

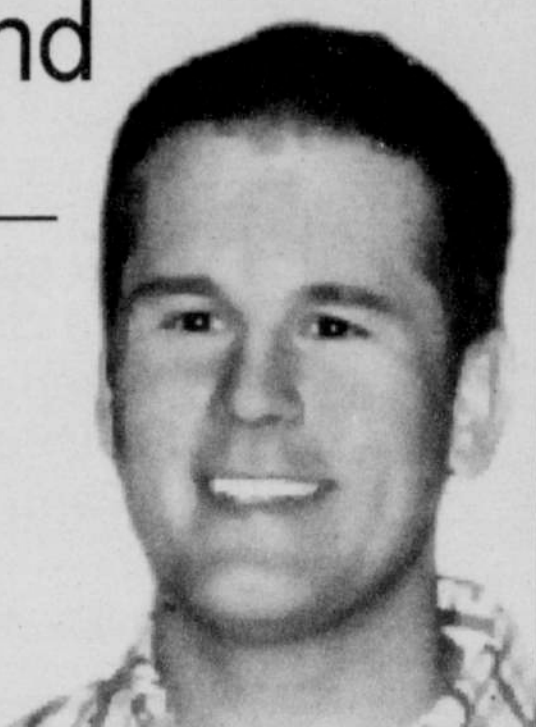
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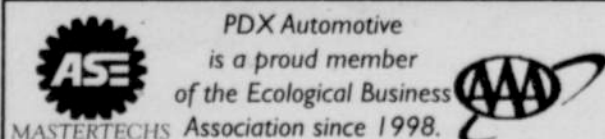


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NATIONAL

House Members Slam UAE on Gay Rights

A bipartisan group of federal lawmakers sent a letter March 16 to the United Arab Emirates embassy deploring the recent imprisonment of 11 men convicted of being homosexual.

Last year, 26 men were arrested during a police raid on a gay wedding at a hotel in Abu Dhabi. Several high-ranking U.S. representatives wrote to the UAE ambassador at the time, objecting to these arrests.

A follow-up letter to the UAE government was organized by Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., who was joined on the letter by five leading legislators, including Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla.; Tom Lantos, D-Calif.; James Leach, R-N.Y.; Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y.; and Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y.

In their letter, the House members state: "Since the time we wrote to you last December, 11 of the men who had been arrested in November were convicted and sentenced to six years in prison. We are very disappointed in these verdicts."

Referring to the UAE rulers as "a non-elected government," Frank said he is "particularly upset that right now the United Arab Emirates is sending 11 men to jail because they happen to be gay." He added that this kind of persecution is "one of the things to take into account" when considering U.S. relations with the UAE.

Group Addresses Rising HIV Among Gay Black Men

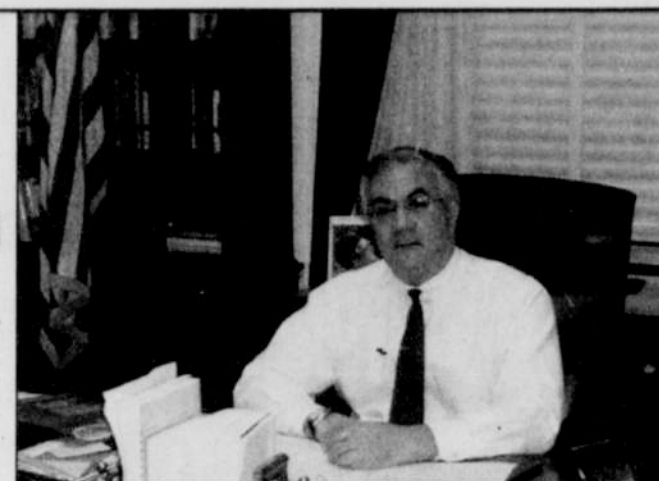
Galvanized by a 2005 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report showing that 46 percent of gay and bisexual black men in major urban centers are HIV-positive, a group of professionals has formed what is described as the nation's first health policy coalition to address rising HIV infections and other health disparities among African-American men who have sex with men. The group will be called the National Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition.

In a statement issued March 29, the group's newly elected chairman, Rudy Carn, said: "The coalition is committed to improving the health and well-being of black gay men through advocacy that is focused on research, policy, education and training. It's our time to take control of our lives. If not us, who will?"

Star Trek Actor Takes on Bias with 'Equality Trek'

The Human Rights Campaign announced March 28 that George Takei, the actor who portrayed Mr. Sulu on *Star Trek*, will embark on a nationwide tour through six cities, speaking about his life as a gay Japanese American and encouraging others to share their stories.

As a child, Takei and his family were held in U.S. internment camps during World War II because of their Japanese ancestry—even though Takei and his mother were born on U.S. soil and his father came to the United States as a child. Takei will speak on the tour about the ways that his life has been touched by both discrimination



Barney Frank rebuked the United Arab Emirates for its medieval attitudes toward gay rights.

and by the healing that takes place when prejudice is replaced with understanding and open communication.

"In my own life, I have felt the discrimination that used to separate Japanese Americans from the rest of the country melt away," said Takei. "I believe that by sharing our stories, queer Americans can break down the walls that separate us and help build a more understanding and truly diverse nation for us all."

Takei has been increasingly in the public eye speaking on queer issues since coming out in the press. He appeared March 30 on NBC's *Will & Grace*.

MINNESOTA

Clergy Stage Rally to Oppose Same-Sex Marriage Ban

In a show of strength by progressive elements within Minnesota's religious community, more than 1,000 people rallied March 23 at the state's Capitol in St. Paul to oppose a proposed constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

The gathering was a virtual mirror image of a rally staged earlier in the week by supporters of the amendment. Both events were organized by a consortium of religious organizations, and almost all speakers at each event were clergy members.

Event organizers hoped that the heavy ecclesiastical presence at the pro-gay event would help dispel the perception that all Christians oppose same-sex marriage. Speakers denounced the amendment as "un-Christian" and "un-loving."

The Rev. Tim Tennant-Jayne, one of at least 60 clergy members in attendance, felt his Christian beliefs compelled him to attend. "I'm here out of my faith," the United Methodist minister told the *Twin Cities Pioneer Press*, adding that Christian voices in opposition to the amendment "haven't been as loudly a part of this. Conservative viewpoints have been very loud."

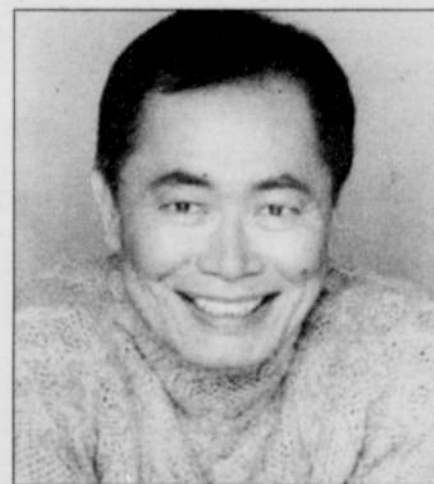
MASSACHUSETTS

Out-of-State Gay Couples Can't Marry in Massachusetts

Citing a 1913 state law, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled March 30 that same-sex couples from out of state cannot legally marry

in Massachusetts, despite the fact that the state allows such marriages between its own residents.

The law in question states that couples from another state may not marry in Massachusetts if the marriage would not be recognized in their home state. Thus, same-sex couples from Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont—all of which have laws explicitly prohibiting same-sex marriage—may not tie the knot in the Bay State. The status of couples from



George Takei will share his view on ethnic and gender identity discrimination on a national speaking tour.