

## African-American gay leader meets with officials in Zimbabwe

by Monique Meadows  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—In response to recent anti-gay policies of the government of Zimbabwe, a black, gay official from the US met with black leaders of Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) and with American and Zimbabwean government officials during a trip to Harare, Zimbabwe.

Keith Boykin, executive director of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, a national organization founded in 1988, was the only openly gay person to participate in President Clinton's 35-member US delegation to Zimbabwe. While in Harare, Boykin met with half a dozen gay and lesbian activists and visited the office of GALZ, Zimbabwe's only major gay and lesbian organization.

"I was very inspired by the courage of the lesbians and gay men I met in Zimbabwe," said Boykin. "In the face of stiff resistance, these freedom fighters press on for justice."

Homosexual conduct is illegal in Zimbabwe and GALZ members reported that police routinely harass gays and lesbians. For the past two years, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has ordered Zimbabwe's gay organization banned from participating in an annual international book fair and has labeled them as "sexual perverts" and compared them to "dogs and pigs." Zimbabwe's state-dominated media will not allow positive coverage of gay and lesbian issues, according to a local reporter in Harare who interviewed Boykin about the situation.

GALZ members are preparing for another possible confrontation next month when the international book fair returns to Harare. In addition, they are preparing for a conference of the World Council of Churches to take place in Zimbabwe in the fall of 1998.

Boykin met with the Honorable Justice Mahomed A. Adam of the High Court of Zimbabwe and discussed Zimbabwe's lack of formal legal protections for gays and lesbians. Adam said that he was unaware of any legal challenges to Zimbabwe's sodomy laws, but Boykin noted that the one-party government's anti-gay rhetoric had intimidated many activists from coming out and challenging the laws. President Mugabe's ZANU PF Party controls the entire Zimbabwean Parliament.

Also in Harare, Boykin met with the US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Johnnie Carson, and with the US Embassy staff, who briefed

him on the current political climate for gays and lesbians in that country. During the same trip, he met with US Ambassador Joseph Wilson, the African Director of the National Security Council, and he urged the American government to raise human rights concerns in meetings with the leaders of Zimbabwe's government.

"The situation in Zimbabwe poses a challenge for American policy makers," said Boykin. "On one hand, the US must help support the development of African countries, including Zimbabwe, but on the other hand, the US cannot ignore its responsibility to speak out on critical issues of human rights," he added. "It's important that we support Africa and support human rights at the same time," said Boykin, who noted that Zimbabwe's neighbor South Africa is the first country in the world to protect gays and lesbians in its constitution.

The official US delegation was led by US Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater and the Rev. Jesse Jackson and included Coretta Scott King; Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women; former New York City Mayor David Dinkins; Ernest Green, who was one of nine black students who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957; George Haley, brother of famed *Roots* author Alex Haley; Michael Brown, President and CEO of the Ronald H. Brown Foundation; and Niara Sudarkasa, President of Lincoln College in Pennsylvania.

The summit took place from July 20 to July 25 and addressed topics including AIDS and health care, arts and culture, business and economic development, media and communications, education, democracy and governance, population, and women's issues.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly two-thirds of all people living with HIV/AIDS are in sub-Saharan Africa. In Harare, Zimbabwe, an estimated one out of every five men is HIV-infected and the number rises to one out of three in the uniformed services, according to the US Embassy. Despite the presence of several major American businesses at the Zimbabwe Summit, virtually no American pharmaceutical companies participated, according to Boykin.

"It's well past time for American drug companies and American political leaders to play a larger role in reducing the spread of AIDS throughout Africa," Boykin said. ▼

Campe is calling for submissions of drag-themed, travel-oriented photos. Air, land or sea...she'll consider any submissions as long as they are fun. Photos must be the property of the submitter and must include submitter's name, address, phone number and favorite mode of travel. Submission deadline is November 10. Send non-returnable photos to Pontalba Press, Attn: Miss Candy Asphalt, 4417 Dryades St., New Orleans, LA 70115.

The Eighth Annual Gay Men of Color AIDS Institute will be held October 23-26 at the Robert Treat Hotel and Rutgers University in Newark, NJ. Sponsored by the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention (NTFAP) and the New York City Department of Health Bureau of HIV Program Services, this institute is the only national conference focusing on the HIV prevention needs of gay and bisexual men of color. Conference fees are \$125, \$50 for PWHIV/AIDS and \$50 for youth under 25. Fees are for the conference only and do not include travel, accommodations nor meals. The Robert Treat Hotel is offering a special group rate of \$84 nightly for singles and doubles. Request the NTFAP group rate and call (973) 622-1000. For more information or a detailed brochure, contact NTFAP, National Programs, 973 Market St., Suite 550, San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 356-8134; fax (415) 356-8138.

After a year's hiatus, Wigstock is back. It's happening from 2:00 - 10:30pm at Pier 54 at 13th St. and the West Side Highway in New York City on Sunday, August 31. This outrageous drag event has astounded even hard-boiled New Yorkers since 1984, as evidenced in *Wigstock: The Movie*. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$20 at the door if available and can be purchased by calling Box Office Tickets at 1-800-494-8497. ▼

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Compiled by Dan Van Mourik  
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The fifth annual West Virginia Pride picnic will be held on Sunday, September 7 from noon to dusk at the Riverside Pavilion in Coonskin Park, Charleston, WV. Organized by Community Oriented Gay & Lesbian Events and Services (COGLES), the picnic includes a "BATTLE of the DJs" in which DJs spin their best while receiving donations for local AIDS charities. There are also volleyball games, touch football games and vendor booths. Drinks, hot dogs and hamburgers are provided, but picnickers are asked to bring a covered dish. A \$3 donation is requested at the gate. For more information, send an SASE to COGLES, 1517 Jackson St., Charleston, WV 25311, call (304) 345-0491 or email SHEETSIGTA@aol.com.

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County is in the process of updating their listing of clubs and organizations in Mecklenburg County. Both a printed directory and mailing labels are available for purchase through the Library. The directory will also be accessible on the Library Internet Home Page at [www.plcmc.lib.nc.us](http://www.plcmc.lib.nc.us). If you have not already received an update form or would like your organization included in this directory, contact K. MacCulley, Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County, 310 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC 28202-2176; (704) 336-2801; fax (704) 336-2677.

Honey van Campe, authoress of *The Drag Queen's Cookbook & Guide to Sensible Living*, has a travel guide set for early 1998 release. Entitled *Adventures While A Broad*, Ms. van

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