

# national news

## Latina lesbians network at Tucson conference

Everything from safer sex to community organizing and Latina lesbian visibility were topics covered at the Latina Lesbian Leadership and Self-Empowerment Conference held in Tucson, Ariz., in September. According to *The Washington Blade*, women who attended reported that attitudes in the Latina lesbian community are evolving, not just about sex, but also about organizing in their own community. About 150 women from a variety of backgrounds attended the conference.

Martina Ramírez of the National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization said about the conference, "Our power comes in numbers... A Latina lesbian who lives in Oregon can feel she's not alone out there even though physically she might be. It's a safe place where you don't need to explain your background, where you are respected, and your needs are being met."

Doralissa Goitía, a speaker at the conference, said, "I think the most important thing that happened to me at the conference was the awakening—to see how many subcultures there are within the Latino culture itself. When I saw how many Latinas there were, the different dialects, and the different foods, it was amazing. I had never thought about it or seen it that way."



Some 550 respondents were the parents of public school children.

The survey extrapolated the responses of white, African American, and traditional Christian parents—those who agreed with the statement "The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word," or described themselves as "born-again Christians"—who have children in public schools.

Only 13 percent of traditional Christian parents said they would want to fire or reassign a gay or lesbian teacher to another school. However, traditional Christian parents were more likely (65 percent) than African American parents (47 percent) or white parents (49 percent) to object to schools providing gay and lesbian support group phone numbers.

Survey respondents said gay men and lesbians are treated unfairly in the textbooks and lesson plans at their local schools (40 percent of the entire sample, 52 percent of African American parents, 29 percent of white parents, and 28 percent of traditional Christian parents).

## CDC director outlines priorities at AIDS conference

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. David Satcher gave one of the keynote addresses at the National Skills-Building Conference early this month in Atlanta, Ga. Nearly 2,000 AIDS service workers attended the conference, its keynote addresses and more than 190 workshops and seminars, reported *Southern Voice*.

In his speech, Satcher said the CDC had identified problems in public health, mainly in the health care delivery system. Other priorities include improving the ability to respond to urgent threats to health (including violence and environmental toxins), development of nationwide strategies, and increased attention to women's health.

Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders gave her address on the topic of lessons learned: that politics should not determine public health policy; that women with AIDS are a "special population"; that sexism, racism, homophobia and elitism are too costly; and that community involvement is vital.

Workshops at the conference included those on AIDS and the African American church, intercultural communications, grant writing, youth outreach, and managing burnout.

## Avis and National go the extra mile

Two major car rental companies—Avis Rent A Car and National Car Rental—have quietly changed their policies to include gay and lesbian couples who rent from them, according to Boston's *Bay Windows*. Previously, second drivers who were spouses were not assessed extra fees for driving, while those who were unmarried were charged from \$3 to \$10 per day. This meant lesbian and gay couples had to choose between paying the extra fee or limiting the driving to one person.

At National, the new policy—which took effect in June—also exempts married couples with different last names and common law marrieds from paying the extra fee. National requires only that both drivers have the same address on their drivers licenses.



At Avis, spokeswoman Demetria Mudar said any couple who identifies one partner as a spouse can rent a car without paying the additional driver charge. "We're not going to question your relationship at the counter. I know I don't carry my marriage license around with me." She said Avis changed their policy about a year ago, saving couples who rent from the company the \$25 additional driver flat rate.

Thrifty Car Rental, Alamo Rent A Car, and Hertz Rent A Car all charge the additional fee for couples who are not married and wish both drivers covered. Hertz spokeswoman Lauren Garvey said, "Should the law change so as to recognize same-sex marriages as the same as heterosexual marriages in terms of rights and responsibilities, Hertz will accord spousal treatment to such persons."

## Harassed man changes story

Jim Gabbert, owner of the independent California television station KOFY-Channel 20, first told police the man who blackmailed, terrorized and stalked him was only an acquaintance, according to an Associated Press story. Now Gabbert says he lied to hide his homosexuality.

Gabbert has now conceded that he and Jim Sebring, 25, met at a Russian River club for gay men, and that they spent time together after that. He claims they were never alone and were never involved sexually. He also claims that after getting together half a dozen times, Sebring became erratic and demanded millions of dollars.

Sebring, held in San Francisco city jail on felony charges, has threatened to claim publicly that Gabbert raped and repeatedly threatened to kill him. Sebring claims that Gabbert drugged and sexually assaulted him on Gabbert's yacht.

According to Sebring's mother, Sharon Sebring, who supports her son's claims, her son showed no erratic or paranoid behavior prior to that incident.

## Atlanta mayor appoints woman police chief

Beverly Harvard has been appointed to the position of Atlanta, Ga., chief of police by Mayor Bill Campbell. According to the Atlanta gay and lesbian newspaper *Southern Voice*, Harvard is the first African American to head a major police force. Activists in Atlanta are hoping the appointment signals the end of a contentious era.

Harvard has been the acting chief since April, when predecessor Eldrin Bell resigned to pursue a county commission post. Harvard has already begun to stir some opposition in the gay community for launching a sting operation in October which was aimed partly at gay cruising spots in public parks.

"We know that she is not Eldrin Bell, and that's great news," said Larry Pellegrini, an advisor to the mayor's panel on gay and lesbian issues. "She certainly deserves the chance to show she can reverse the tone of the last administration."

Harvard has spent most of her 21-year career with the Atlanta Police Department in administrative positions.

Compiled by Jann Gilbert

## Education survey shows positive trend

In a story from *The Washington Blade*, results of a national poll show 61 percent of people in the United States surveyed believe it is appropriate for public schools to teach "respect for people who are homosexual." The survey, called "First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools," was designed by the Public Agenda Foundation to determine the public stance on education reform and the role of public schools in teaching values.

More than 1,100 people over 18 years of age were randomly selected to take the phone survey.

## Dykes To Watch Out For

