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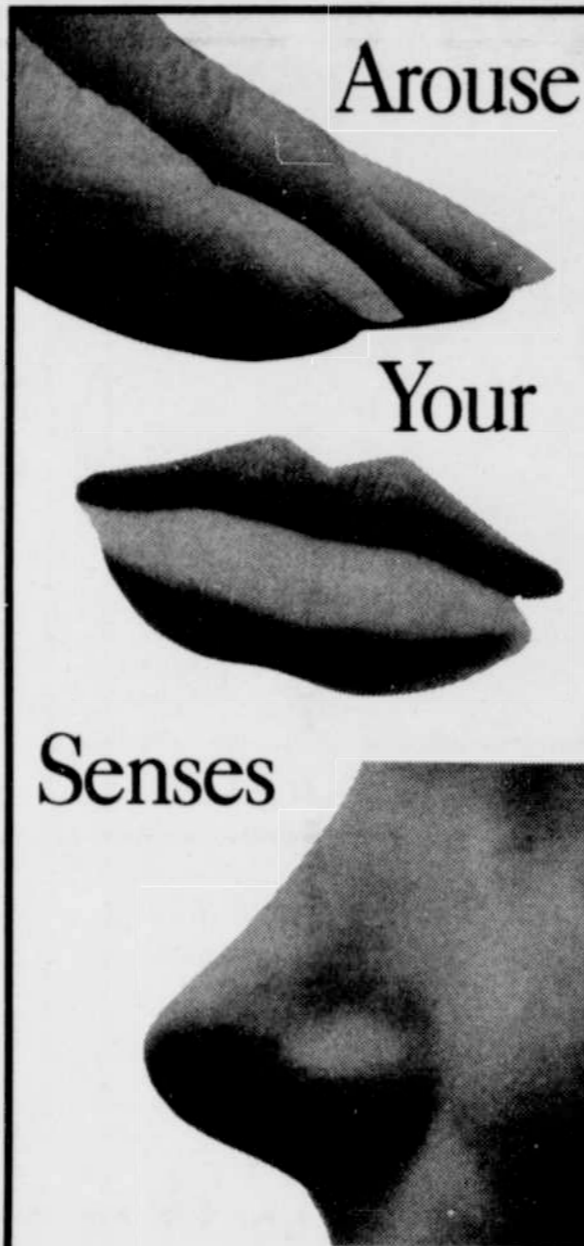
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national news

Gay rights law signed by Rhode Island governor

Last month Rhode Island became the ninth state to provide lesbians and gay men with basic protections against discrimination, when Gov. Lincoln Almond signed a bill prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, credit and public accommodations. Rhode Island joins an elite group of states that include sexual orientation in anti-discrimination laws. The other states are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont and Wisconsin. The District of Columbia also prohibits such discrimination.

Black and White Men Together celebrates 15 years

1995 marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of the National Association of Black and White Men Together. A celebration in honor of the anniversary will be held at the association's annual convention, the Crystal Celebration, which will be held in Key West, Fla., from July 16 to 22.

Black and White Men Together got its start in San Francisco in 1980 with an ad in *The Advocate* that asked for people interested in forming a group of black and white gay men who were interracial oriented. The association now boasts 30 chapters nationwide. For information, call 1-800-NA4-BWMT.

Maine legislature rejects discrimination bill

The Judiciary Committee of the Maine Legislature voted 13-0 to kill a bill that would deny lesbians and gay men protection from discrimination. The Legislature's rejection of the citizen-initiated bill sends the measure to referendum on the November ballot. Opponents of the measure claim that it would also limit protections for groups such as veterans, smokers, hunters, civil service employees and others who currently receive special protections under Maine law.

Helms blocks Ryan White CARE Act

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) is at it again. This time Helms is holding up billions of dollars targeted for AIDS prevention and treatment programs. Using a behind-the-scenes technique known as a "hold," Helms' actions prevent the Senate from voting to reauthorize the Ryan White

Comprehensive AIDS Emergency Resources Act. Helms was one of only four senators to oppose the Ryan White CARE Act when it first passed in 1990.

A "hold" is a private notification to Senate leaders that a senator intends to filibuster against a particular bill if it is brought to the Senate floor. A "hold" can be overcome by either modifying the bill to overcome a senator's objections or by gathering at least 60 votes to override a filibuster.

California governor razes affirmative action

Gov. Pete Wilson, yet another Republican presidential hopeful, has begun dismantling scores of affirmative action policies that give preferences to women and minorities in hiring for state government jobs, contracts and education. According to a Reuter news service story, Wilson signed an executive order June 1 that heralds the beginning of his crusade to end affirmative action. His order repeals three executive orders signed by previous governors, including Ronald Reagan.

Wilson, a staunch supporter of the infamous Proposition 187, which sparked anti-immigrant sentiment across the United States and helped Wilson win re-election to the California governorship, is expected to make the dismantling of affirmative action a major issue in his bid for the Republican presidential nomination.

AIDS on rise among black and Latino gay men

A dramatic rise in AIDS among gay men who are African American or Latino or who live outside urban gay communities such as San Francisco and New York was reported in June by federal health officials. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the largest increase in gay-transmitted AIDS cases occurred among Southern African Americans. That rate more than doubled between 1989 and 1994.

A Reuter story reported that the rate of AIDS among sexually active gay men rose 69 percent in rural areas, as opposed to a 19 percent increase in large cities. In New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles the infection rate among white men fell 3 to 20 percent. At the same time, the rate for black men in those cities rose approximately 50 percent.

From 1989 through the first half of 1994 the rate of gay-transmitted AIDS increased 79 percent among African American men, 61 percent among Latino men, and 14 percent among white men.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

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