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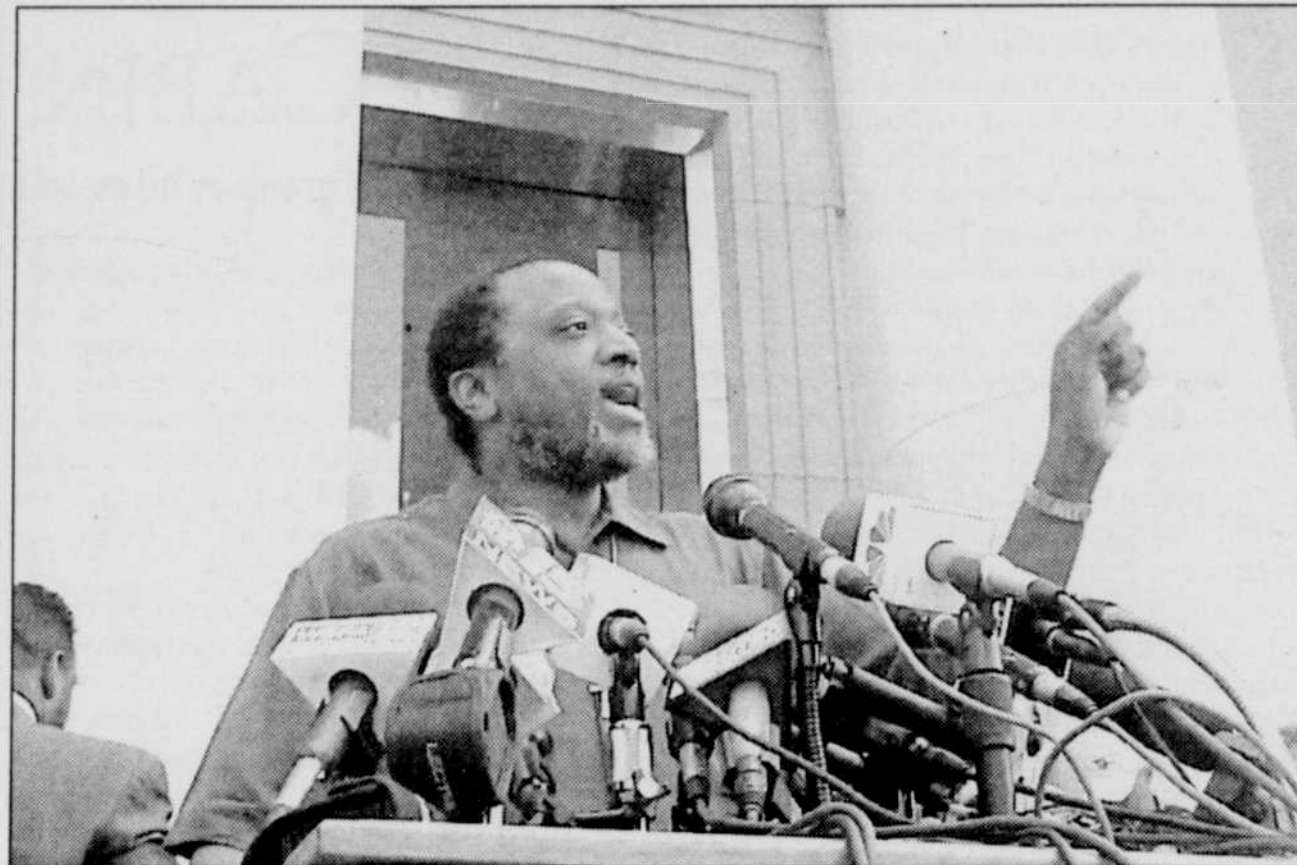
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NATIONAL news



Alan Keyes called Vice President Dick Cheney's lesbian daughter a "selfish hedonist"

NATIONAL

Illinois Republican Senate candidate and long-time anti-gay activist Alan Keyes said during an interview Aug. 31 on Sirius radio that Mary Cheney, the lesbian daughter of Vice President Dick Cheney, is "by definition" a "selfish hedonist."

"Alan Keyes' comment is both stunning and not at all surprising," said Joan M. Garry, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation executive director. "Keyes has never made an attempt to mask his contempt for gay and lesbian Americans. You really have to question anyone who hands this guy a microphone."

Meanwhile, Illinois Family Institute executive director Peter LaBarbera thought Keyes' statements were a "breath of fresh air in an age desensitized to moral truths.... Keyes' fearlessness in discussing issues is a refreshing change from cookie-cutter candidates who lack courage or run from their liberal record every election year."

After the vice president concluded his Sept. 1 speech to the Republican National Convention, he was joined on stage by his wife, his straight daughter, Elizabeth, her husband and their children. But where was Mary? Once on stage, Lynne Cheney offered an answer when she turned to her husband and mouthed, "Mary's up there," pointing to another side of the arena far away from her family.

"They can hide gay and lesbian family members at their convention, but Bush can't hide his failed record from the American people," said Terry McAuliffe, Democratic National Committee chairman. "President Bush isn't content with just dividing the country along political lines, now he's dividing families, including the family of his vice president."

Mary is also the only child of either President Bush or Vice President Cheney who was not given a speaking role during the convention. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays called her absence disheartening.

"Sadly, the message...was that Mary was not welcome to share the stage with her straight sister," said Ron Schlittler, PFLAG executive director. "It was a missed opportunity by Lynn and Dick Cheney to show the country a family in all its diversity, sharing an exciting moment together."

Gay Men's Health Crisis released a report Sept. 13 comparing the health care reform proposals of President Bush and U.S. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass. *Prescriptions for Reform: A Comparison of the Bush and Kerry Health Care Access Proposals and Their Impact on People with HIV/AIDS* sheds light

on the stark differences between the two plans and assesses how each one might affect the public and private insurance systems on which people with HIV/AIDS rely.

"The presidential candidates are offering two very different visions for the future of the U.S. health care system, and this report helps clarify those differences in the context of the health care access needs of people with HIV/AIDS," said Ana Oliveira, Gay Men's Health Crisis executive director. "Health care is one of the most important issues in this year's presidential race. We urge everyone to review the positions of the two candidates so they can make a sound selection on Election Day. The health of our nation depends on it."

Key highlights of the report include:

- 20 percent of people with HIV/AIDS in the United States are uninsured.
- 50 percent of people with HIV/AIDS (who access care) rely on either Medicaid or Medicare to pay for their health care needs.
- Kerry supports Medicaid coverage for non-disabled people with HIV; Bush's position is unclear.
- Bush opposes the importation of low-cost drugs from Canada and elsewhere; Kerry supports importation.

PENNSYLVANIA

University of Pittsburgh agreed Sept. 2 to provide domestic partner health coverage to its gay and lesbian employees. The decision to grant the benefits, which will also apply to unmarried straight employees in committed relationships, was made independent of the pending lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union against the university seeking equal health insurance benefits for gay and lesbian employees.

"This is a very gracious turnaround by Pitt," said Witold "Vic" Walczak, litigation director for the ACLU's Pennsylvania affiliate. "Like so many organizations and businesses today, Pitt has finally recognized that lesbian and gay employees deserve equal treatment in the workplace."

A letter by university chancellor Mark Nordenberg notifying employees of the change in policy cites the need to remain competitive in the recruitment of "top talent" as a principal factor in deciding to provide the benefits. The letter points out that nearly 80 percent of the universities belonging to the Association of American Universities and two-thirds of Fortune 100 companies now offer domestic partner benefits.



Ana Oliveira says the Bush and Kerry health care reform proposals will have a significant effect on people with HIV/AIDS