

OITM Roundup: State, National and World News Briefs

compiled by Kip M. Roberson

Parade's organizers win right to ban gays

WASHINGTON, DC -- The organizers of Boston's St. Patrick's Day parade have a constitutional right to ban a gay and lesbian group from the annual event, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously.

In an opinion written by Justice David Souter, the court ruled that parades, like protest marches and newspapers, are protected by the First Amendment, and that their organizers have the right to express themselves freely.

Souter's opinion in the gay parade case hinged in part on whether a loosely organized St. Patrick's Day parade, in which almost anyone who wanted could march, was in fact protected speech, since the veterans council that organized it did not have a specific message.

But Souter said that "a narrow, succinctly articulable message is not a condition of constitutional protection." Otherwise, he said, the modern abstract paintings of Jackson Pollock, the atonal music of Arnold Schonberg and the nonsense "Jabberwocky" verse of Lewis Carroll would not be protected either.

The Boston gay group wanted to march under a banner identifying it solely by its name, the "Irish American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston." But even that identification might send a message of which the Irish veterans who organized the parade might disapprove, Souter said. (*The Burlington Free Press*)

Gay elected officials attend White House meeting

WASHINGTON, DC -- Thirty-two openly gay and lesbian elected leaders, including Hinesburg state representative Bill Lippert, met with Clinton administration officials in what one state senator described as an "historic, first-of-its-kind" gathering.

Among the highlights was the announcement by Patricia Fleming, the President's AIDS policy coordinator, that her 30-year-old son is gay. In making that announcement, Fleming said she is worried that young gay men are not getting the message about HIV prevention.

Nearly three dozen state legislators, city council members, school board members and other elected officials from across the country attended the White House meeting. Among Clinton administration officials present were Vice President Al Gore; Donna Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services; Henry Cisneros, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and White House Counsel and former federal judge Abner Mikva.

The historic nature of the meeting was dampened somewhat by the actions of the Secret Service officers, some of whom donned rubber gloves before shaking hands with gay leaders. Fleming later expressed outrage over the incident. "The actions of the individuals involved were totally inappropriate and insulting," she said. "They were in violation of White House policy. This incident shows the lack of knowledge of HIV transmission." Some gay officials at the meeting were willing to overlook the Secret Service's actions. "This meeting is a real step forward," said Los Angeles Board of Education member Jeff Horton, who called the Secret Service's actions "a minor embarrassment, but the administration didn't do it."

Of more concern to many was the Clinton administration's decision not to file a "friend of the court" brief opposing Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2, which will be argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Judge Mikva was told by some of the elected officials of the cynicism of the gay and lesbian community in light of what many see as the administration's betrayal of the civil rights battle and the gays-in-the-military fight of 1993," said William Fitzpatrick, a member of the Rhode Island state senate.

Another sore spot for some was Clinton's naming of Marsha Scott, a deputy assistant, as his liaison to the gay and lesbian community. Steve Michael, with ACT UP,

chastised the President for being unwilling or unable to find an openly gay or lesbian official to serve in that position. Shalala discussed the administration's commitment to fighting AIDS by emphasizing that the budget for research, care and prevention has increased by 40 percent under Clinton. Cisneros criticized Congressional efforts to cut funds for housing for people with AIDS. Cisneros said most PWAs have a life expectancy of 10 years, but homeless PWAs have a life expectancy of only six months. (*Frontiers*)

The Contract for Queer Families

CHICAGO -- In an era of ever increasing oppression, prejudice and intolerance, Queer Nation Chicago announces The Contract for Queer Families. This contract is a long overdue call to action to end the oppression of queer families caused by heterosexism and homophobia. The demands, in no particular order, are:

1. Freedom to marry, or not.
2. The right to adopt and be foster parents.
3. The repeal of all sodomy laws.
4. The enactment of a federal Hate Crime Law inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identification
5. The right to conceive, via artificial insemination, without regard to sexual orientation or marital status.
6. The enactment of a comprehensive federal non-discrimination law inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identification.
7. Accurate representation and portrayal of queers in the educational system.
8. Separation of church and state.
9. Right to legal guardianship of loved ones.

If any one of these issues are important to you, affect your life, or the lives of loved ones, please get motivated, get involved. For more details on the Contract contact Queer Nation Chicago at (312)202-5482 or write at P.O. Box 3104; Chicago, IL 60654. (*Press Release*)

Mayor: Give gay couple marriage license

ITHACA, NY -- Two gay men who want to marry may not be able to under state law, but they have the support of the mayor of Ithaca, NY. Toshav Greene and Phillip Storrs, who recently moved to Ithaca from Elmira, were hoping to receive official marriage certification but were turned down by a city clerk, who cited state law. New York does not recognize same-sex marriages and will not issue a license. But Ithaca Mayor Benjamin Nichols would like to issue them a marriage license. Nichols, a Socialist, encouraged the Common Council to pass a resolution at its July meeting, urging the state to allow gay couples to marry. The two men say they will go ahead with a planned Jewish commitment ceremony. National gay activist groups have been investigating state law on same-sex marriage. A similar case has reached the state Supreme Court in Hawaii. The tricky part about the city issuing a license to Greene and Storrs is that a test case in New York could affect what happens in Hawaii, where a decision isn't expected until 1996 or 1997. If New York courts do not uphold same-sex marriages, the precedent could lead Hawaii's courts to follow suit. "The question isn't whether to fight for this right, but how to fight for it," said Evan Wolfson, an attorney for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. (*Frontiers*)

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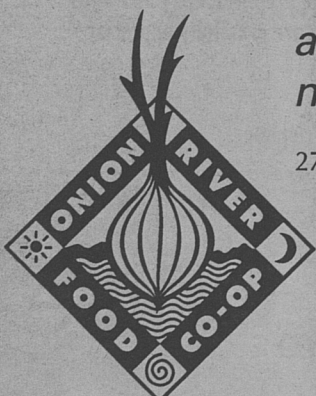
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