

Denver group attacks youth info poster

Plans to display an informational poster aimed at gay and lesbian youth and those who are questioning in Denver's 10 public high schools has come under attack from Focus on the Family, a homophobic Colorado-based organization. Denver School Board members received a letter from James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, that stated, "The poster's intent is clear: It is meant to promote same-sex romance among teens."

In fact, the poster advises gay, lesbian and questioning youth that they may contact the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Community Services Center of Colorado. Additional assistance would be available from school counselors.

At school board hearings last month, parents of gay and lesbian teens testified about the complete lack of information available to teens, and about the climate of fear and torment that exists at school for these youth. One parent described it as a "wall of silence."

First gay frat house opens

Delta Lambda Phi became the first gay and bisexual fraternity to open a fraternity house on campus when it opened its house this past August at the University of Minnesota. At present 15 people live in the house, including eight current or soon-to-be fraternity members, two international students, two lesbians, two straight women and one straight man.

"This is a more comfortable environment than the dorms," fraternity President Rusty Robertson said. "Everyone can be what they want to be, and they don't have to worry about being criticized for this and that."

AIDS as genocide

A five-year-old survey of approximately 1,000 African American church members found that nearly one-third of the respondents believed the AIDS virus was created as a form of genocide against black people. Another third was uncertain whether AIDS was produced to kill black people, the Associated Press reports. The final third disputed the genocide theory.

The survey was conducted by Sandra Crouse Quinn, a health educator at the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and Stephen B. Thomas of Emory University in Atlanta. They gave the survey to 1,054 church members in African American churches in Atlanta; Charlotte, N.C.; Detroit; Kansas City, Mo.; and Tuscaloosa, Ala. The group was not a representative sample of the African American population in the United States, and the findings cannot be applied to that population as a whole.

Rumors that AIDS was created to kill African Americans have circulated in that community for years, according to the AP. In 1992, the AP reports, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, chief doctor for the Nation of Islam, told an NOI convention that former President George Bush "played a leading role in developing a policy of genocide against non-white people all over this Earth, and we believe that the AIDS virus is a direct consequence of that plotting and planning in secret."

Commenting on the survey results, the Rev. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, cited the Tuskegee

experiment: "It's been documented that the government did use African Americans as guinea pigs in this experiment."

The Tuskegee experiment was a study of the long-term effects of syphilis, which took place from 1932 to 1972. During that 40-year period the U.S. government withheld treatment from 399 poor African American men infected with syphilis.

Lowery also pointed out that the survey questions were asked five years ago and said he believed AIDS education in the African American community had probably reduced the number of those who believe AIDS is a genocidal conspiracy.

Gay man sues insurance company

A San Francisco man has filed a \$1 million lawsuit against Minnesota Mutual Life Insurance Co. of St. Paul, Minn. The suit, filed in San Francisco Superior Court, alleges the insurance company denied Mark LaBonte life insurance coverage because he lives with a partner who has AIDS. LaBonte tests negative for HIV.

The case is important, according to LaBonte's attorney, Paul Wotman, because it questions the legality of discrimination based on the hypothetical risk of contracting a disease through casual contact, according to the *Baltimore Gay Paper*.

"If they're going to make decisions based on his medical records like this, are they going to start asking people if they've checked the HIV status of everybody they've ever slept with? Have they asked all their partners about hepatitis? Or any other potential diseases that could be serious?" Wotman asked. "Also, if you're going to do it on the basis of who you live with, what about smokers and secondhand smoke?"

New labor head is an ally for gay/lesbian workers

John Sweeney, newly elected president of the AFL-CIO, is a friend of the gay and lesbian community, according to a gay and lesbian labor organization.

Lambda Labor, a Washington D.C./Baltimore-area organization, praised Sweeney's election, citing his long-standing advocacy of gay and lesbian rights in the workplace. Sweeney is the president of the Service Employees International Union. During his tenure, SEIU established a gay and lesbian member caucus, an advisory panel on gay issues, activities and meetings for gay and lesbian members at union conventions, and a model education program on advancing lesbian and gay rights in the workplace.

Discrimination hits Cincinnati's pocketbook

Cincinnati's Issue 3, a 1993 ballot measure that denies discrimination protection to lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, has cost the city more than \$24 million in lost convention business, the Cincinnati Convention and Visitors Bureau reports. According to a United Press International story, eight conventions have canceled meetings in Cincinnati because of the passage of Issue 3.

In November the American Musicological Society decided to move its 1996 convention from Cincinnati to Baltimore because of the anti-gay-rights charter amendment. Other groups that have canceled because of Issue 3 include the Music Teachers National Association; the Ohio Psychology Association; the American Statistical Association; the American Library Association; the American Historical Association; the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association; and the American Academy of Audiology.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

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