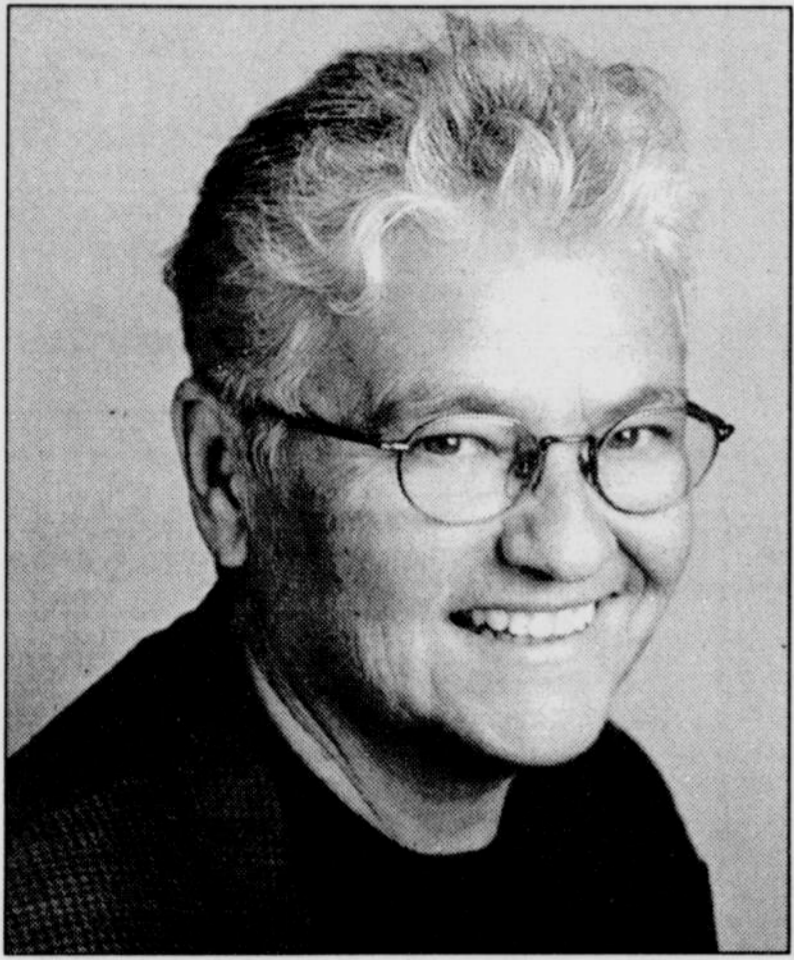


NATIONAL news



Jean Harris

The survey also indicated many lesbians are not getting the gynecological care they need. Almost 18 percent of women surveyed said they never have visited a gynecologist, and 23 percent said they haven't visited one in more than two years.

"Regular gynecological exams—including pap, pelvic and breast exams—are extremely important for lesbians because they can detect abnormalities," warns Kathleen DeBold, Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer executive director. "Yearly pap smears are our best defense against cervical cancer."

Catholic University of America canceled a major "ex-gay" conference after accusing Parents and Friends Ministries director Anthony Falzarano of applying for use of school facilities under "false pretenses." The three-day "Healing for the Homosexual" event was scheduled to kick off June 8.

According to the *Washington Times*, Falzarano misrepresented the intent of the conference in newspaper advertisements—giving the impression it would deal with ministering to victims of child abuse—when he signed the contract April 3. Campus officials contacted him May 17 after the deception came to light.

"We do not rent space to people who misrepresent themselves," university spokesman Victor Nakas said. "If the conference had been described to us as it was in the ad, it'd be a completely different story."

Falzarano now is demanding the university give back his group's \$3,200 deposit, but Nakas said officials are waiting for assurances that the "ex-gay" leader won't sue. "We are willing to return the money if he were to drop the threat of any lawsuit, because we have counterclaims of misrepresentation."

Trinity College, a Catholic institution across the street from the university, has agreed to play host to the conference. Speakers include the Rev. Paul Scalia, pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Spotsylvania, Va., and son of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

CALIFORNIA

Assemblymember Carole Migden's domestic partnership bill was approved June 6. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

The measure would extend to registered domestic partners basic legal protections that only married different-sex couples have under California law. Under AB 25, they would be able to:

- Relocate with a domestic partner without losing unemployment benefits.
- Use sick leave to care for a family member.

- File disability benefits on behalf of an incapacitated partner.
- Provide partners with employer-based health coverage without additional taxation.
- Make medical decisions in the hospital or act as a conservator.
- Inherit property without a will or administer an estate.
- Seek damages for the loss of economic or social support due to wrongful death.
- Adopt a partner's child using the stepparent adoption process.
- Continue health coverage for surviving domestic partners of retired government workers.

The floor debate went on for a couple of hours. A number of supportive members spoke about the basic fairness of AB 25, rejecting the argument that the bill undermines marriage or Proposition 22, the initiative approved in March 2000.

Several lawmakers criticized the scare tactics—including newspapers ads, multicolored brochures and radio announcements—that one anti-gay group had used to target some of the legislators, zeroing in on the members of color. After an emotional debate, the 80-member Assembly voted 43-29, approving the measure.

"Today, the California Assembly pushed back the forces of hate that continue to attack us," said Jean Harris, California Alliance for Pride and Equality executive director. "Not only do they want to prevent lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people from being treated equally, they relentlessly and ruthlessly targeted lawmakers who support this bill. Bravo to those who withstood these attacks in order to promote a vision of fairness."

TEXAS

The Human Rights Campaign called June 13 for a nationwide boycott of ExxonMobil because it has refused to reinstate a nondiscrimination policy covering sexual orientation and open its domestic partner benefits program to all gay and lesbian employees.



Protesters demand equality at ExxonMobil

In December 1999, when Exxon merged with Mobil, it became the first U.S. employer ever to rescind a nondiscrimination policy covering sexual orientation. At the same time, executives closed Mobil's domestic partner benefits program to any additional employees.

The nationwide boycott comes after HRC co-filed a shareholder resolution asking the company, for the third year in a row, to add the words "sexual orientation" to its equal employment opportunity statement. During a news conference after the annual shareholder meeting May 30 in Dallas, a reporter asked CEO Lee R. Raymond why the company doesn't actively reach out to gay men and lesbians, as it does to other minorities.

"We don't want to know [who they are]," he replied. "That's the whole point of the policy." [M]

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