

American Airlines changes sponsorship strategy

In response to growing controversy over alleged drug use and unsafe sex taking place at gay male "circuit parties," American Airlines has withdrawn its sponsorship of several such events, the *New York Blade* reports.



A company representative said the airline sponsored several parties that served, at least in part, a philanthropic function, but it will instead become more involved in sponsorship of the nonprofit organizations themselves.

American Airlines spokeswoman Andrea Rader said the decision was prompted by several factors, including the increasing criticism of circuit parties by gay writers like Michelangelo Signorile.

"[H]aving our name on an activity that's been linked to drug use and other kinds of questionable behavior, whether it be a gay function or some other function, certainly is something that would make us sit up and take notice," Rader said. "We like to be sure that our dollars are used in ways we consider appropriate."

APA says yea

On Dec. 18, the executive council of the American Psychoanalytic Association adopted a resolution endorsing the legal recognition of same-sex marriage.

According to the Business Wire news service, the resolution states: "Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice...the state should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage."

Dr. Marvin Margolis, association president, expressed support for the resolution and lauded the ongoing political and judicial work undertaken by psychoanalysts to counter attempts to infringe upon the civil rights of any individual.

Member Dr. Ralph Roughton added that the group is "proud to join the many prominent national organizations and individuals which support the efforts for gay and lesbian civil rights in the area of marriage and family."

'Famous' doesn't equal 'popular' for Ellen

A Gannett News Service poll found that more than 90 percent of U.S. citizens know who Ellen DeGeneres is (making her more well-known than Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott) but only one in three approve of her, the *Detroit News* reports.

Responses to other questions in the survey indicate that a significant number of people think the depiction of queers on television has gone too far: 33 percent said television should feature no gay characters and 23 percent said there should be fewer gay characters, while 30 percent were satisfied with the current

mix and only 7 percent wanted to see more gay characters.

The survey also found that respondents were largely opposed to legal recognition of same-sex marriage, with 58 percent saying the government should prohibit the practice, vs. 33 percent saying it should be allowed.

So much for teamwork

Two incidents involving allegations of homosexuality and ensuing fights between teammates have made headlines in the nation's capital of late.

According to the *Washington Post*, on Dec. 10 Rod Strickland of the basketball team Washington Wizards accosted teammate Tracy Murray after learning through a third party that Murray said Strickland was gay.

Four months earlier, Washington Redskins teammates Stephen Davis and Michael Westbrook came to blows because Davis used a derogatory term in suggesting that Westbrook was gay.

Both incidents were resolved through disciplinary actions and fines imposed by the teams' coaches.

The *Post* story suggests that the macho atmosphere surrounding professional sports should not

be held at fault. Richard Lapchick, director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University, told the newspaper: "Not to diminish [the impact of] racism or sexism, but we have people studying diversity and conflict resolution and they say homophobia is the biggest problem by far. Nothing is even close to it. It is not something about professional sports. It's a huge problem in society."

Teachers, students under fire in California

When a San Leandro High School science teacher recently told students she was a lesbian, her admission set off a storm of parental criticism, *The Associated Press* reports.

The teacher's revelation came during a week of campus lessons about diversity, during which more than half the school staff wore pink triangles that proclaimed, "Someone you care about is lesbian or gay."

Complaints were quick to follow, and an ad hoc parents' group asked the school district to fire the science teacher, who prefers to remain anonymous, as well as the principal and another outspoken teacher, Carl Debro, who told reporters, "Some teachers feel that this is a witch hunt...and the silence of the district has left them feeling that maybe the district is going to allow this witch hunt to continue."

The AP report says district officials are investigating Debro for alleged "unprofessional conduct," "misuse of class time" and showing disrespect for the race and sexual orientation of the parents who complained. The parents are heterosexual and white; Debro is heterosexual and black.

Further controversy arose when John Cambra, leader of the newly formed parent group People Interested in Public Education, wrote a letter to a local newspaper in which he claimed that two 15-year-old girls had had sex in a high school bathroom.

One of the girls denied the story and reported that she and her girlfriend had been so harassed as a result of their openly lesbian relationship that they left the school to join an independent study program.

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