

NATIONAL news

National Coming Out Day is Oct. 11. This year's theme is "Talk About It." Hundreds of people across the country are working with the Human Rights Campaign to tell the stories of queers to the nation every day.

In addition, Equality Forum, in collaboration with the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, has distributed a publication on queer history to more than 3,000 high school Gay Straight Alliances. "We have a responsibility to provide the next generation with the information about our civil rights and its elders," executive director Malcom Lazin noted.

To order a resource kit that includes guides to coming out, posters, balloons and more, visit tinyurl.com/bvkw8.



Keith Haring's famous image still stands as the symbol for National Coming Out Day.

SEMINARIES TARGETED FOR GAY SWEEP

Catholic seminaries will soon be reviewed for evidence of homosexuality for both teachers and students, according to a document from the Vatican given to *The New York Times*. The United States has 229 such facilities.

This investigation follows the sex abuse scandal that rocked the church in 2002, in which about 80 percent of the victims were young men and boys, but fails to take into account that coerced sex is an abuse of power foremost, and only secondly of sex. A disproportionate percentage of boys may have been abused because priests were more likely to have access to male targets—like altar boys or junior seminarians—than to girls.

Estimates about the number of gay priests range widely, from 10 percent to 60 percent.

HOUSE EXTENDS PROTECTIONS FOR QUEERS

The House of Representatives voted Sept. 14 to amend the Children's Safety Act by adding what has been known as the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

If enacted into law, the amendment's provisions would extend existing federal hate crime laws that already cover crimes motivated by race, color, national origin and religion to include crimes based on actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity, including gender-related characteristics. The gender identity/characteristics language was added just this year to make clear that the legislation applied to hate crimes against transgender people.

The vote was 223-199, with 30 Republicans supporting the amendment. The full bill later passed the House overwhelmingly.

TASK FORCE DISAPPOINTED ABOUT ROBERTS CONFIRMATION

The U.S. Senate voted Sept. 29 to confirm the nomination of Judge John Roberts as chief justice of the United States.

Eleanor D. Acheson, director of public policy and government affairs for the National Gay



Oakland artist Weston Takeshi Teruya created this poster commemorating the life of Gwen Araujo.

and Lesbian Task Force, notes in a statement: "The U.S. Senate today voted to confirm the nomination of John Roberts for chief justice of the United States without reviewing materials that constitute the most critical and telling part of his record and without getting meaningful answers about his views on critical legal and constitutional principles. This is beyond disappointing—it is outrageous."

"The Bush administration flatly refused to produce critical documents from Judge Roberts' tenure in the solicitor general's office, materials that have been produced in earlier judicial confirmation proceedings under both Democratic and Republican administrations. Seemingly oblivious to this precedent or the interests of the American people, the Senate failed to stand up to the administration and effectively relinquished its constitutional 'advise and consent' responsibilities. The Senate compounded this default by not holding Roberts' nomination until he fully answered all the questions asked."

CARAVAN TO ASSIST PEOPLE WITH HIV DISPLACED BY KATRINA

Thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS are preparing to travel across the United States in 10 activist caravans this month, stopping in more than 150 cities across the country to tell local and national leaders: "We have the tools to stop AIDS. Now it's up to you to make those tools available worldwide." The caravans will converge in Washington, D.C., from Nov. 5 to 8 for four days of prayer, lawmaker visits, protests and a March to End AIDS.

The caravans are part of the Campaign to End AIDS, a new national coalition endorsed by more than 400 organizations. C2EA brings together longtime HIV-positive people and veterans of the AIDS activist group ACT UP with more recently diagnosed Americans—many of them women, African Americans, Southerners and churchgoers. Together, they're demanding that governments fund treatment worldwide, promote science-based prevention and protect the rights of people with HIV/AIDS.

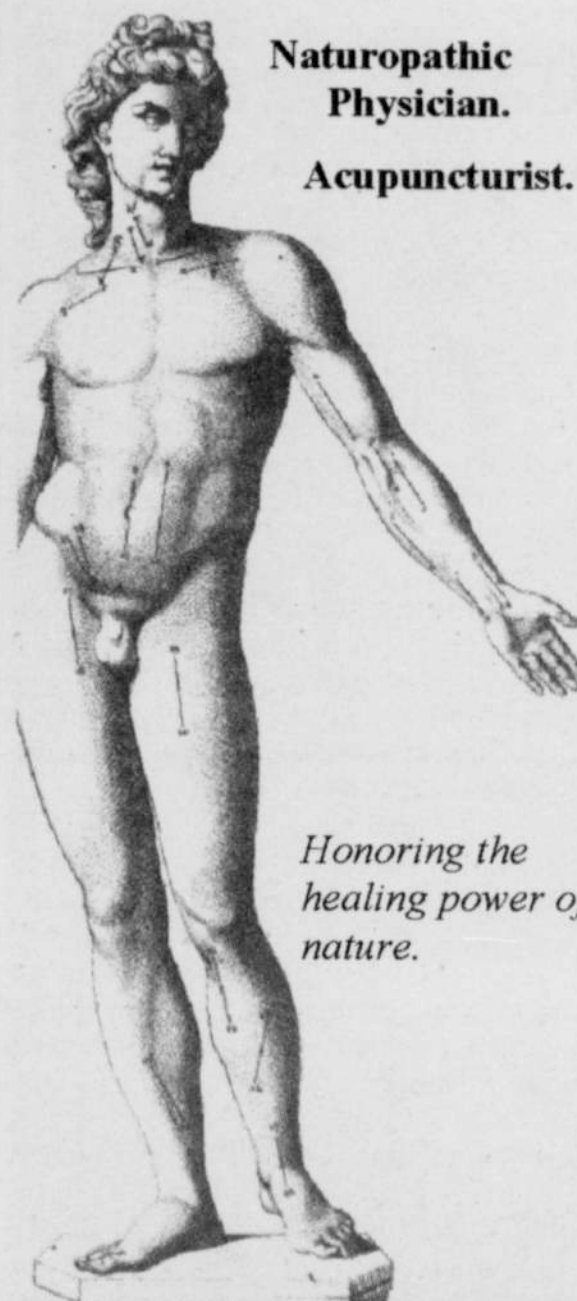
C2EA planned to launch its caravans in September, but the devastation of Hurricane Katrina forced organizers to postpone. They are intent on bringing relief to the 8,000 people with HIV affected by that tragic event. Half of the money raised at C2EA events nationwide will go to Gulf Coast residents with HIV/AIDS.

"The people hardest hit by Katrina—poor people and African Americans—are also the people hardest hit by this disease," says C2EA organizer Judith Dillard of Fort Worth, Texas. "We won't leave them behind." ■

Compiled by SARAH DOUGHER

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