Carole Miller, Chair Matt Harris, Jane Weiner, Leigh McBurnett, Fran MacFerran and Denise Wright take a break after discussing business.



Empress D.D. DeMarco and Regent Emperor Ronnie Siebert were crowned at the Royal Sovereign Imperial Court of the Single Star coronation.



Robert Silvy and Greg Griffin at the Houston GLBT Community Center's 'Queer Bingo.'



(Left) Lane Lewis and Houston native Tommy Tune, who stars in the production of 'Dr. Dolittle.' (Right) The rest of the cast of the show, which made its debut this month at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts.



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## editorial

# Dems' new face is not their spine

Fresh off backing a constitutional amendment

banning gay marriage and civil unions, Tim Kaine

is being heralded as his party's new poster boy.

By CHRIS CRAIN

**T**HE DEMOCRATIC PARTY announced last week that Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine will deliver the party's official response to President Bush's "State of the Union" address later this month. A statement issued by the party praised Kaine, just one week on the job, for being "a champion for working families, putting their priorities above the needs of the special interests."

That description will surprise the "working families" of Virginia headed up by gay and lesbian couples. Because the same day Kaine debuted as "the new face" of the Democratic Party, the *Blade* reported that he supports and will sign onto the ballot an amendment to the Virginia Constitution that not only bans gay marriage and civil unions, but domestic partnerships as well, and may even deprive gay couples the protection of domestic violence laws.

After the *Blade* story hit the fan, a Kaine spokesperson telephoned to "clarify" his position. It turns out the governor does, as reported, support a constitutional ban on gay marriage and civil unions, but he opposes the rest of the amendment, which prohibits the state or local governments from giving any legal recognition whatsoever to gay and unmarried straight couples, and also blocks the state from recognizing similar efforts by other states or local governments.

Not only would Virginia's gay couples be blocked from any legal recognition, so too would a married gay couple visiting the state from Massachusetts, or a civil union'd couple from Vermont, or domestic partners from neighboring Washington, D.C. Should they encounter a medical emergency, their home-state recognition would be stripped and they'd have no right to make medical decisions or hospital visits.

What a relief that these gay "working families" must feel at Kaine's "clarified" position, opposing such unprecedented bigotry! Not so fast.

It also turns out that although Kaine isn't "comfortable" with the extraordinary broad language, which would be the most punitive ever adopted by any state, this "champion for working families" decided not to expend any political capital limiting its scope and will sign onto the ballot.

With champions like this, who needs enemies?

NOT TO WORRY, GAY VIRGINIANS (AND those who might visit them). You still have plenty of leverage here because Kaine is a Democrat and has aspirations to higher public office.

Given the influence gay Democratic groups have within the party, pressure will surely be brought to bear on such an abject betrayal of an important constituency, not to mention the party's historical commitment to civil rights.

But alas, gay Democratic activists ought to be called "Democratic activists who happen to be gay," as they so clearly are Democrats first and gay second (and activists very, very third).

Josh Israel, president of the Virginia Partisans Gay & Lesbian Democratic Club, which endorsed Kaine's election, refused to call on Kaine to veto the bill that puts the amendment on the ballot.

With gay rights activists like that, who needs party hacks?

It will come as a bitter irony to gay Virginians, and gays nationwide who should be appalled by Kaine's selection as the party's new poster boy, that just across the Potomac River, a Republican governor is proposing to extend the very rights the Democrat in Virginia would permanently ban.

Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich has introduced legislation to allow gay and unmarried straight couples to sign an official government registry ensuring they can make medical decisions for each other in time of emergency.

The National Stonewall Democrats, based in Washington, reacted to Ehrlich's proposal by attacking the Republican and not even mentioning the "new face" Democrat in Virginia.

"A bridal registry at Target would offer same-sex couples more benefits than this watered-down, election-year ploy by Governor Ehrlich," said Eric Stern, the Stonewall Democrats' executive director.

Maybe so, but the Democrat in Richmond is poised to sign a ballot measure that would amend the state's constitution to forever ban even a "watered-down" registry like the one proposed by Ehrlich, and it would probably take the bridal book at Target down with it.

Give the Stonewall Dems credit for eventually calling on Kaine not to sign the marriage amendment, even as the

Virginia Partisans and apologists like Adam Ebbin, the state's first openly gay legislator, worked the phones to defend Kaine rather than their gay constituents.

Gay Democrats aren't the only ones to buy into the dogma that the party is always a higher priority than gay rights, for the perverse reason that helping the party is supposed to, some day, help gay rights, too.

Log Cabin Republicans have been smoking their own dope for at least as long, and just this week failed to oppose the horrific nomination of Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court. Of course, the gay Democrats who run our national gay rights groups have also refused to lobby party leaders to filibuster, the only hope of blocking the nomination. Only the National Center for Lesbian Rights has shown the courage to join abortion and women's rights groups on that front.

**BUT THIS TIME AROUND, THE ISSUE** couldn't be clearer for gay Democratic leaders and the national gay groups. The party that enjoys our votes and our money, and that claims to cherish civil rights, has selected as its "new face" a governor who won't lift a finger to stop the most punitive anti-gay constitutional amendment since Colorado adopted Amendment 2.

They should join together to call on Kaine to act and act now, and if he won't he should be stripped from his new role as party spokesmodel.

Kaine's political cowardice isn't just bad for gay "working families," it's bad for Democrats. James Carville and Paul Begala, two leading Clinton-era warriors, went on "Meet the Press" on Sunday to hawk their new book, "Take it Back," which offers a tough prescription for what ails the party.

"The problem with the Democratic Party is not ideological, it's anatomical," they wrote. "We lack a backbone. Consider this book an attempt at a spinal transplant."

It couldn't come soon enough for Tim Kaine. If Howard Dean and other party leaders truly believe Kaine is a "champion for working families who puts their priorities above the needs of the special interests," then we can only conclude that the Democratic Party now views the civil rights of our working families as "special interests" to be sacrificed on Election Day.

Tim Kaine may be the new face for Democrats, but he certainly isn't their spine.

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



## viewpoint WAYNE BESEN



In the last episode, ever-frustrated Will should cruise a seedy leather bar and leave with a guy named Spike.

## 'Will & Disgrace'?

WHEN A GAY FRIEND FOUND OUT THAT NBC was canceling "Will & Grace," he was ecstatic. He derisively called the show "Will & Disgrace" and compared it to a minstrel show because the effeminate homosexual "Jack," played by Sean Hayes, is consistently the butt of jokes.

He is right that Jack is often the punch line, but I think historically this sitcom will go down as a knockout success for acceptance of gay people in mainstream culture.

"Will & Grace" isn't perfect, but it came along at the perfect time and bailed gay America out of potential primetime disaster. Ellen DeGeneres had recently come out and her sitcom quickly collapsed.

Many critics blamed the gay content for the demise, and even lesbian activist Chastity Bono told Daily Variety that "Ellen" was "too gay."

There was a real danger that the lesson network executives might have taken from Ellen was that mainstream audiences would not accept gay lead characters.

Into this political and cultural minefield stepped "Will & Grace." Thankfully, it was timely, unquestionably funny and proved that largely straight audiences can embrace gay subject matter. Where would we be today without this show rising like a phoenix from the ashes of "Ellen"?

Nonetheless, Will's (Eric McCormack) moribund sex life continues to irritate

gay viewers. The man is obviously attractive and successful, yet he fritters away his Saturday nights with Grace (Debra Messing), whining about men he would surely get, if he would just lose her.

I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT I'D like to see the last episode (May 18) end with the perennially frustrated Will cruising a seedy leather bar and leaving at 3 a.m. in a drunken stupor with a shirtless and tattooed guy named Spike.

The pragmatist in me, however, realizes that explicit sexuality isn't what this show is about. "Will & Grace" introduced gay people to millions of Americans and brought us into their living rooms.

Instead of deriding "Will & Grace," we owe David Kohan and Max Mutchnick, the show's (gay) co-creators and executive producers, a debt of gratitude. They made it possible for the networks to take gay-themed shows seriously.

IT SEEMS PROGRAMMING THAT features minorities always begins with stereotypes, before the group branches out to more complex archetypes.

Let's remember that before Denzel Washington could become a superstar, America had to endure less threatening African Americans like Jimmie Walker, who played J.J. on the sitcom "Good



Times," and liked to mindlessly shout "dy-no-miiiite!" in his Chicago housing project.

In a similar fashion, the gay characters in "Will & Grace" ingratiated themselves with Americans who were otherwise fearful of homosexuality. This has led to increasing cultural comfort and opened the door for more realistic portrayals of gay men and lesbians.

"Desperate Housewives," for example, a phenomenally popular sitcom particularly beloved in the so-called "red states," has a complex gay teenage character. On "Book of Daniel," cancelled this week by NBC, the preacher has a gay son. And, of course, the remarkable success of "Brokeback Mountain" will only lead to more gay-themed shows.

Still, there is a long way to go before gay characters get fair and equal treatment by Hollywood. ABC cancelled the reality series "Welcome to the Neighborhood," where neighbors got to choose from competing families to see who would be invited to move into a subdivision.

After a gay couple with children was

selected, the show was mysteriously pulled. ABC claims that the winners had nothing to do with their decision. Yet, critics point out that the Disney-owned network was wooing evangelicals to support the wildly profitable "Chronicles of Narnia."

Sadly, "Welcome to the Neighborhood" was exactly what America needs to see. Even Jim Stewart, who in an early episode said, "I would not tolerate a homosexual couple moving into this neighborhood," came around. It turns out that he had a gay son and the show helped him reconcile the strained relationship.

The lesson of the unseen ABC reality show highlights the reason "Will & Grace" was so instrumental: Once you allow gay families into your living room, they are inevitably accepted into the neighborhood of shared humanity.

@ Wayne Besen is author of "Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals & Lies Behind the 'Ex-Gay' Myth" (Haworth Press); he can be reached at [wbesen@aol.com](mailto:wbesen@aol.com).

## THE

With the recent release of gay-themed movies 'Brokeback Mountain,' 'Capote' and 'Transamerica,' do you think Hollywood is more accepting of gay men and lesbians?



It has been so for years. Remember people like Christy McNichols? All of the lesbians (or not knowingly lesbians) were very accepting. Also, remember Stephen in 'Dynasty'? Hollywood has been testing the market for many years. Thank God they are finally realizing the enormous support and awareness in the community and in the world, moving us closer with each step to an overall acceptance by all.

VICKY HAYES, 44  
Houston  
Salesperson



Yes. Hollywood is starting to accept gays and lesbians as regular people leading regular lives, just like everyone else.

MARTIN VELA, 39  
Houston  
Customer service associate



Absolutely. With the rise of superstars taking on roles prominently gay, I feel Hollywood is more accepting. But it is not Hollywood's choice to decide, it is up to America. Congratulations to the exposure of these films. It is a major step.

MATTHEW ALLEY, 24  
Houston  
Graphic/interactive  
media designer



First, it is not all about Hollywood. It is the little people that bring in the money. Second, we must keep on keeping on because when I went to see these movies some people, such as parents of gay children, were paying their way just to understand it.

MONTIQUE BURNS, 42  
Houston  
Engineer



Yes. Movies are a very important storytelling medium to society. This medium opens our eyes, our hearts and our souls. It is with this regard that people are more accepting and tolerant. After all, we are all part of the community, which makes this country a strong nation.

NELVIN ESQUILLO, 32  
Houston  
Banker

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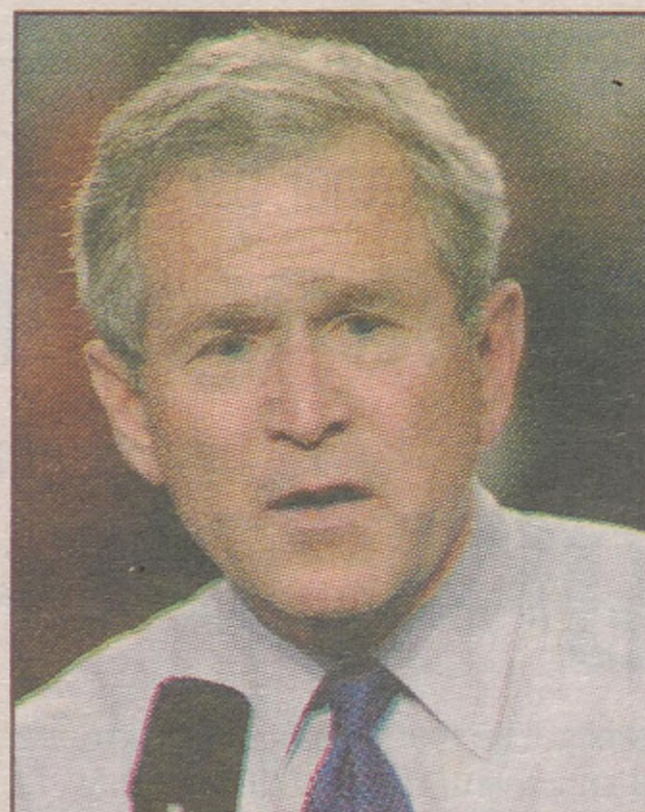
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"I'd be glad to talk about ranching, but I haven't seen the movie."  
*President George W. Bush, responding to an audience member's question about his thoughts on "Brokeback Mountain" (Kansas State University, Jan. 23)*

"Are you a girl?"  
*"American Idol" judge Randy Jackson to a male contestant on the show; the remark, coupled with a comment from fellow judge Simon Cowell that the contestant should "wear a dress," drew condemnation from GLAAD (Fox's "American Idol," Jan. 17)*

"Prevention of same-sex marriage is not rationally related to the state's interests in promoting stable families and protecting the best interests of children. ... When tradition is the guise under which prejudice or animosity hides, it is not a legitimate state interest."

*Baltimore Circuit Court Judge Brooke Murdock, in her 20-page ruling that Maryland's same-sex marriage ban violates the state's constitution (Jan. 20)*

"I have fought for equal protection for same-sex couples for many years."  
*Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan, a Democrat running for Maryland governor; though his spokesman has refused to say whether he backs gay marriage (Baltimore Sun, Jan. 21)*

"I was raised to believe that marriage is between a man and a woman. ... This is a fundamental issue of the state's public policy, and a decision that ultimately should not be made by a single trial court judge."

*Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley on the marriage ruling (Baltimore Sun, Jan. 21)*

"The far left is playing into the hands of the far right. They're idiots."  
*Maryland Senate President Mike Miller, a Democrat, on the nine gay couples who sued challenging the state's ban on same-sex marriage (Baltimore Sun, Jan. 21)*

"I never wanted to put a label on myself but, yes, I have dated women. It's about the person and what's in their soul. Right now, I am dating a man, but hey, I can still look at the girls. I think everybody's got a little queer in them."

*Singer Gioia Bruno, formerly lead singer of Exposé, on her bisexuality (Q Television Network's "Brunch," Jan. 19)*



"When two people of the same sex ... decide that they want to then adopt children ... then I think what you have in many respects is state-sanctioned child abuse because you have purposely taken away either a momma or a daddy, and mom and dad are both necessary in a child's life."

*Radio talk show host Janet Parshall (CNN's "Larry King Live," Jan. 17)*

"You know my main concern, Larry, is not with the gospel of heterosexuality, even though I think that's very important. It's with the gospel of Jesus Christ and what I find lacking in the movie ... [is] these persons [never] know why they were created and how ... they would find their greatest satisfaction in living just as God had intended them for his glory."

*Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, on "Brokeback Mountain" (CNN's "Larry King Live," Jan. 17)*



"This shows us that we don't have to simply sit back and take the trash, but we can get involved and fight back with our pocketbooks."

*Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association, claiming credit for NBC's decision to cancel "The Book of Daniel," a new program that featured an Episcopal priest with a gay son (Jan. 24)*

"A free meal, and I love lipstick. Lipstick has done wonders for my life."  
*Gay singer/songwriter Rufus Wainwright, on why he attended a New York City dinner hosted by Chanel (New York Times, Jan. 26)*

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# eclipse



## Bare essentials

A porn company uses a play on words and takes everything (protection too) off in a flick.

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JANUARY 27, 2006

## A marriage of many?

Is gay marriage a slippery slope toward legal polygamy, or are conservative warnings a red herring?

By RYAN LEE

EACH TIME DANI EYER ATTENDS A forum to advocate marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples, she knows the first question to expect at the end of her speech.

"What about polygamy?" an audience member inevitably asks Eyer, executive director of the ACLU of Utah. "Will gay marriage lead to legalized group weddings?"

Each time, Eyer answers affirmatively.

"The ACLU of Utah has traditionally advocated that personal relationships between consenting adults are protected by the Constitution, and that freedom of religion and freedom of expression are fundamental rights," Eyer says, citing the her ACLU chapter's official stance on polygamy since 1989.

"Criminal and civil laws prohibiting the advocacy or practice of plural marriage are constitutionally defective," she adds. "Neither the polygamists nor the proponents of same-sex marriage are wild about the analogy, but we do see the two as similar concepts."

Mathew Staver, president of the conservative legal group Liberty Counsel, agrees that there is "an easy transition" from allowing marriage for gay and lesbian couples to legalized polygamy. But instead of considering them fundamental rights, Staver says neither gay marriage nor polygamy should be recognized by states.

"If you convert marriage to merely the placing of a license on consenting adults that are in a committed relationship, or who love each other, then there is no logical line that can be drawn between gay marriage and polygamy," Staver says. "Gay marriage clearly opens the door to polygamy."

But gay rights organizations have long refuted claims that acceptance of same-sex unions is a slippery slope toward marital anarchy.

"The right wing would love nothing more than for us to spend all of our airtime discussing distractions such as polygamy, bestiality and other — from their point of view — doomsday scenarios rather than engage the public about committed same-sex couples being discriminated against," says Evan Wolfson, executive director of

Freedom to Marry, which advocates marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.

"The opposition to ending discrimination in marriage for gay couples does not turn on how you feel about polygamy," Wolfson continues. "It's just a diversion."

THE FORM OF POLYGAMY MANY people are familiar with is the structure that at one point was practiced in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Mormonism: polygamy, when one man marries multiple wives. But a more communal, egalitarian form of group love called polyamory — "many loves" — has increased in visibility over the last few decades.

Polyamorous relationships can include heterosexual, gay and bisexual individuals who believe it is against their nature to have only one sexual and emotional lover. They are composed of many blends of multiple partners: a heterosexual woman with four bisexual husbands, a trio of gay men living as a single unit, or pairs of married heterosexual couples who live as a tribe, just to name a few of the possibilities.

A Dutch polyamorous relationship recently ignited a firestorm among conservative pundits and religious organizations in the U.S., after a married heterosexual couple entered into a "cohabitation contract" with their bisexual female lover. The "cohabitation contract" does not include all of the benefits and responsibilities that accompany Dutch marriages, but the trio celebrated their union by donning wedding regalia and holding a marriage ceremony.

Stanley Kurtz, a fellow at the Hudson Institute, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, considers a polyamorous contract as "an unmistakable step down the road to legalized group marriage."

"The use of cohabitation contracts was an important step along the road to same-sex marriage in the Netherlands," Kurtz writes in the Dec. 26, 2005 issue of *The Weekly Standard*. "The popularity of cohabitation contracts among Dutch gays in the 1980s helped create laws in the early 1990s forbidding employer discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation — including discrimination between married and unmarried couples in the granting of benefits."

Kurtz argues that Dutch society is taking the same "small step" approach



People in polyamorous relationships aren't officially organizing to gain marriage rights, but could their quest for recognition affect the movement for marriage between same-sex couples?

toward polyamorous nuptials as it did for gay marriage — offering symbolic recognition and limited benefits (such as domestic partnerships for same-sex couples) until the mainstream population is comfortable granting full marital rights to non-traditional relationships.

Kurtz's treatise — the latest in a line of articles linking gay marriage and polyamory penned by the conservative scribe — drew a rebuttal from *The New Republic's* Rob Anderson, who wrote that opposition to gay marriage is based on two variables: the "ick" factor and the "slippery slope" to man-and-monkey weddings.

"With the 'ick' factor heading towards irrelevancy [because of increased tolerance], the slippery-slope argument is all [conservatives] have left," Anderson writes. "If the right can convince the public that an acceptance of same-sex marriage inherently means the acceptance of polygamy, the chance of same-sex marriage becoming legal will greatly diminish."

Wolfson agrees that conservatives are "desperate to change the subject."

"They make wild claims about Scandinavia falling apart; they make wild claims about Canada falling apart; and they make wild claims about polygamy," Wolfson says. "Those are all distractions, and we really have to resist that bait."

HARLAN WHITE UNDERSTANDS WHY Wolfson and other gay rights leaders don't advocate on behalf of him and his dozen intimate lovers, but he's disappointed that they claim not to see the link between gay rights and the acceptance of polyamory.

"What is kind of sad is the impression some gay leaders can give that they believe somehow monogamy is inherently better than polyamory," says White, a het-

erosexual Seattle resident who has been in polyamorous relationships with women and male "co-lovers" since the early '90s.

"I notice when people of one minority group try to relate to the mainstream, there's an unfortunate tendency to point to another minority group and say, 'We may be different from the mainstream, but we're not like them,'" White adds. "... we shouldn't have to sell ourselves to society by being better than other people."

For Wolfson and gay organizations like the Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, the issue boils down to "couples" being allowed to wed.

"Just as heterosexuals can marry a single person, so do we want that freedom to marry the person we want to build a life with, with the same rules, the same responsibilities and the same respect as heterosexual couples," Wolfson says. "Gay couples are not saying 'Let's have no rules.'"

"What gay couples are saying in the court cases, in the legislatures and in public discussions around the country is 'Let us have what you have,'" says Wolfson.

As a gay man, Justen Michael appreciates Wolfson's work to secure marriage rights for same-sex couples. But as founder of the group Polyamorous NYC, Michael says efforts by gay groups to distance themselves from polyamory sometimes stings.

"I'd encourage people to keep an open mind — it wasn't too long ago that gay relationships were completely ostracized," Michael says. "All movements have a tendency to build on the movements that have come before them."

"It's hypocritical for us as gays and lesbians to pretend we're the only people

Please see POLYAMORY on Page 19

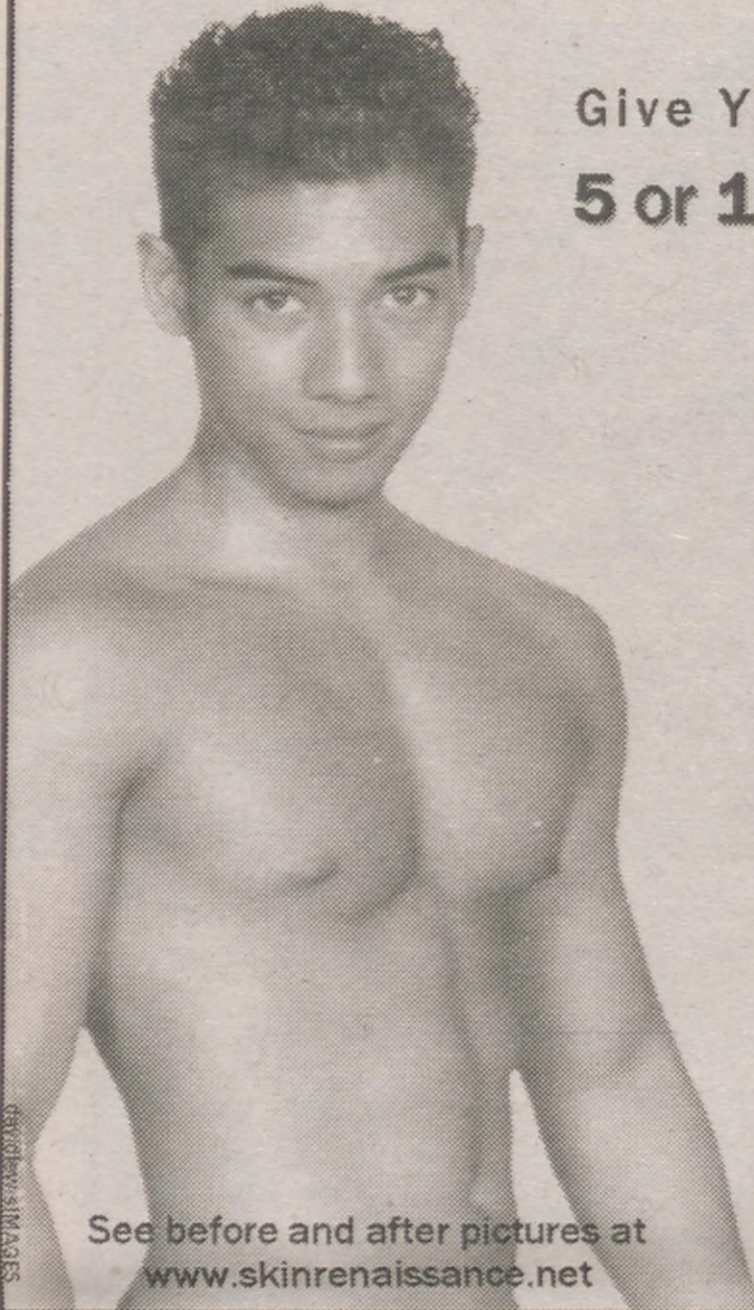
**THEATER:** New talent graces the stage in HGO's winter opener. **Page 15**

**TELEVISION:** MTV's 'True Life' series features gay-themed episodes. **Page 16**

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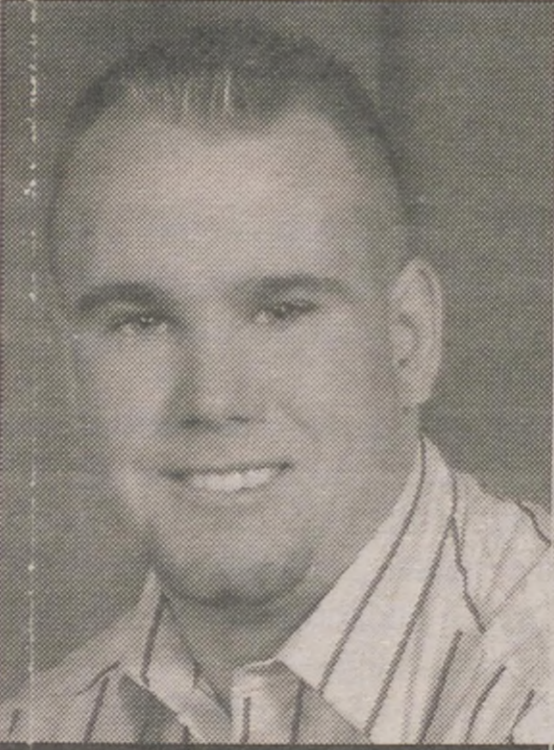

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## nightlife JOHNNY HOOKS



Grab your gay partner and head over to BRB for country line dancing, party with 'Spoiled Boyz' and see a porn star at South Beach.

# The nightlife 'Rush'

HOVO ON THE GO-GO RETURNS WITH the latest news on where to go and what to do in Houston. The final week of January is upon us and the city is gearing up for three very high profile events, all happening within weeks of each other: the 2006 NBA All Star Game, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and Mardi Gras.

As you will see, February 2006 is looking fine in the Bayou City, kids.

NEW THIS WEEK, THE ALWAYS CUTTING edge **Alley Theatre** is staging one of the most talked about plays of 2005, "The Pillowman," beginning Jan. 27 and running through Feb. 26 on the Neuhaus Stage. This is quite the coup for the Alley as they are the first resident theatre to produce **Martin McDonagh's** Tony-nominated play and 2005 Broadway sensation.

The harrowing story, set in an unnamed totalitarian state, opens with the fiction writer Katurian being interrogated about crimes in his community that mirror the crimes in his short stories. "The Pillowman" takes on some of modern society's most intriguing issues, including what defines art, censorship and civil rights. Tickets for the play are \$29.00 and performances are selling out quickly. For more information call 713-228-8421 or visit [www.alleytheatre.org](http://www.alleytheatre.org).

IS YOUR TWO STEP A BIT RUSTY? With Rodeo Houston just around the corner, and the "Brokeback Mountain" effect in full swing, how about taking a line dancing workshop? Sat., Jan. 28, from 3 until 5 p.m. head over to the BRB where **Southern Country Houston**, one of Houston's competitive Country and Western dance organizations, will be hosting a line dance workshop for only \$5. You'll learn these dances: **SXE, Push, Swing Your Chains, Baby You Make Me Sick, Freaks to the Floor and Chill Factor** (if time permits.) Plus step sheets, lunch and door prizes will be available. Registration begins at 2:30 p.m. The BRB is located at **2400 Brazos**, just across from the main Spec's Warehouse in midtown and can be reached at 713-528-9192.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING A BIT more sweaty this final weekend of January? Then check out the return of **Chas Soloman's BEYOND Entertainment** and the **Spoiled Boyz**. Fresh and rested from their successful New Year's Eve event with **Jamie J Sanchez** and **Jeanie Tracy**, the boyz are back with "Rush."

# HoVo on the go-go

Anticipating the inevitable football frenzy that comes with Super Bowl perhaps? We hope so! The Spoiled Boyz will be hosting the "Rush: The After-Party" on Sat., Jan 28, from 3:30 a.m. until dawn and beyond.

The party happens at **Dean's Credit Clothing** located at **316 Main Street** at Preston. Dallas' remix artist and DJ Josh Gram will be throwing the beatz around in the Main Room, while Houston's own **DJ Jessica Lozano** will be getting into the groove in the Groove Lounge. Fraternity and/or sorority insignia or apparel is highly encouraged. \$15 advance tickets are available at **M2M Fashion** at **3400 Montrose**. For more information, visit [www.spoiledboyz.net](http://www.spoiledboyz.net).

GET READY TO WORK IT ALL NIGHT long at **Rich's** Feb 11. Rich's and **The Texas Circuit Boyz** present "The Red Party" featuring the number one circuit DJ in the world, **Peter Rauhofer**.

This will be his only Texas performance in all of 2006 and his first ever Houston appearance. HotGG fave, **DJ Mark D**, kicks the night off and **DJ Lydia Prim** takes you into the late night. This event is sure to sell out so get your tickets now at **M2M Fashion** on Montrose and online at [www.richs-houston.com](http://www.richs-houston.com).



Mark Dalton

**SOUTH BEACH** IS holding its annual **Mardi Gras Ball** on Feb. 18 and includes porn star, **Mark Dalton**. His "Super Soakin' Tour" stops in at 9 p.m. and includes a photo shoot, autograph session and a live show. **DJ Jimmy Skinner** spins until 5 a.m. 713-529-SOBE.

## theater RICH ARENSCHIEDT



The Houston Grand Opera's winter opener sees the debut of new actors and actress who can definitely play the part.

# Makings of a new 'Don'

SEVERAL NEW FACES (AND VOICES) grace Wortham Center in the Houston Grand Opera's winter opener, "Don Pasquale" by bel canto king Gaetano Donizetti.

Soprano Jennifer Welch-Babidge makes her house debut as the duplicitous Norina and, in his first major mainstage role, opera studio member Norman Reinhardt sings Ernesto as her finance. American baritone Brian Leerhuber also makes his debut as the manipulative Dr. Malatesta.

"Don Pasquale" is a perfect vehicle for this trio. This farcical work recounts the attempts of the aged Don Pasquale, sung here by American bass baritone John Del Carlo, to secure a much younger and more attractive wife than his years allow. All goes quickly awry as his attempts to snare a bride while simultaneously disinherit his nephew Ernesto result in Pasquale being duped by his friend, Dr. Malatesta.

As a result, he is trapped in a faked marriage arranged by Malatesta and eventually driven to distraction by a shrewish "wife" who abuses him and bilks him out of a sizable chunk of his fortune. Relieved to be rid of his raving spouse, he gladly consents to the eventual union of Norina and Ernesto.

By the time Donizetti composed "Don Pasquale" he'd already written 63 operas and was the undisputed master of theater. The timing was right—he was sandwiched musically between two other great composers, including Bellini, who died in 1835, and Verdi, who gained fame in 1842 with his blockbuster "Nabucco." With "bel canto" opera there's no uncertainty about who is who and what is happening – occasional confusion yes, but ambiguity regarding character development, no.

This cast takes full advantage with soprano Welch-Babidge heading up the hilarity. She portrays the lover and the shrew with equal abandon, incredible technique and timbre that's pure to the very top of her range.

Babidge's character knows Norina holds all the cards in the deck and that no flaccid octogenarian can subjugate her. Her ardent opposite is opera studio member Reinhardt. Perfectly cast and costumed (in fabulously fitting trousers) he personifies the penniless artist.

Though he sometimes shrank in the ensembles, this young tenor has a great bel canto voice and sings with passionate enthusiasm. His Act III offstage solo (beautifully accompanied by guitarist Mark Moore) was spot-on, well placed and had perfect pitch.



Miserable and broke, Don Pasquale regrets his hasty marriage. (Photo by Brett Coomer/HGO)

Donizetti duets are fraught with pitfalls and measures of unaccompanied vocal hijinx. Reinhardt and Babidge negotiated all with aplomb.

John Del Carlo defines a Donizetti basso buffo. In a strange twist of fate, he bears a remarkable resemblance to Luigi Lablache, the singer who created the role in 1843. Last seen here in Rossini's "Barber of Seville" Del Carlo delights us in the comic roles of this repertoire.

The alacritous ACT III "Cheti, Cheti" duet between him and baritone Leerhuber was a vocal highlight of the evening.

Brian Leerhuber's youthful lush baritone is the perfect contrast to the bluster and exasperation required from Del Carlo's Don.

The whole ensemble, the chorus and even the Don's morosely resigned servants reinforce the comedic aspects of the play.

In this production, the music necessitates laughter; Babidge gets up on her toes for the high notes and the whole cast follows. Chorus members portraying gossipy servants and tradesmen all seem to be having more fun with "Don Pasquale" than anything else in recent memory.

Even conductor Patrick Summers appeared to be having a great time in the pit, leading the band through this production with absolute ease.

## **i** MORE INFO

'Don Pasquale'  
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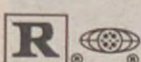
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television **KATHERINE VOLIN**



MTV and Logo team up for an episode of 'True Life' about gay parents, but the show should get both grounded for bad behavior.

**Straightening up**

THE OLD SAYING THAT TRUTH IS stranger than fiction may be true, at least for television executives who have realized that truth is much more fun to watch than fiction while sitting underwear-clad on the couch.

MTV's "True Life" series has become an endless source of fascination for those of us trapped on our sofas in our underthings, capable of only staring at the blaring blue screen as three parallel stories of people's lives unfold. The programs are paralyzingly watchable. Who doesn't want to find out how the morbidly obese live? Or what it's like to move to New York from Ohio when you're 19?

In classic MTV style, the programs often include gay people and are sometimes gay-centered. But the latest episode, "True Life: I Have Gay Parents," which aired on MTV at 10 p.m. on Jan. 26, was co-produced by Logo and will also show as part of Logo's Real Momentum documentary series as "Raising Teens."

The co-production makes for an interesting scenario. Can one program please both of its presumed target markets: MTV's youthful, mostly straight audience and Logo's older, gay audience?

IN CLASSIC "TRUE LIFE" STYLE, THE show tracks three teens and details some of their experiences growing up with gay parents.

Cooper, 18, has two mothers who have been together for 25 years. He was conceived via artificial insemination and now is allowed to contact his biological father. While it's interesting watching Cooper agonize over contacting his father, it's more "True Life: I'm Meeting My Biological Father."

Aidan also has two mothers. Her biological mother, Janet, was pregnant and married when she met Jane, whom she has been with ever since. Aidan, a high school junior who describes herself as pansexual, heads up her school's Gay-Straight Alliance and is concerned that her gay activism may keep her from the position of drum major at her conservative Richmond, Va., school.



Aidan, a Richmond, Va. teen, shops with her lesbian parents. A new television show documents several teens growing up in households with gay parents.

Classic lesbian jokes run rampant as Aidan's parents help her pick out a prom dress, "How many lesbians does it take to pick out a prom dress?" one mom asks the other. "None," she responds "They'd pick out a pair of jeans."

Hope's story as it shows on MTV is perhaps the most banal of all the three. Logo's website reveals what "True Life" doesn't, which is that her fathers were turned down 24 times when they tried to adopt in New York City in 1987, until finally they were offered a four-month-old biracial baby appropriately named Hope. Well, that's an interesting tidbit about race and sexual orientation as part of the adoption process, but MTV's show doesn't include it.

Although most gay people would presume there are similar child-raising struggles no matter one's sexual orientation, it's no secret that there are challenges to being gay and raising a child in a straight world. Other than Aidan's story, none of the stories deal specifically with gay issues.

The production process seems intent on "heterosexualizing" a gay-headed household by ignoring the gay-specific issues that surely come up. Though more predominant in such situations, questions of artificial insemination and biological parents aren't inherently gay.

This show might be good for those in the MTV target audience who need a big cup of "duh" to see that gay parents aren't so different. For everyone else, however, "True Life: I Have Gay Parents" provides little insight into an increasingly common scenario.

**MORE INFO**

'True Life'  
Thursdays at 9 p.m.  
MTV

'Real Momentum: Raising Teens'  
Saturday, Feb. 4, 3 p.m.  
Sunday, Feb. 5, noon.  
Logo

If it's gay and on the air, it's at  
www.houstonvoice.com/calendars  
TV LISTINGS

## music MIKE FLEMING



'Desperate Housewives' soundtrack may easily draw gay men, but featured lesbian artists likely to pique female interest, too.

## Let's get 'Desperate'

EGOTISTICAL DIVAS BATTLING FOR supremacy, country girls in the big city, soulful sirens with secrets and rocker chicks ready to throw down are in store for eager fans.

No, it's not the next episode of 'Desperate Housewives.' It's the hit TV show's surprisingly well-conceived soundtrack.

Released in December, "Music from and Inspired by 'Desperate Housewives'" grabbed the expected attention of gay men. We love gay creator Marc Cherry's show about fabulous women who stop at nothing to get their way, and we are the most likely targets for songs by artists including Gloria Estefan, Broadway smash Idina Menzel ("Rent," "Wicked"), LeAnne Rimes and Shania Twain.

But our lesbian sisters have reasons to get "Desperate" as well. Even if they don't watch the TV show, female fans can revel in the CD's inclusion of lesbian artists kd lang and Indigo Girls plus rocker Liz Phair.

Rare are the musicians that appeal to both the male and female gay bents, but the hearty voices of Joss Stone, Martina McBride and Macy Gray should please most listeners.

CHERRY OVERSAW THE SONG SELECTIONS, which include perfectly chosen classic covers and original hits, each with elements of female empowerment and of course, desperation.

Fans are already familiar with composer Danny Elfman's whimsical theme for the show, which appears on the CD. Instrumental tracks for each "Housewife" also punctuate the album and define distinct sections of its playlist.

Elfman, who went from '80s Brit-pop band Oingo Boingo to become known for his TV and movie themes including "The Simpsons," "Nightmare Before Christmas" and many others, expertly sets the tone for the album with "Mary Alice," a nod to the show's unseen narrator. The band SHeDAISY follows with the aptly titled ditty, "God Bless the American Housewife."

But the ball really gets rolling after "Edie," the theme for the bitchy serial divorcee played by Nicollette Sheridan. Shania Twain's undeniable voice follows



The 'Desperate Housewives' characters played by Eva Longoria (left), Terri Hatcher, Marcia Cross and Felicity Huffman each receives a personal theme song on the show's soundtrack. (Photo courtesy ABC)

with "Shoes," and the '60s classic "Band of Gold" gets a makeover by Anna Nalick.

After a musical interlude for "Lynette," Phair provides one of the CD's highlights with a remake of the Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper," and Indigo Girls have their trademark fun covering Simon and Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson." McBride doesn't add anything new to "Harper Valley PTA," but the song's inherent appeal is perfect for the soundtrack.

The CD hits its stride with a section of songs starting with "Bree," an ode to Marcia Cross' uptight character. Standouts include Rimes letting that famous voice rip on the hauntingly beautiful "We're Running Out of Time," and Joss Stone proving her pipes on "Treat Me Right (I'm Yours for Life)."

The selections following "Gabrielle" are among the most impressive. Macy Gray lends her signature growl to "Boom Boom," and Estefan adds depth to "Young Hearts Run Free" on her cover of the Rod Stewart classic.

AFTER A FUN RIDE WITH "SUSAN," the best of the character themes, Menzel shows her chops on "Damsel in Distress," and lang, sure to make the replay list on any compilation album she graces, offers "Dream of the Everyday Housewife."

Cherry and his collaborators should be commended for putting together a CD that is toe-tappingly strong throughout. With the show's popularity, it would be easy to crank out and sell a disc with the show's stars on the cover and any old playlist. But producers went out of their way to organize the CD and select songs with an exacting ear for appropriate content and listenability.

### **i** MORE INFO

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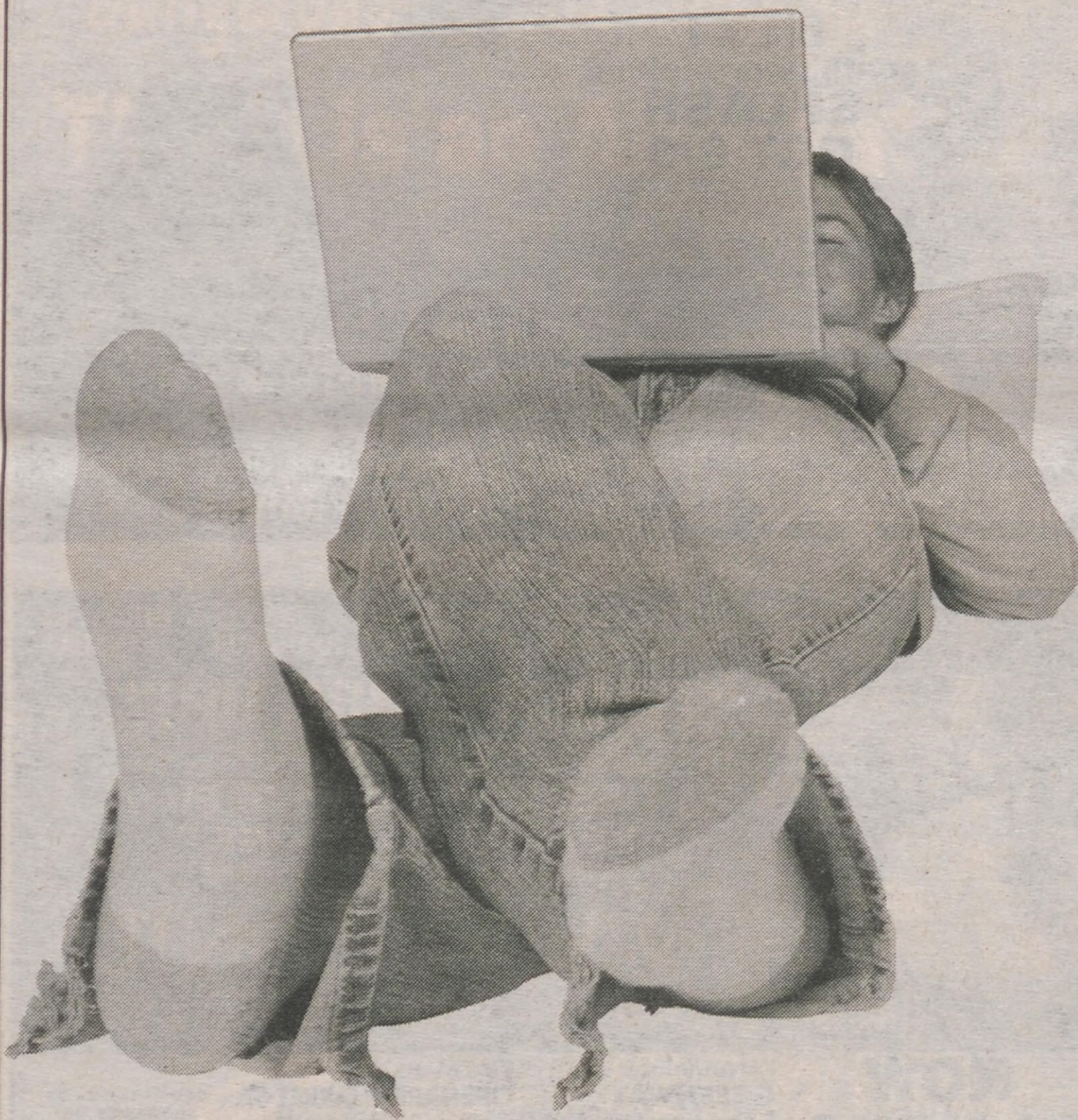
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## Dial up a cliché

Tired porn jokes,  
Brando's gay sex fest and  
'Supernanny' wants you

JUST WHEN YOU thought the "Bareback Mountain" joke was long gone, IR Media really did come out with a porn movie titled — you guessed it — "Bareback Mountain." Even though everyone from gay internet blogs to Dish's lesbian friends have been laughing over the lame play-on-words for the last year, this porn producer barreled onward into mediocrity.

Still in production, the skin flick is littered with twinks in 10-gallon hats and boots doing manly things, including each other.

A pool table figures prominently in one of the opening scenes where one of the characters hands his bottom a belt saying, "Here, you'll want to bite down on this." Such scintillating and witty dialogue! Then the pair makes good on the title and goes for broke with nary a condom in sight.

IR Media lures consumers by promising 19-year-old cowhands doing the rear-end rodeo. More likely, the actors are somewhere in their 20s and cashing in on their age-defying genetics.

Not that Dish is bitter.

### Sexcapades

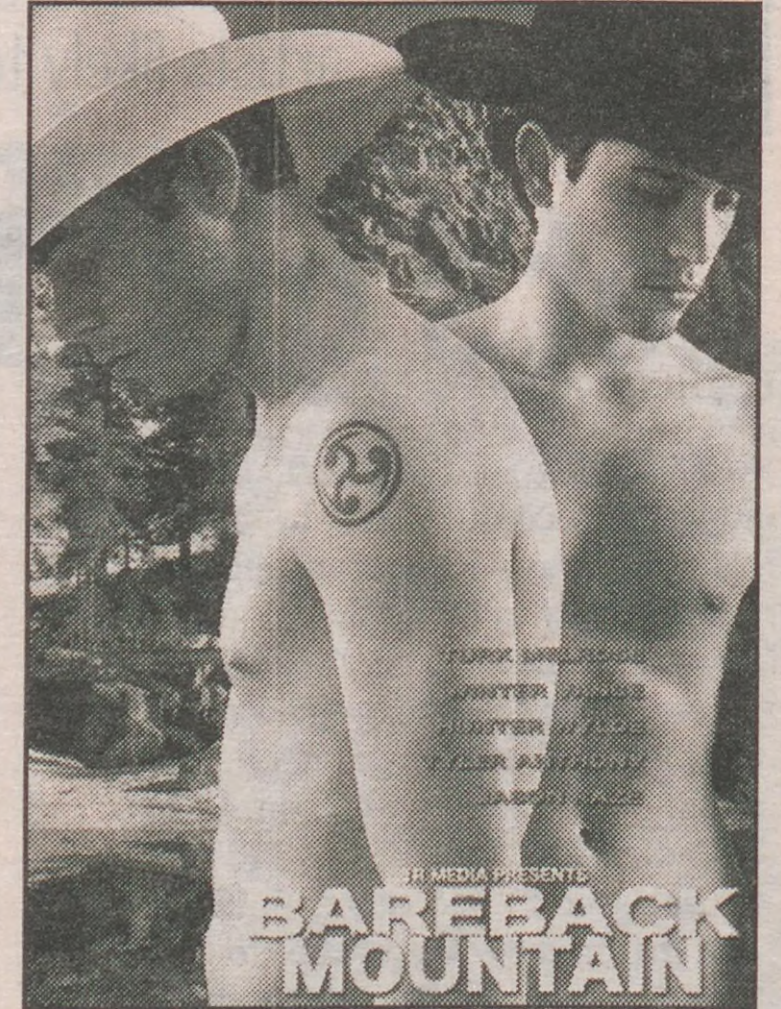
When she was a young chick, Dish thought about changing her name to Stella, so she could fantasize while hearing gorgeous **MARLON BRANDO** bellow her name in the movie "A Streetcar Named Desire."

Darwin Porter, biographer of Hollywood idols, recently published "Brando Unzipped," a very steamy look at the star's life, including the sexual escapades of which legends are born.

According to Porter, totally dreamy **BURT LANCASTER** was one of the many who fell to the charms of Brando. Lancaster starred in such classics as "Judgment at Nuremberg" and "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral." The two actors supposedly met at auditions for "A Streetcar Named Desire," and the 34-year-old Lancaster followed the 27-year-old Brando to the gym and into the shower where the two started their brief tryst.

Italian actress **PIER ANGELI** was engaged to iconic heartthrob **JAMES DEAN** when she walked into her living room and caught Brando and Dean in flagrante delicto, Porter claims.

Also included in Brando's man-on-man parade was **STEWART GRANGER** who ironically enough played Lot in a 1962 film titled "Sodom and Gomorrah." Porter writes that everyone interested in men drooled over Granger, including



A porn company is planning to release 'Bareback Mountain' — catching up with a joke that was already tired a year ago.

movie star **CARY GRANT**, who chased him for years.

### Disciplinarian Poppins

Finally, dysfunctional gay families have achieved equality alongside dysfunctional straight families. ABC's show "Supernanny" is casting same-sex families for its upcoming season.

The casting producer for the show, which sends a child care professional into a chaotic home to teach bratty kids how to behave, has put out an active call for gay and lesbian parents to sign up for the show. Now you have the opportunity to be beamed into people's living rooms, so hee-haw rubes can say, "I told you so" about gay child-rearing skills.

Same-sex households with two or more children that are interested in being dissected before all of America can e-mail Tami Brandel at [Tamibcasting@aol.com](mailto:Tamibcasting@aol.com).

London's **JO FROST** is the nanny on the show, which debuted in the United Kingdom in 2004. In 2005, ABC picked it up in the U.S. Since that time, Frost has chatted up **OPRAH WINFREY** and **DAVID LETTERMAN** and been hailed by papers around the country for her behavior-changing techniques with children.

She observes how the parents control or try to control their children and then she makes her move. In no time, the little horrors are behaving as if they've just left finishing school.



Supernanny Jo Frost



Marlon Brando

@ Send comments, suggestions to  
[Dish@houstonvoice.com](mailto:Dish@houstonvoice.com)

## eclipse

# Few buy gay marriage as 'slippery slope' to legal polygamy

POLYAMORY, continued from Page 13

who are treated differently because our relationships are not mainstream," Michael adds. "Both [the polyamorous and gay] communities are concerned with love, and forming lasting relationships, and with our own liberation."

IF THERE IS POLYAMOROUS activism in the U.S., both Michael and White consider themselves as attuned as anyone. But both agree there's nothing grand about the polyamorous agenda.

"We're still a fairly new community, and our primary focus at the time being is building our own infrastructure — find out who we are as people," Michael says.

Individuals in polyamorous relationships are more concerned about losing their job or custody of their children than they are about gaining legal recognition for their relationships, White says.

"In my experience of the poly community as a whole, there's no strong or coherent movement to legalize plural marriages, and there's certainly no poly movement waiting in the wings ready to pounce on marriage once gays can do it," says White, whose 12-person polyamorous tribe includes one legally married couple.

"With many polys, we'd rather the government not be involved with certifying or recognizing our relationships," he says.

Sasha Lessin, who founded the World

Polyamory Association with his wife Janet Kira Lessin, says polyamorous units deserve "all the protections and rights a married couple receives — hospital visitations, shared property, insurance benefits, everything."

But even the Lessins concede there is no vibrant polyamory movement. So supporting the gay rights movement is their "No. 1 priority," because it opens society's door of tolerance a little wider, Kira Lessin says.

"We're all about freedom and choice, and we can maybe pool our efforts together and make this happen in our lifetime," she says.

IN HIS WEEKLY STANDARD ARTICLE, Kurtz also suggests that "bisexuality is emerging as a reason why legalized gay marriage is likely to result in legalized group marriage."

Bisexuals won't be satisfied until they can have a husband and a wife, Kurtz reasons, and so surely they'll begin calling for multi-partner marriages.

There are no hard statistics on bisexuality, but many, if not most, bisexuals do not have relationships with men and women simultaneously, says Luigi Ferrer, president of BiNet USA and board member of the Bisexual Resource Center.

"I don't think polyamory is necessarily tied to sexual orientation," Ferrer says. "I think the detractors of same-sex marriage have used that slippery slope argument very effectively to scare a lot of people."

But if some bisexuals want legal protec-

tions for multiple partners, that's something so-called "LGBT" shouldn't automatically dismiss, he adds.

"I think there are good arguments for bringing protections to family units that look different from the mainstream," Ferrer says. "But gay and lesbian groups are highly unlikely to ever support that policy."

IRONICALLY, BISEXUAL POLYAMOROUS couples might find an unlikely ally in religious conservatives, namely fundamental Mormons and variations of Islam that continue to practice polygamy.

On Jan. 16, a government-sponsored panel in Canada recommended decriminalizing polygamy, citing sensitivity to the customs of Muslim immigrants. Eyer from the ACLU of Utah says her organization is beginning to receive calls from Muslims seeking to continue polygamy.

But polygamy in Islam was restricted to the context of women losing their husbands to war, and having to join another family for protection and sustenance, says Ahmed Younis, national director at the Washington D.C.-based Muslim Public Affairs Council.

"There is no polygamy amongst American Muslims," says Younis, who notes that 70 percent of the country's Muslims were born in the U.S., and generations of Muslim immigrants did not transport polygamy to America.

Some Mormons are attempting to get polygamous marriage recognized by state

governments, and they're using the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that decriminalized homosexual sodomy, *Lawrence v. Texas*, as their primary basis.

"What *Lawrence* holds is that private, intimate sexual conduct between consenting adults cannot be criminalized, and Utah's law violates that," says Brian Barnard, an attorney representing a Mormon Utah couple challenging the state's anti-polygamy statute.

A federal judge ruled against Barnard's clients in February 2005. Barnard is appealing the ruling.

He asserts that his case is about freedom of religion, with fundamentalist Mormon men required to have multiple wives in order to enter heaven.

Like traditional marriage, Polygamy has a religious and heterosexual context that facilitates natural procreation, he says.

"If you're slipping down that slippery slope, polygamous marriages should come before gay marriage because they more closely resemble traditional marriage," Barnard says.

Even if gay marriage does lead to legalized polyamory, that isn't bad, says Theresa Brennan, who runs a weekend campout in Washington State called PolyCampNW.

"The slippery slope argument is over-used," she says. "Giving blacks the vote, women the vote, contraception — it's all a slippery slope to a place of better social justice and acceptance."



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**THE HOUSTON WOMEN'S Festival** is a fun-filled, day-long celebration of music, art, culture & community. This year's line-up includes Melissa Ferrick, from Boston, award-winning songwriter Susan Gibson, one of Texas' favorites Beth Wood, as well as Natalia Zuckerman & Yvonne Perea. **The Houston Women's Fest is Saturday, Feb 4, 2006 at Clear Lake Park in Seabrook Texas, 5001 Nasa Road 1 from 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.** Please call (281) 757-6153 for more info or [www.hwfestival.org](http://www.hwfestival.org)

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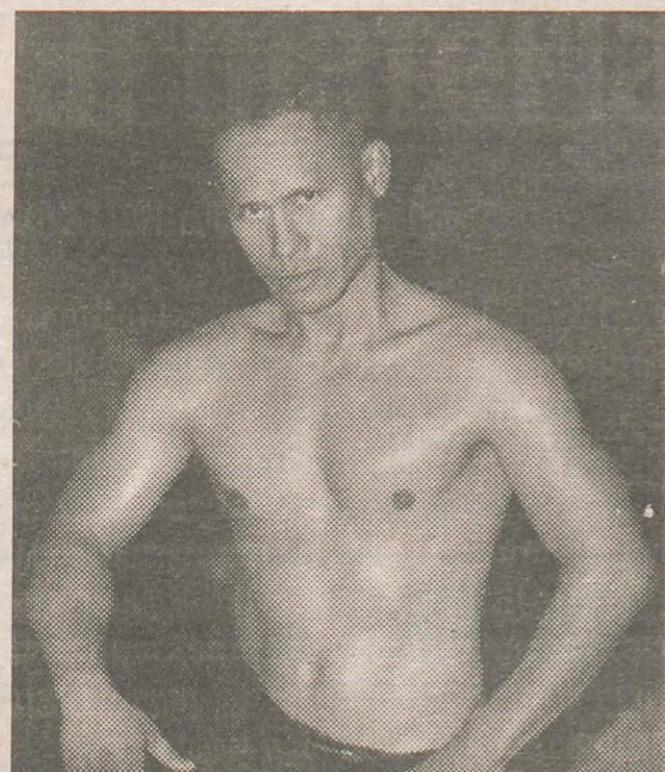
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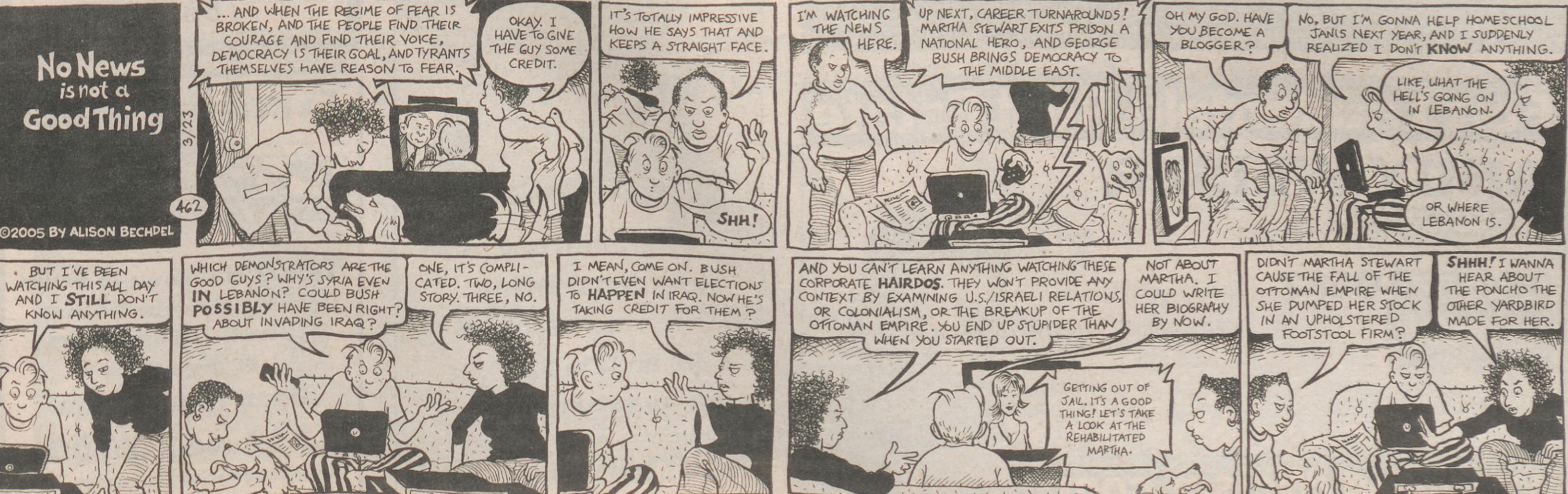
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## Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



**No News is not a Good Thing**

3/23  
462  
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... AND WHEN THE REGIME OF FEAR IS BROKEN, AND THE PEOPLE FIND THEIR COURAGE AND FIND THEIR VOICE, DEMOCRACY IS THEIR GOAL, AND TYRANTS THEMSELVES HAVE REASON TO FEAR.

OKAY, I HAVE TO GIVE THE GUY SOME CREDIT.

IT'S TOTALLY IMPRESSIVE HOW HE SAYS THAT AND KEEPS A STRAIGHT FACE.

SHH!

I'M WATCHING THE NEWS HERE.

UP NEXT, CAREER TURNAROUNDS! MARTHA STEWART EXITS PRISON A NATIONAL HERO, AND GEORGE BUSH BRINGS DEMOCRACY TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

OH MY GOD. HAVE YOU BECOME A BLOGGER?

No, BUT I'M GONNA HELP HOMESCHOOL JANIS NEXT YEAR, AND I SUDDENLY REALIZED I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.

LIKE, WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON IN LEBANON.

OR WHERE LEBANON IS.

BUT I'VE BEEN WATCHING THIS ALL DAY AND I STILL DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.

WHICH DEMONSTRATORS ARE THE GOOD GUYS? WHY'S SYRIA EVEN IN LEBANON? COULD BUSH POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN RIGHT ABOUT INVADING IRAQ?

ONE, IT'S COMPLICATED. TWO, LONG STORY. THREE, NO.

I MEAN, COME ON. BUSH DIDN'T EVEN WANT ELECTIONS TO HAPPEN IN IRAQ. NOW HE'S TAKING CREDIT FOR THEM?

AND YOU CAN'T LEARN ANYTHING WATCHING THESE CORPORATE HAIRDOS. THEY WON'T PROVIDE ANY CONTEXT BY EXAMINING U.S./ISRAELI RELATIONS, OR COLONIALISM, OR THE BREAKUP OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. YOU END UP STUPIDER THAN WHEN YOU STARTED OUT.

NOT ABOUT MARTHA. I COULD WRITE HER BIOGRAPHY BY NOW.

DIDN'T MARTHA STEWART CAUSE THE FALL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE WHEN SHE DUMPED HER STOCK IN AN UPHOLSTERED FOOTSTOOL FIRM?

SHHH! I WANNA HEAR ABOUT THE PONCHO THE OTHER YARDBIRD MADE FOR HER.

GETTING OUT OF JAIL, IT'S A GOOD THING! LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE REHABILITATED MARTHA.

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# bitch session

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**I'VE READ THAT MALES REACH THEIR sexual peak in their early 20s. Is it me or am I getting hornier as I get older?**

**TO THE LOVELY PERSON WHO THINKS the term "healthy poz" sounds phony: By that logic, I guess you think Lance Armstrong should describe himself as a "one testicled, potential-cancer-relapse victim."**

**TO ALL YOU QUEENS (CARSON Kressley included) who misuse the word "couture": It means a one-of-a-kind, handmade garment, the likes of which you (Carson excluded) probably couldn't afford. Just because you can string together a bunch of cheap accessories from H&M and pop the collar on your A&F polo does not mean that you are wearing "couture."**

**DEAR SHERYL SWOOPES: IF YOU HAVE to choose to be gay, as you said you did, you ain't gay! If you were not born gay, you are just a hetero who inexplicably chose to sleep with people she isn't even attracted to.**

**TO ALL THE GAY MEN WHO THINK BI men are just in denial or sex addicts: Prejudice isn't exclusive to heterosexuals.**

**AS THE GREAT GAY ARTIST SALVADOR Dali said: "I don't need drugs. I am drugs."**

**JUST BECAUSE WE WENT OUT TO dinner didn't mean I wanted to date you, especially since you lied in the first place about whether you were dating someone else.**

**TO SINGLE GUYS WHO AVOID COU- ples like the plague: I hope y'all find that special one and see how lonely it can be; just the two of you in a bubble and no one else to be friends with.**

**BEING A LESBIAN ISN'T A TREND, SO stop doing it so you look cool to the guys in the hallway.**

**WHAT THE HELL IS A "MADONNA CD Release Party" when they don't even play any Madonna music? I heard less Madonna music than I would normally hear at a gay bar.**

**WHY IS IT WHEN I MAKE THE FIRST move and make it clear I want a guy, he thinks I'm too aggressive? Then if I change gears and wait for him to make the first move, I'm too passive and shy?**

**OK SO VOLUPTUOUS DOES NOT MEAN fat. It just happens to look exactly like it!**

**NOW IT'S THE TWINKS CLAIMING that at one time they were the only ones who stood up for our rights? Before it was the drag queens and at other times, it's the lesbians. It's pathetic how people try to get respect by recasting history!**

**TO LESBIANS THREATENED BY BI males: Insecurity is a bitch, ain't it?**

**NO, YOU WILL NOT TALK TO ME ANY- way you feel like! You will speak to me with respect if you want to get any from me. Some people have a lot of damn nerve but way too little sense to go with it!**

**WHY AREN'T PEOPLE DEVELOPING gay-friendly retirement communities for middle-income gays? Where are all the working stiffs supposed to end up?**

**ANYONE ELSE SEEN THE GAY COW- boy movie, "Bareback Mountain"?**

**I'VE BEEN WITH PLENTY OF GAY ranchers and cowboys, and not from gay rodeo either! Those two in the movie do not look like gay cowboys. They should have hired a gay cowboy as a consultant.**

**Bitch Boy responds: Who'd you have in mind? The one from the Village People?**

**I GAVE MY FRIEND THE CHOICE between me and his drug habit. He chose his habit. I guess Tina is more fun to hang out with than I am.**

**MASCULINE OUT OF BED, BOTTOM IN bed: There's nothing wrong with that!**

**TO THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOTH- ing better to do than bitch in a gay publi- cation: Get a boyfriend to bitch at. It's a lot more fun!**

**EVERY TIME I OPEN A NEWSPAPER, I see more evidence that Kansas is a huge open-air insane asylum.**

**"ALL AMERICAN"? WHAT ON EARTH does "All American" look like?**

**I THINK IT'S FAR BETTER TO HAVE A guy tell you up front he has a boyfriend than for him to tell you after you have sex. I've had enough guys lie to me when I ask them if they are involved, only to tell me the truth after sex.**

**IF YOU'RE HOT AND INTERESTED, DO me a favor: Give me some eye contact when I'm standing next to you and say hello!**

**Bitch Boy responds: Anyone else see the gap in reasoning here?**

**BITCH BOY, GIVEN HOW JUDGMENTAL you frequently are about other gay men who have problems dating or finding the right guy, enlighten us on how long have you been in a long-term relationship? Be sure to count the number of times too!**

**Bitch Boy responds: Lemme see (count- ing): 35 years with the same gorgeous hus- band after a few warm-up relationships that taught me the ropes. Oh and I'm a super- young-looking 33, usually confused for 25!**

**SKIN COLOR DOESN'T MAKE A DIF- ference. But certain racial features that make us unique do make a difference in personal tastes and attraction. It's only human to be attracted to a certain look.**

**IT'S SICK TO ASSUME THAT GAY PEOPLE were only outraged over Matthew Sheppard's murder because he was cute! Any one of us can be victims unless we demand justice when any one of us is murdered.**

**I JUST SPENT THREE HOURS GETTING screamed at for being an ass queen. Nigga please!**

**JUST BECAUSE I AM IN MY EARLY 20S doesn't mean I can't be attracted to some- one in their late 30s. Don't question my motives or his. We are both far more attractive and intelligent than most of you!**

**MY GIRLFRIEND GAINED WEIGHT, and now she makes me physically ill to look at naked.**

**Bitch Boy responds: When you're naked or when she is? I'm getting queasy just trying to figure it out.**

**TO ALL YOU ARROGANT TOPS WHO talk crap about us "nelly bottoms": Without us, who would you screw? It takes a real man to take it up the bum.**

**IT'S NOT A CRIME TO NOT LIKE BEING around flaming femmes (or, for that matter, people you don't like). Just because I like guys doesn't mean I like Judy Fucking Garland.**

**Bitch Boy responds: So that's her middle name! I always wondered!**

**DON'T THOSE PEOPLE AT THAT PARTY understand that jobs and education are the two forbidden topics of conversation among gay men? How dare they take pride in their accomplishments!**

**PEOPLE TELL ME I SHOULD BE GLAD that I look younger than my real age, but when I ask why, they immediately change the subject.**

**WE WON'T BE FREE UNLESS EVERY- one is free. Gay black men — just like our white brothers and sisters — have put up with enough homophobia. Let's "chill out" on the self-hate and the excuses. We are and have always been part of a gay world.**

**POOR THING, WHEN YOU OBSESS about casual sex so much that you are harming yourself and the people around you, then you need professional help. Don't get angry with me for pointing out the obvi- ous. Can you feel the (real) love?**

**Editors' note: These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch?**

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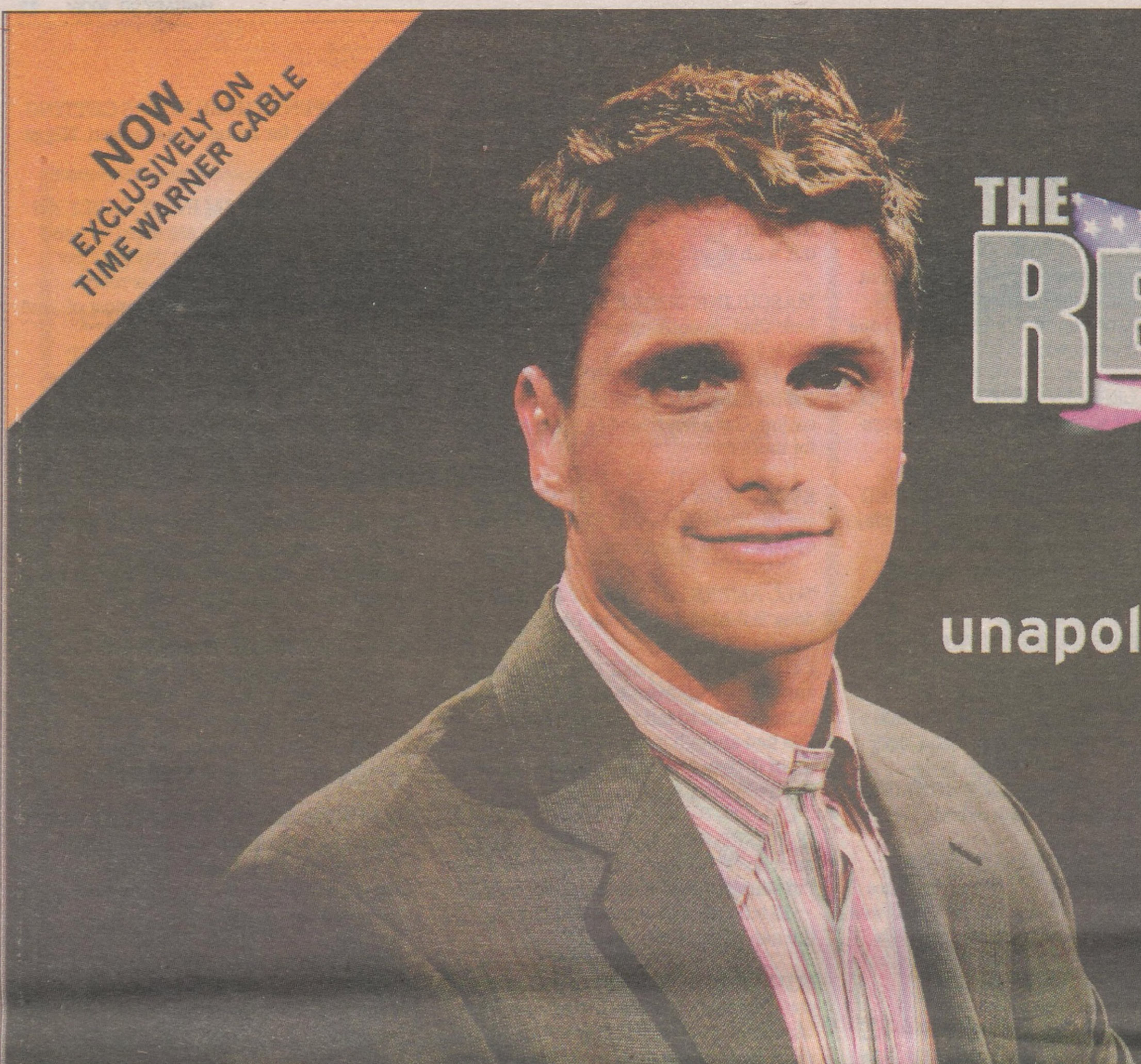
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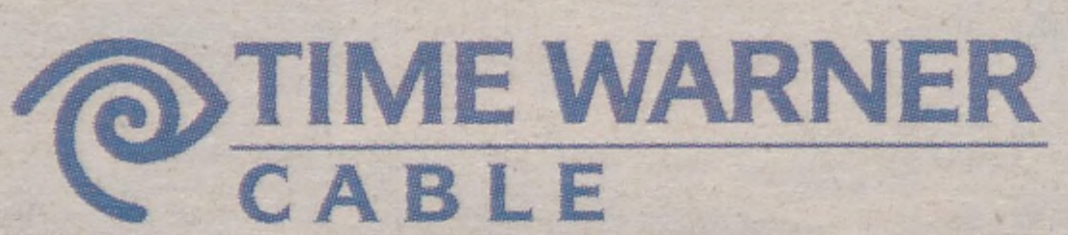


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