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don't seem to care
about HIV."
—Bill, 39**

**"The fact is
many young guys
do get HIV."
—Andre, 19**

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national news

CALIFORNIA

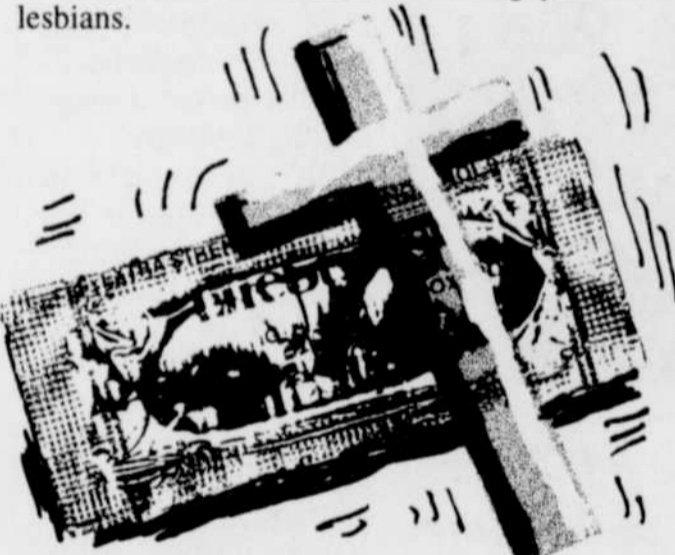
Ariel Da Silva, the first person granted asylum by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service on the basis of sexual orientation, died in August in a Los Angeles hospital of AIDS-related complications, according to the Associated Press. Da Silva's case prompted Attorney General Janet Reno to declare persecution based on sexual orientation to be grounds for political asylum. Da Silva, 36, claimed he would be persecuted in Mexico because he was gay.

The Coalition of Color, a new alliance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual organizations representing the African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latina/o communities, recently formed in San Francisco. As a kick-off event Sept. 10, the group hosted a candidates forum of contenders for the city's Board of Supervisors.

Coalition member organizations include the Asociación Gay Unida Impactando Latinos a Superarse; ELLAS en Acción; the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance; Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action; and the California chapter of the Latina/o Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Organization.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

For its four-hour, first-ever AIDS Awareness Day, the Metropolitan Baptist Church, one of the city's largest, asked participating HIV/AIDS service organizations to refrain from talking about safer-sex practices and not to bring condoms, reported *The Washington Blade*. Many of the church's 5,000 members are African American gay men and lesbians.



"Metropolitan Baptist does not condone condom use, we condone abstinence, because [condom use] goes against God's word," said Emory Perkins, chair of the church's AIDS ministry. "We talk about unsafe sex practices. We don't separate the two [homosexual or heterosexual sex], we talk about anal and vaginal sex."

"I think it was ludicrous," said Dr. Elias Farajaje-Jones, a professor of divinity at Howard University, and an openly bisexual HIV/AIDS activist. "To intentionally withhold information from the entire congregation that could be lifesaving information...to me, that's genocidal."

FLORIDA

Mark McHugh, a supervising attorney for the Broward County state attorney's federal crime unit, was arraigned last month for a drunken rampage through a gay bar in Boca Raton, according to *The Advocate*. McHugh and three other men allegedly entered the bar in what one witness called "scary drag" and proceeded to shout homophobic slurs at the patrons, and to rip artwork off the walls. The incident followed an afternoon golf game which McHugh and members of his rugby team played in drag, in a supposed parody of the Ladies Professional Golf Association. If McHugh is convicted, he could lose his job and spend time in jail. His attorney, David Bogenschutz, said the case is one of mistaken identity.

MASSACHUSETTS

For the first time in its history, a bill that would repeal the state's sodomy laws has made it out of a

legislative committee.

"We had [the bill] released a couple of weeks ago because it's something that's not prosecuted, [the sex laws are] an antiquity," said state Sen. Shannon O'Brien (D-Easthampton).

Senate Bill 891 will now go to the Committee on Bills in Third Reading, and could go to the Senate floor for debate this fall if support is strong enough. Twenty-six states have already removed archaic sex laws from their books, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont.

NEW YORK

Seven Lesbian Avengers took over the two studios of Mega KQ 97.9 FM in New York City, shouting, "Enough! Hate is not funny." The Avengers grabbed the microphones in both studios and demanded that the radio station put an end to its campaign of racism and hate against Latina/o lesbians and gay men. Meanwhile, 20 Avengers demonstrated in the street in front of the building chanting, "Boycott la Mega," "Mega KQ is hate radio," "Mega KQ es Mega Ca Ca!" in both Spanish and English.

Reportedly, during their daily 6-10 am program "El Vacilón de la Mañana," disc jockeys Ricky Ricardo and Luis Jimenez verbally attack the lesbian and gay community. The DJs have also disparaged African American and Native American men, and proclaimed that women secretly enjoy rape. Mega KQ 97.9 FM is part of the Spanish Broadcasting System, which owns seven stations in New York, Los Angeles and Miami.

TEXAS

The Alliance for Progress, a Dallas-based non-profit organization, has filmed what it calls "the nation's first gay rights television commercial." The commercial, entitled "Sunday Morning," is intended to present the daily lives of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals through a chronological series of scenes.

According to Christopher Parman, co-founder of AFP, "It's important that the lesbian community educate [people]...to the fact that the majority of lesbians and gays live normal everyday lives, except with same-gender partners. The most cost-effective way to inform them is through 30-second television commercials aired into their homes." AFP intends to air the spot in areas where lesbian, gay and bisexual civil rights are under attack.

UTAH

District Judge David Young recently reduced the sentence of convicted killer David Nelson Thacker to no more than six years in prison, according to *The Washington Blade*. Thacker pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the murder of Douglas Koehler, 31, a gay man. The conviction carries a sentence of one to 15 years unless a judge decides otherwise. Young said he was confident that Thacker would never kill again and gave him the reduced sentence.

Utah lesbian and gay activists are outraged at the reduction. The group Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats is seeking the judge's ouster. Young has already been criticized by the National Organization for Women for decisions regarding women and people of color.

VERMONT

Vermont is the first state in the union to offer "domestic partner" benefits to its employees, according to the *Baltimore Gay Paper*. The policy, which went into effect in August, came about as a settlement to a grievance filed by a state worker. Almost 140 employees have now signed up their unmarried partners. Although the question of domestic partner benefits has largely been viewed as a gay and lesbian issue, 119 of the registered couples are heterosexual. Only 17 of the couples are gay or lesbian.

"It's not out of the realm of what we expected," said state personnel Commissioner Thomas Torti.

Compiled by Jann Gilbert