

the rest of



our world

University Theater

BOCA RATON, Fla. — A university production of a play that portrays Christ as a gay man led some Florida lawmakers to threaten to withhold state funding.

Corpus Christi chronicles a Christ-like character named Joshua who is growing up gay in modern-day Texas. The story parallels parts of the Gospels.

A kiss between Joshua and a character named Judas is similar to the kiss the biblical Judas used to identify Jesus to the Romans.

"For anyone who's a Christian, it's very offensive," said state Sen. Debby Sanderson, whose district includes Florida Atlantic.

School officials said they would allow the play to finish this weekend's run.

"It's a matter of academic freedom," university spokeswoman Lynn Laurenti said.

Homophobic Cops

WASHINGTON — Police in the nation's capital are being investigated for possible racism and homophobia expressed in e-mails sent from computers in their cruisers.

Chief Charles H. Ramsey said his zero-tolerance policy on use of such language by officers will mean changes for the department. "It is not OK to have that kind of attitude if you are a police officer," he said.

Ramsey learned that dozens — perhaps hundreds — of his officers had used their police computers to send inappropriate messages. He warned that discipline could range from reprimands to dismissal.

Investigations said a spot check of 4 million e-mail messages sent last year found about 25 percent contained profanity, homophobic or sexually explicit language or other inappropriate content.

Many of the messages were transmitted through the mobile digital computers installed in 600 of the city's police cars.

Dr. Laura on TV

LOS ANGELES — Dr. Laura is no more, at least on TV.

Laura Schlessinger's TV talk show, which was boycotted by many advertisers at the urging of gay rights groups, has taped its final show, although it may appear into the fall.

Poor ratings had prompted stations in major television markets including New York, Los Angeles and Chicago to move the syndicated, *Dr. Laura*, from daytime to the

middle of the night.

Schlessinger, who was unable to convert her radio popularity into TV success, said she was proud of the program that she called a "true alternative."

"I believe it could have earned a substantial audience in time, but the television advertiser boycott precluded that," Schlessinger said in a statement.

"Paramount from the beginning said 'Let the people decide.' Viewers and advertisers alike have decided, and they decided to reject 'Dr. Laura's' message of intolerance," said GLAAD executive director Joan M. Garry.

Quilt Moves

SAN FRANCISCO — The AIDS Memorial Quilt has a new home.

The quilt, which memorializes those who have died of AIDS with more than 80,000 panels, will now be housed in Atlanta.

The NAMES Project Foundation is moving its AIDS Memorial Quilt to Atlanta, hoping it will have a greater impact in the South, where HIV among blacks is rampant. The 54-ton memorial will be housed in a climate-controlled warehouse.

"By being in Atlanta, we are going to be able to make sure that this quilt is as useful and as powerful and as important to the African American community and its struggle against this terrible disease as it was to us in the Bay Area and in the gay and lesbian communities," said Cleve Jones, who stitched the first panel in 1987 to remember his best friend.

Gert McMullin, who has repaired and sewn thousands of panels dedicated to AIDS victims throughout the world, said the quilt should stay in San Francisco.

"It angers me in a lot of ways," she said. "This is where it is loved. It was built here by these people. These people who are now dead."

"I'm moving to Atlanta because of the quilt," she said, hugging friends and AIDS survivors.

Gay Marriage

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands — For the first time in the world, same-sex couples have recited their vows and gotten married.

Amsterdam's mayor wed four gay couples at the stroke of midnight Saturday, immediately after the legislation enacted last year went into effect.

The couples — three male and one female — nervously held hands and exchanged vows to fulfill the duties of matrimony set out in Dutch law.

"There are two reasons to rejoice: You are celebrating your marriage and you are also celebrating your right to be married," Mayor Job Cohen told the newlyweds in Amsterdam's City Hall.

"I admit that 10 years ago I didn't understand why homosexuals were making such a big deal out of civil marriage. Now I know better," Cohen said.

The crowd of about 150, which included members of parliament and government, whistled and cheered when the couples kissed and embraced. Pink cake and pink champagne were served at a reception, and then the party moved to several of Amsterdam's gay clubs.

Gay Studies at Yale

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — A gay studies program, along with a \$1 million endowment, will be established at Yale University.

Gay activist Larry Kramer ended his dispute with the university and agreed to give some of his papers to the school while his brother donates \$1 million toward gay and lesbian studies at their alma mater.

Four years ago, Kramer accused Yale of homophobia after it rejected his plan for a gay studies program as too narrow a focus for a permanent professorship. Writer Calvin Trillin, a classmate of Kramer's, helped work out the reconciliation.

"I think what Larry's saying now is ... these things ought to sort of work organically," Trillin said. "You ought to plant the seed and start with some money and that collection, which will in draw other collections, and see where it goes."

Kramer, who graduated from Yale in 1957, has said he attempted suicide because of the isolation he felt as a gay student. He turned from isolation to activism, helping found ACT UP and the Gay Men's Health Crisis to address the AIDS epidemic.

His papers will go to Yale's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Kramer's brother, attorney and financier Arthur Kramer, has agreed to donate \$1 million over five years to create the Larry Kramer Initiative for Gay and Lesbian Studies.

The money is expected to be used to hire a coordinator who will raise money, coordinate programs and conferences, attract additional teaching and get research funds.

Cellucci Nomination

WASHINGTON — Sen. Jesse Helms is letting his homophobia get in the way of nominations for ambassadors again.

The Senate confirmed Massachusetts Gov. Paul Cellucci as ambassador to Canada despite the opposition of Helms, Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman.

At a meeting of committee members, Helms indicated he would not block President Bush's choice, but had misgivings about Cellucci's positions on social issues. Cellucci is a pro-choice Republican.

"I have at hand reports regarding Mr. Cellucci's tenure as governor of Massachusetts — reports that, quite frankly, have raised my eyebrows — as have his positions on the sanctity of human life, parental rights and the defense of traditional family values," Helms, R-N.C., said in a statement after his committee approved the nomination.

"These positions," the statement continued, "are out of sync not only with my own views, but with the president's stated positions on these important matters."

Conservative groups have lobbied against Cellucci, saying his support of gay rights is "anti-family."

AIDS Ads

SAN FRANCISCO — Ads for AIDS drugs that feature buff, muscled men excelling at a variety of strenuous pursuits might be banned in San Francisco.

That's because city officials believe the ads use sex to sell AIDS drugs to gay men.

Tom Ammiano, president of the city Board of Supervisors, is leading the fight against pharmaceutical company ads portraying young, buff men climbing mountains and popping antiviral pills. Opponents say the ads promote unsafe sex by downplaying the dangers of AIDS.

"I want it to stop being all about profit and more about prevention," said Ammiano, who is gay. The committee that will hear testimony Thursday

could recommend that the full board vote on banning the ads from bus shelters, commuter trains and other city property.

A recent study by the city Department of Public Health found 62 percent of 262 gay and heterosexual men surveyed said the ads influenced unsafe sex. The study follows a report that the rate of HIV infection has more than doubled among San Francisco's gay men in the last four years.

A representative of New Jersey-based Merck & Co. said the company's ads have consistently gotten a positive reception since their introduction in 1996.

"Very clearly, there needed to be a larger effort around so patients would be motivated to talk to their physicians about the drugs," said Kyra Lindemann, a Merck spokeswoman. "We were very effective in getting people to talk to their doctors about what treatment is right for them."

Boys Don't Cry

LINCOLN, Neb. — A former sheriff, portrayed in the Oscar-winning, *Boys Don't Cry*, was negligent for failing to protect a woman who lived as a man and later was murdered.

The Nebraska Supreme Court, in a ruling written by its chief justice, harshly condemned Sheriff Charles Laux for failing to investigate Teena Brandon's rape a week before she was murdered.

Brandon's mother was ordered paid \$80,000, plus damages for emotional distress.

The decision reversed a ruling by a lower-court judge who said the 21-year-old was partly responsible for her own death.

In 1993, Brandon reported to the sheriff that two friends of hers had raped her after learning her true gender. About a week later, the two men killed her in a Humboldt farmhouse, along with two others who witnessed the slaying.

Brandon's mother, Joann Brandon, sued Sheriff Charles Laux and the county for more than \$350,000, saying he should have offered her daughter protective custody. A judge awarded just \$17,360.

The Supreme Court instructed a lower court to refigure emotional damages, but did not specify a minimum or maximum. State law caps such damages at \$1 million.