

Notes

Her story
in history

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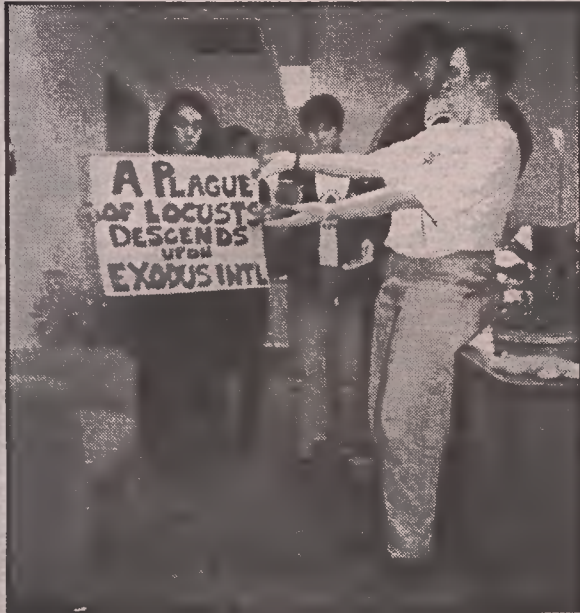
Rev. has no appetite
for Robertson

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"The Exodus staff watched dumbfounded as a swarming pile of crickets spread across their office floor. One woman picked up the phone and dialed 911, shaking as she said, 'There are lesbians here with bugs.'"



Exodus International swarmed by Biblical plague of locusts

SAN RAFAEL, CA—The San Francisco Lesbian Avengers recently summoned a "plague of locusts" onto Exodus International, a cult-like organization whose mission is to "cure" people of their homosexuality. The Avengers chose to target Exodus because conversion programs, a largely invisible form of Christian Right organizing, have profoundly devastating effects on lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

"If anyone deserves a plague of Biblical proportions right now, it's the Radical Right," said Avenger Liz Harris.

Five Avengers stormed the organization's headquarters, carrying signs proclaiming "Queer Love is not a Disease," and chanting "Exodus, stop your hate and fear! Help like yours is killing queers!" Once inside, the activists climbed onto the reception desk, shouted "We don't need to be cured," and released 1,000 "locusts" (crickets) in an attempt to shut the operation down. The Exodus staff watched dumbfounded as a swarming pile of crickets spread across their office floor. One woman picked up the phone and dialed 911, shaking as she said, "There are lesbians here with bugs." By the time she was able to convince the police that it wasn't a prank call, the Avengers were on their way back to San Francisco.

An umbrella referral agency, Exodus claims to have converted 100,000 people since

1976 through a network of 75 "ex-gay ministries" in North America and affiliated organizations in England, Singapore, Australia and the Philippines. "Freedom from homosexuality," according to Exodus promotional materials, "is increasingly experienced as the former homosexual matures through ongoing submission to the Lordship of Christ and His Church."

Such major right-wing operations as Focus on the Family, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the 700 Club refer people to Exodus for placement in groups and live-in conversion programs.

"Ex-gays" are the trophies of the far Right," says Avenger Katie Hern. "They're used in right wing propaganda to prove that homosexuality is a chosen perversion. And that we therefore don't deserve basic civil rights."

Many bisexuals, lesbians and gays become involved in conversion programs because they can't reconcile their conservative religious backgrounds to their sexual orientation. Some have been devastated by learning they are HIV-positive and are searching for emotional support.

"The ex-gay ministries pretend to provide a service to struggling, traumatized people," says Harris, "In reality, this is a cult."

According to past participants who have rejected program teachings, Exodus leaders

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Anonymous testing to end in June

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—The North Carolina State Health Department prevailed in its most recent attempt to end anonymous HIV testing, reversing a decision just three months ago to keep it available. In a 6 to 5 vote, the state Commission for Health Services voted on February 9, 1995 to end anonymous testing on June 15, 1995. The same Commission voted on November 4, 1994 to keep anonymous HIV testing for two more years. The Commission is the state independent rule-making body that adopts health regulations.

State AIDS Advisory Council co-chair David Jolly called the reversal of policy "grotesque." At its November meeting the Commission endorsed a proposal by the Council to keep anonymous HIV testing while programs were developed to reduce barriers to testing. The compromise proposal was worked out

over a year of often heated debate by members of the Council. Jolly played a key role in framing language that was acceptable both to Council members in favor of and opposed to anonymous testing.

ACT UP/Triangle's Steve Harris, having prevailed in court in several previous lawsuits against the state, told Q-Notes, "We have met with our attorney and we are considering our options," but did not want to discuss specifics while their legal strategy was being developed.

The State Health Department's opportunity to reverse the decision came because when the Commission voted at its November meeting to keep anonymous testing, the State Health Department had not published a public notice of the state's intent to adopt a permanent regulation. Therefore, the Commission had to adopt a temporary regulation and vote

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OutCharlotte '95 to hold first cultural festival in October

CHARLOTTE—Throughout history, gay, lesbian and bisexual people have enriched society with their contributions to art, music, literature, politics, education, medicine and sports. Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein, Susan B. Anthony, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Emily Dickinson, Tchaikovsky, Andy Warhol, Tennessee Williams, Florence Nightingale, Martina Navratilova, Ma Rainey, Rock Hudson and Rudolf Nureyev are just a few of the more well-known persons whose accomplishments we laud today.

To celebrate the life, accomplishments, achievements and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, a new group, formed out of the success of North Carolina Lesbian & Gay Pride 1994, recently unveiled its plans to hold an annual cultural festival to honor the LGBT community.

OutCharlotte '95 will hold its first festival October 11-15 of this year. The organizing committee expects the 5-day event to draw thousands to Charlotte for entertainment, workshops, seminars, and speakers. Events under consideration include gay and lesbian films, theatre performances, comedians, book signings, a business & crafts fair, a cabaret show, an art exhibit, and a mega-dance in Uptown Charlotte. The festival's stated purpose is to foster awareness and appreciation of LGBT culture through arts-related, educational and historical programs.

"I am thrilled to be part of this event," exclaimed Julie Henry, co-chair of the Festival Steering Committee. "The positive impact of NC Pride 1994 is still resonating through Charlotte's LGBT community. We chose the name OutCharlotte to identify what the festival is and where it will be held, but we expect the entire region to be here to celebrate. We look forward to hundreds of people participating as donors and volunteers." Henry co-sponsored a yard sale last year to raise advance monies for NC Pride 1994, and currently serves on the Red Party Board of Directors.

According to co-chair Jim Fulton, "October 11 is National Coming Out Day, and we couldn't think of a better day to kick-off the festival. October is also National Gay & Lesbian History Month, and it's a perfect opportunity to share our cultural achievements with the community-at-large. We'll be focusing a large part of the festival on educational and historical seminars with knowledgeable speakers and community leaders." Fulton was a volunteer for NC Pride 1994, and this year also serves as Operations Manager of the Gay & Lesbian Switchboard of Charlotte.

"We have assembled a great team of committed community leaders to plan this event," stated Festival Director Dan Kirsch. "We believe the potential of OutCharlotte is unlimited, and that it will continue the dialogue started with the community-at-large with last summer's Pride event. It will keep the LGBT community visible, making it easier for people to come out." Kirsch was co-chair of NC Pride 1994.

The idea for the cultural festival occurred even before NC Pride 1994 was held, but it took a series of focus group and town meetings to find a new group of people who were willing to commit the time necessary to make an event this big a success. Most of the Festival Steering Committee (FSC) participated in Pride in a volunteer capacity, and all have performed leadership roles in community organizations. The 1995 Committee is composed of: Jim Fulton and Julie Henry, Co-Chairs; Elizabeth Pruett, Secretary; Albert Lujan, Treasurer; Dan Kirsch, Festival Director; David Boxer, N. Tamara Fry, Brandalyn Grier, Rodney McAllister, Jonathan Padgett, Linda Scott, Laura Starkey, David Stout, Amy Sturkey and Naomi Swinton.

The FSC has been meeting since the beginning of January, and has issued several goals for the festival: (1) to draw on the combined strengths of the LGBT community and Charlotte's arts and educational organiza-

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Nominations sought for annual Q-Notes awards

CHARLOTTE—Nominations are currently being accepted for this year's Q-Notes OUT!Bound Award and Mark Drum Memorial Award, to be presented by Q-Notes during Pride 1995. This year will be the third time the annual awards have been presented.

The Mark Drum Memorial Award is given to recognize and individual who has done outstanding and exceptional work in the HIV/AIDS-affected community.

Mark Drum was a Q-Notes Staff writer who chronicled his battle with the disease until his passing in May of 1991. We are honored to pay tribute to Mark and feel this award is our appreciation in action.

The Q-Notes OUT!Bound Award is presented to someone who has made a significant impact on the lesbian and gay community in North and/or South Carolina. This person will have made a viable change through activism, lobbying, and community service.

If you or your community service orga-

nization know a person who should be considered for either prize, please write to us. Include in your letter a brief personal profile of the individual; a description of their work and performance; and the reasons why their contribution has been exceptional.

We are aware that hundreds of people in the gay and lesbian community are committed every day to extinguishing disease; suffering; bigotry; basking; and discrimination, so choosing these recipients will be a difficult process.

The deadline for your submission is Monday, May 15.

All applications will be given serious consideration by a nominating committee; finalists will be voted on by the entire staff.

Please make sure that you include your contact information, as we will be making further inquiry regarding finalists.

Send your submissions to Q-Notes, P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222.