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Do you think
the fight for
LGBT civil rights
is comparable to the
African-American
struggle for equality?
Yes No

Massachusetts rules in favor of same-sex marriage; decision unleashes frenetic right-wing response

President vows to 'protect sanctity' of marriage while Senate introduces Federal Marriage Amendment

by Johnson Evans

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled Nov. 18 that same and opposite-sex couples must be given equal civil marriage rights under the state constitution. That ruling makes Massachusetts the first state to take a step forward toward granting marriage equality for gay and lesbian couples. The Court ruled that civil marriage in Massachusetts means "the voluntary union of two persons as spouses, to the exclusion of all others," and allowed the Legislature 180 days to change the civil marriage statutes accordingly.

California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii have domestic partner laws that allow same-sex couples access to some of the basic benefits and protections afforded to married heterosexual couples. And Vermont has same-sex civil unions. However, 37 states have passed laws denying recognition to same-sex marriages.

President George W. Bush wasted no time in attacking the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling. "Marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman," Bush said in a statement released in London. He vowed to do everything in his power to defend the "sanctity of marriage."

As expected, right-wing media has pounced on the story, flooding the airwaves with leaders of religious right groups and polls and opinions from

conservative think tanks.

For example, an AP poll carried by CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network) indicates a majority of Americans (52 percent) support a ban on gay marriage. CBN fails to mention, however, that only 10 percent of that 52 percent actually endorse a constitutional amendment to achieve such a ban.

In the Carolinas, no immediate effect is expected to arise from the ruling, though increased media attention to the subject matter has brought about some local response from various political organizations. In South Carolina, the Republican Party platform says gay marriage is "detrimental to the peace and tranquility of our state," while the North Carolina GOP platform is practically verbose in its anti-gay insistence: "We believe that homosexuality is not normal and should not be established as an acceptable 'alternative' lifestyle ... we oppose actions, such as "marriage" or the adoption of children by same-sex couples, which attempt to legitimize and normalize homosexual relationships."

"I think we can expect a backlash, not just



The Massachusetts ruling in favor of same-sex marriage has sparked an unprecedented reaction from politicians and conservatives.

in N.C., but across the country," says Equality NC Executive Director Ian Palmquist. "Certainly this will help jumpstart the marriage amendment by conservatives and I wouldn't be surprised to see some legislation in North Carolina, as well.

"On a positive note, I think the most immediate effect is that it moves forward a dialogue for same-sex couples that really hasn't been at the forefront of our state in a while."

see RULING on 7

Ten ways to create a cool yule

LGBT depression is often magnified during the holidays

by David Stout
Q-Notes staff

During the holiday season there is intense pressure to be merry and bright and gay. But what if you can't be merry and bright expressly because you're gay? For many, this time of year, with its focus on family and tradition, is little more than a painful reminder of the difficulties and isolation that LGBT people routinely face.

"Folks are especially at risk for disappointment, disillusionment, depression and anxiety during the holidays," explains Jamey Collins, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and nationally recognized work-



shop presenter, in an article on GayHealth.com.

"Many members of our community are single and extremely lonely for companionship or a partner," he adds. "Some are estranged from families because of their orientation. Whether they are single or coupled, individuals may feel alone, invisible or left out. If coupled, they may be in a troubled relationship and experiencing distress about the future."

Too often individuals attempt to escape holiday anxiety by using alcohol, drugs or sex (would that be hum-buggery?). "Steve" tells GayHealth.com that prior to recovery he tried to anesthetize himself with all three.

"I was getting into trouble at work, I had just ended a long-term relationship and I was very depressed. The holidays made [my alcohol and drug use] worse because I am not out to my family and I am usually alone on the holidays. I had a lot of unsafe sex and I put myself in dangerous situations. I've got better ways of dealing with the holidays now."

Taking a cue from Steve's success, Q-Notes has assembled 10 tips to help readers healthfully contend with their own holiday depression.

see TEN on 11

Homo for the holidays!

Q-Notes' seasonal shopping guide

Compiled by Brent James and David Moore

It's that time of year again — it's colder outside, the leaves have mostly fallen from the trees, you've already put on a few extra pounds from Thanksgiving and early holiday party rounds. Add to that recipe the constant jingle jangle of a charity bell ringing outside numerous local retailers and you're all too quickly reminded that it's time to pull out the checkbook and pick out the perfect gifts for those special people in your life.

In the Carolinas, there's much to choose from for the LGBT-minded shopper. Just take a look at what we've dug up for your holiday shopping pleasure!



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