

# The FRONT PAGE

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Serving the Carolinas' Gay &amp; Lesbian Communities for Over Eighteen Years

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## Sodomy Laws, Custody Cases, et al...

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### January

The year got started with scores of anti-gay protesters organized by Operation Rescue in Texas launching a demonstration near Walt Disney World over what they called the Disney Company's "pro-homosexual" policies — allowing "Gay Day" to be held at the theme park, extending domestic partner benefits to employees, and other company policies. Three far-right demonstrators were arrested for interfering with the park's business.

Two Canadian men — Martin Dube and Manuel Gambora — filed a lawsuit in Montreal, asking the court to declare the Quebec provincial civil code discriminatory because it prohibits same-sex couples from legally marrying.

In the Cayman Islands, the government refused permission to let a charter cruise ship from docking for 7 hours at the Caribbean resort because the ship catered mainly to gay tourists whom government officials said didn't meet the "standards of appropriate behavior expected of visitors." British officials later complained to the Cayman Island government about the incident, and reportedly were pressuring a number of British territories in the West Indies — British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Anguilla, Montserrat and the Caymans — to drop their anti-gay sex laws.

After just a month on the books, the Salt Lake City council voted 4-3 to dump an anti-bias ordinance that barred the city government from discriminating in hiring, promotion or firing of city workers based on sexual orientation. The measure was narrowly approved in December by a lame-duck council, but new council members taking office at the beginning of the year promptly repealed the ordinance. Later in 1998, the council would once again approve the measure and put the anti-bias ordinance back on the books.

Texans continued to show they do things in a big way when the Dallas-based Cathedral of Hope, the largest gay and lesbian church in the world, announced it had raised \$6.2 million to build a new church for the 3,500-member congregation and that it was embarking on an effort to raise an additional \$19 million nationally for further building. The building campaign would include a sanctuary by noted architect Philip

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Johnson described as "resembling a soaring iceberg 11 stories tall and two football fields long" on the church's current 13-acre site.

The Rev. Jimmy Creech faced a United Methodist Church trial on charges he violated church rules by performing a covenant ceremony last year for a lesbian couple at First United Methodist Church in Omaha, where he was the pastor. A church jury in March determined that in fact Creech had conducted the union for the couple, but then voted 8-5 that he had not violated church law in doing so. Nebraska Bishop Joel Martinez, however, later refused to reappoint Creech as pastor of First United, leaving the minister without a congregation.

### February

In South Africa, the nation's supreme court ruled that same-sex couples in the country must be given access to the same or comparable benefits employers offer married workers. The ruling, one of the most important to date for gays and lesbians in the country since South Africa ended apartheid, came in the case of Jolande Langemaat, a police captain who tried to enroll her partner of 11 years in the South African Police Service's insurance program for employee spouses.

As part of the settlement of a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, Chicago will no longer sponsor programs of the Boy Scouts of America because of the youth group's ban against gays and its requirement that Scouts affirm a belief in god.

Just ten days after announcing it earlier in February, the Human Rights Campaign and the Metropolitan Community Church said they were at least temporarily suspending plans for a "Millennium March" on the nation's capital in the year 2000 because a number of organizations that were expected to support the march had instead criticized announcements of plans without enough discussion. The march continued to be on-again/off-again for several months, but by May it appeared to be a go, with local activists focusing actions on their state capitals during the week of March 21-27, 1999, in a campaign known as "Equality Begins at Home" as a prelude to the Millennium March on April 30, 2000.

Librarians say books — especially books dealing with homosexuality — were increasingly the target of vandalism as a kind of political protest in Ohio's Dayton and Montgomery County area, where several thousand dollars worth of books have been damaged since the unpredictable vandalism began more than two years ago. Authorities said the books are all damaged beyond use by being smeared with feces and left in the library's men's toilet along with a "hate note." Police later charged Carl Lenhoff with the vandalism, and he was sentenced to 180 days in jail.

Police arrested Steve R. Cole, 18, and Jeffrey Eberle, 19, in connection with the Jan. 19 beating of Jason Kindinger, a Miami University student in Oxford, Ohio. Police said the two youths attacked Kindinger and Brad Waite with a club while shouting racist

and anti-gay epithets. Waite escaped and called police, but Kindinger was left with a fractured skull and several broken bones.

Mark McBride, the mayor of Myrtle Beach, S.C., tried to block a Gay and Lesbian Pride parade in the coastal tourist town in May, and insisted he wasn't a bigot but said letting the gay event take place would attract groups like and white supremacists to march there. Even though anti-gay activists organized a "traditional values" protest rally at the same time, the gay pride event came off more or less without a hitch — and with the largest attendance for the state's annual celebration, about 15,000 people.

### March

The South Dakota state supreme court ruled that Richard Collins must be reinstated as a teacher because the Faith School Board offered no evidence he was incompetent. Collins, a teacher for 29 years in the district, was fired by the school board after he answered a student's question about homosexuality. He said he had been asked by community health nurse who showed a sex education film to answer questions by male students because she believed the boys would be more at ease asking a male teacher than a female nurse.

Just being gay isn't sufficient reason for the Boy Scouts of America to exclude homosexuals from the youth organization and is a violation of state's anti-bias laws, a three-judge panel of the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court ruled in overturning a lower court decision. The New Jersey court said in its ruling that the Boy Scouts of America and its affiliated local councils are "places of accommodation" that "emphasize open membership" which makes them subject to the state's anti-bias laws that in 1992 were broadened to bar discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Ft. Collins became the sixth city in Colorado to pass an anti-bias ordinance when the city council unanimously voted on March 3 to enact the legislation. But opponents of the new measure, which took effect March 13, immediately announced they would begin a petition drive to reverse the council's actions and repeal the ordinance. In the Nov. 3 elections, voters in the town soundly rejected the measure.

Tempe, Arizona's openly gay Mayor Neil Giuliano fought off a challenge from a polit-

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## Now Beginning Our Twentieth Year!