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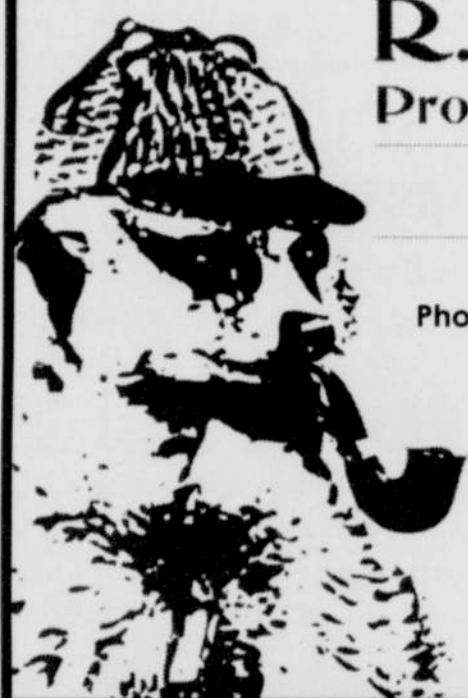
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national

NATIONAL

Report: U.S. Falling Short on HIV/AIDS

As the United Nations opens its High-Level Review Meeting on HIV/AIDS, a report shows that the United States has fallen short on commitments made at the United Nations five years ago to curb the disease within the nation's borders.

With no national plan in the United States for HIV prevention, treatment and support; with half the people in the United States who need HIV treatment not receiving it; and with the number of new HIV infections in the United States not decreasing in more than a decade, AIDS continues to have a devastating impact on communities of color, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and the poor.

"The U.S. is in no position to preach to other countries on how to address the AIDS epidemic when it has much to answer for back home," said Chris Collins, author of the report.

Based on extensive consultation with experts and review of U.S. AIDS policy and outcomes, the report, *HIV/AIDS Policy in the United States: Monitoring the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*, also found:

- The financing system for AIDS services in the United States does not allow for "comprehensive and sustained access to quality HIV care."
- HIV prevention resources are not allocated in the most cost-effective manner, and research on program effectiveness often does not inform policy.
- A significant number of people living with HIV/AIDS are being tested for HIV too late in the course of disease to benefit from early care.

"The U.S. needs to help strengthen, not weaken, the political declaration at the U.N. meeting on AIDS," said Rachel Guglielmo, project director of the Public Health Watch Project. "Only by first delivering on its commitments at home can the U.S. speak with full credibility to other nations at the U.N."

MISSOURI

Anti-Gay Foster Care Ban Axed

Opening the possibility of loving families for nearly 2,000 children who desperately need foster care, the Missouri attorney general has indicated that the state's anti-gay foster care ban must be dropped. The move was applauded by the American Civil Liberties Union, which has been battling the ban since 2004.

"Every major mainstream child welfare and health organization opposes laws that ban lesbian and gay people from parenting because social science proves that lesbian and gay people are just as capable of being good parents as anyone else," said Lisa Brunner, ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri cooperating attorney. "Making so many new foster homes available by ending this senseless and illegal ban is wonderful news for the children of Missouri."

Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon admitted to reporters June 7 that because the state's unconstitutional same-sex-only sodomy law was repealed earlier that week, there is no longer



DC Comics doesn't mind Batwoman being a lesbian, as long as she still dresses like a bondage queen.

any basis for the state's denial of foster care applications by queers.

"The attorney general's office is recognizing what our Legislature already acknowledged in striking down the sexual misconduct law—that there is no justification for discriminating against gay and lesbian Missourians," said Julie Brueggemann, executive director of Promo, Missouri's statewide queer equality organization. "We know that there are gay and lesbian families ready and waiting to take in many of the children in need of foster homes, and we're thrilled that they are finally going to be able to do so."

ALABAMA

Alabama Voters Approve Anti-Marriage Amendment

Alabama voters approved a state constitutional amendment June 7 that prohibits same-sex marriage and other forms of family protections for unmarried couples.

Alabama is the 20th state in the past eight years to amend its constitution for the purpose of banning same-sex marriage. The vote was 81 percent to 19 percent. Voters in Alabama's neighbor state, Mississippi, passed a similar amendment in 2004 by an 86 percent to 14 percent margin.

It wasn't until 2000 that Alabama repealed its constitutional ban on interracial marriage, 33 years after *Loving vs. Virginia* made such discrimination unconstitutional coast to coast. Similarly, 50.1 percent of voters opposed a 2004 measure to remove a constitutional provision mandating segregated public schools for "white and colored children."

"This vote put the right of a minority—a right that the majority takes for granted and sees as fundamental only for them—up for a popular vote," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "This is not democracy—it is tyranny of the majority, and it is immoral. Our founders knew that basic rights should never be put to a popular vote, and that is why we have the Bill of Rights. In the not-too-distant future, those involved in this injustice will look back with shame and regret, just as they do for other past inflictions of discrimination."

NEW YORK

Gay Performer Attacked

A gang of youth brutally attacked a gay singer and performer June 11.

Kevin Aviance, who has penned several No. 1 dance hits, told *The New York Post* that a gang of teens started following him after he left a gay bar in

the East Village around 1:30 a.m., screaming: "Fucking faggot! Where are you going?"

The teens threw trash at him, and one of them sucker-punched him from behind, knocking him to the ground. They then stomped on him in the middle of the intersection.

"I got kicked in my head 12 times. They kicked me in my back. They kicked in my knees. They just kept kicking," Aviance told the *Post* from his bed at Beth Israel Hospital. "I really thought they were going to kill me."

The performer passed out and awoke to a passerby, who