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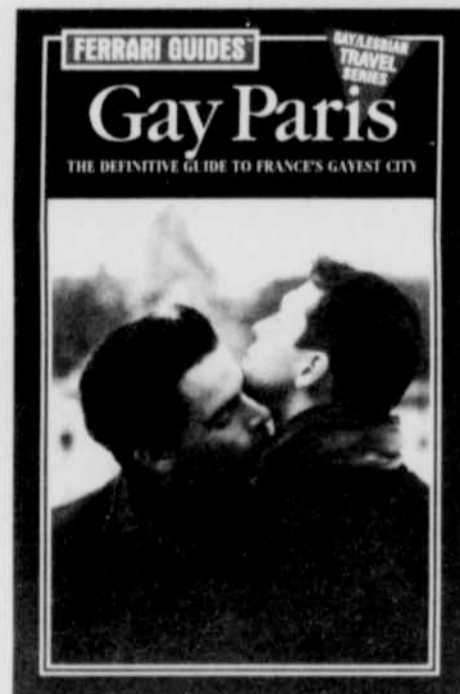
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**national news**

**Legal ties further  
bind lesbian family**

Eighteen months ago, the New York Court of Appeals chose to recognize the right of unmarried couples, whether homo- or heterosexual, to adopt children together. That decision paved the way for Dee Hoole and Robin Shlakman of Huntington to cross-adopt each other's daughters—who were conceived via artificial insemination using sperm from the same donor—without a protracted legal battle. The women, both 33, have been living together for six years and, according to a *Newsday* article, petitioned for the cross-adoption to avert future legal problems should one of them die. The couple's lawyer said this is the first cross-adoption in the United States by lesbians whose children are half-siblings.

Suffolk Family Court Judge William Kent signed the adoption papers March 7. The girls' biological father agreed to the adoption, however he was not present in court because he wanted to remain anonymous. New York is the third state, after Vermont and Massachusetts, to allow unmarried couples to adopt children.

**Mid-Atlantic or medieval?**

Hertford County, Va., school officials ordered the destruction and disposal of nearly 30,000 donated books March 2, after a visiting grandparent found a copy of *The Gay Handbook* at C.S. Brown Elementary School, which houses pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. According to the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, Lynell Eure and an unidentified friend complained to the school board, the board contacted school system administrators, and ultimately all of the books—which reportedly included cookbooks, history books, contemporary novels and sports stories, as well as a few lesbian and gay titles—were sent to the landfill.

Although a 30-member media advisory committee had already reviewed the materials and removed about 400 "objectionable" volumes, Schools Superintendent Andrew Carrington defended the drastic action, saying the district chose to err on the side of caution in order to "safeguard the interests of our children and our community." The books were being stored at Brown Elementary until they could be distributed to other schools, libraries and colleges throughout the region and were not meant to be seen by the students there, but Eure claims she learned that students had access to the books and had been privately circulating some of them for months.

The books were donated to the Hertford County school system by Communities In Schools, a nonprofit organization based in Alexandria, Va., that provides services for drop-outs and routinely give surplus materials to needy communities. Dr. Ronald Lewis, who helped arrange the donation, said such gifts are accompanied by a disclaimer that some materials may not be suitable for some communities and may be destroyed. The group, which began in Harlem in the 1960s and now has chapters in 28 states and England, with plans soon to expand to South Africa, had not encountered a similar situation before.

**Queers demand  
right to clone**

Thanks to assistance from the Anti-Violence Project and cooperative police, a March 1 demonstration in New York City's West Village by the Clone Rights United Front was carried off with-

out any major catastrophes. Activists participating in the event included Stonewall riot veterans



Sylvia Rivera, Bob Kohler and CRUF founder Randolfe Wicker. Although it initially encountered resistance and hostility, the group is continuing its bid to legalize cloning as a method of same-sex reproduction, according to a report on the Internet news site *Badpuppy/Gay Today*.

Wicker told reporters that CRUF has made progress in convincing others that cloning is a gay and lesbian issue and a matter of reproductive rights.

Although not a member of the organization, Ann Northrop, co-host of the weekly cable news show *Gay USA* and *LGNY* columnist, gave her full support, as an independent lesbian spokeswoman, to the pro-cloning demonstrators. She told *Gay Today* that cloning is not only an opportunity to make more gay people—assuming there is a genetic basis for homosexuality—but also a feminist jackpot that could lead to the eventual obsolescence of men.

On the other hand, longtime gay activist Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, also a supporter of cloning rights, foresees cloning taking place outside of female wombs. He said that cloning technology may require minor governmental regulation, but will continue to advance until it will be possible to stimulate any body cell into cloning-related embryogenesis and to complete gestation in vitro.

**Workplace fairness  
rides again**

On March 6, U.S. Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-Calif.) reintroduced the Workplace Fairness Act, which would prohibit employment discrimination on any basis other than "qualities pertaining to job performance" for all workers, including gay men and lesbians. Cosponsors of the bill, which was originally proposed last year, include openly gay Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) and Rep. Albert Wynn (D-Md.), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Bilbray's bill is an innovative, broad-based approach that would fight discrimination in general without adding new protected classes under the traditional civil rights model. The proposal lists "qualities pertaining to job performance," including employment history, ability, willingness to work, educational background, criminal record, conflicts of interest and other items.

WFA would not limit, amend or repeal any protected-class civil rights laws currently in force.

**Anti-queer violence rises;  
administration calls meeting**

The 12th "Anti-Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Violence" report, issued by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs on March 11, shows a rise in hate crimes against queers nationwide. The finding prompted Attorney General Janet Reno and other Clinton administration officials to schedule an ad hoc meeting, to be held within two weeks of the report's release, with sexual minority leaders and anti-violence activists from around the country, according to a *Washington Blade* story.

The report includes statistics from 14 U.S. metropolitan areas and indicates a 6 percent increase over the number of bias crimes reported in 1995. While the increase may seem slight, Chris Quinn of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project, which prepares the annual report, said it should be viewed in contrast to the number of crimes overall—which went down in