WASHINGTON -- The Boy Scouts can bar Gays from serving as troop leaders, the Supreme Court said at the end of June in a 5-4 decision on "free-association rights." The decision may also let the 6.2-million-member organization reject Gay boys as members.

Forcing the Scouts to accept Gay troop leaders would violate the organization's right of "expressive association" under the Constitution's First Amendment, the justices ruled on the last day of their 1999-2000 term.

"The Boy Scouts asserts that homosexual conduct is inconsistent with the values it seeks to instill," Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist wrote for the court. Reaching a decision "...would force it "to send a message, both to the youth members and the world, that the Boy Scouts accepts homosexual conduct as a legitimate form of behavior," the chief justice said. "We're very pleased," said Scouts spokesman Greg Shields. "It's going to allow us to continue our mission of providing character-building programs for youth." see Scouts, p. 9

UN Predicts: AIDS Will Kill One Half of African Teens

GENEVA (AP) -- AIDS has killed 19 million people worldwide, but the worst is yet to come, the United Nations has just predicted: the disease is expected to wipe out half the children in some African nations, devastating economies and societies.

"There is a whole generation which is being taken out," said Peter Plot, head of the U.N. Joint Program on HIV/AIDS. He said vulnerable countries in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean risk a similar catastrophe unless they act now to control infection rates.

In its 135-page report released at the end of June, UNAIDS estimated:

- The virus has killed 19 million people worldwide, up from 16.3 million at the end of 1998. It has infected 34 million more, including 5.4 million last year alone.

- More than 13 million children have been orphaned by AIDS.

- In 16 sub-Saharan African countries, more than one-tenth of the population ages 15-49 carries the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, or HIV.
- In seven of those countries, at least one-fifth of the population is infected.

One in five of the countries where 20% of the population is infected is South Africa, which has 4.2 million people who are HIV positive -- the largest single national total. The southern African nation of Botswana has the worst rate, with more than one in three adults infected. That's the equivalent of 90 million people out of the U.S. population of 270 million. see Africa, p. 9

Vermont Judge Won't Block Unions, Officials Rebel + More

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) -- Opponents of Vermont's civil unions made another legal bid to block the law from taking effect on July 1st. A day after a Superior Court judge refused to issue a preliminary injunction blocking the first civil unions ceremonies in the nation, opponents filed a new request and added new plaintiffs.

A Virginia lawyer representing Shetra and the other plaintiffs in SuperGay Court, said she has no enough information from him before the judge ruled that no irreparable harm would occur if the law went into effect.

Lawyer Erik Stanley asked to add two new plaintiffs to the lawsuit. "Our clients in Montpelier, a woman and a man, said they would be harmed if forced to issue civil union licenses.

These town clerks object to doing that on moral and religious grounds and have asked the attorney general's office if they could not issue these licenses," Stanley said. "The attorney general responded in a letter to them that if they refuse to issue civil union licenses, they could be fined and there will be a problem with the law itself.

"Our goal is to ensure that the Coea-Cola Company is the best place for all people to work. This extension of benefits is another step toward achieving our business class leadership to the beverage industry, and to the business community in Atlanta and all of Georgia by taking this historic action," said Harry Knox, executive director of the Georgia Equality Project, which represents Georgia's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered citizens. see Coke, p. 2

INFORMATION:
Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual + Transgendered Tulsans, Our Families + Friends
High Court + Scouts: No Gays Need Apply
by Laurie Asseo, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The Boy Scouts can bar Gays from serving as troop leaders, the Supreme Court said at the end of June in a 5-4 decision on "free-association rights." The decision may also let the 6.2-million-member organization reject Gay boys as members.

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Coke Adds Benefits for Gay + Lesbian Partners

WASHINGTON -- The Human Rights Campaign, anational Gay civil rights organization, commended the Coca-Cola Co. today for announcing plans to extend health care benefits to same-sex domestic partners of its United States-based employees.

"This is excellent news, and yet another sign that domestic partner benefits are becoming a standard component of benefits packages at forward-thinking companies," said Kim L. Mills, HRC's education director who oversees WorkNet, HRC's workplace project. "With this announcement, Coke becomes the 99th member of the Fortune 500 to take this important step.

The Human Rights Campaign and its Business Council have been working with Coca-Cola and KOLAGE, its Lesbian and Gay employee resource group, for many months on this issue, Mills said. HRC WorkNet (www.hrc.org/worknet) provided data, strategy and other advice as needed.

The Coca-Cola Co. released a statement today announcing the benefits, which will begin Jan. 1, 2001. According to the statement, employees will be able to sign up during the fall benefits enrollment period. The company also said it is researching opportunities for implementing its policy on a global basis. "Our company is committed to attracting and retaining the most diverse workforce in the world," Coca-Cola said in the statement. "Our goal is to ensure that the Coca-Cola Company is the best place for all people to work. This extension of benefits is another step toward achieving that goal.

The Coca-Cola Company has provided world-class health care to the pool industry, and to the business community in Atlanta and all of Georgia by taking this historic action," said Harry Knox, executive director of the Georgia Equality Project, which represents Georgia's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered citizens. see Coke, p. 2
TULSA - tulsa.org, a non-profit continues to stir controversy about and in the Tulsa Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans community.

Hosted by webmaster David and his partner, Seth, a statement on the site notes, "[that it is] an effort to chronicle the time spent out and about in the Tulsa gay scene mixed with a bit of news and information. We do not claim to be fair, objective, or even nice. This is 100% opinion. While you may or may not agree, we can promise you will be either amused, baffled, or (more commonly) pissed if you let it. We are kept gossip, slander, or anything else you want to submit we can post here."

The award winning site features links to other sites in the area and offers a key role in working with the company and KOLAGE to help bring about the new policies. GEP also unveiled a new initiative to persuade nine other Georgia companies to provide domestic partner benefits to their Lesbian and Gay employees. These companies are: Home Depot, Atlanta Gas Light Co., BellSouth, Georgia Pacific, Delta Airlines, United Parcel Service, Shaw Industries and Gulf Stream Aerospace.

"Some companies in Georgia are behind the times in their treatment of their Lesbian and Gay employees," said Knox. "We are launching this initiative because our Gay daughters, sons, fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles and cousins should receive the same benefits to their Lesbian and Gay employees."

"The first time an entire industry, along with its leading union, announced domestic partner benefits simultaneously. More than 300,000 private and public employers provide these benefits to their employees."

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"So far this year, an average of five employers a week are announcing these benefits, according to HRC's WorkNet, a key role in working with the company and KOLAGE to help bring about the new policies."

Anti-Gay Ads in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The two leading candidates in Mexico's presidential campaign have been brawling by casting doubts on each other's masculinity. But the real surprise to many in this land with a reputation for "machismo has been the negative reaction to the tactic.

Criticism led opposition candidate Vicente Fox to quickly drop a negative TV ad aimed at rival Francisco Labastida, the candidate of the long-governing Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. Using a Mexican slang term for someone of undefined sexuality, the ad showed Labastida hugging and lifting a PRI colleague by the thighs. It also featured shots of male strippers at a campaign rally for another PRI candidate.

After canceling the ad, Fox's socially conservative National Action Party, known as PAN, ran an advertisement in newspapers defending itself to the Gay community. The party is "not against the Gay community in any way," the ad said, adding: "In a Fox administration, there will be freedom for people to live without masks."

Carlos Monsivais, an author and social critic, said the party's retreat was a milestone for Mexico, where there are no openly Gay politicians and homosexuality has not been widely accepted. "The most important thing is that even Fox and the right had to back down and apologize to the Gay community," he said. "It's incredible to hear the word 'homophobia' being used even by the right."

Labastida's supporters have drawn their own criticism for taking shots at Fox's masculinity with allusions to his separation from his wife and being the father of four adopted children. Such attacks have seldom been so direct in Mexican politics, although in the previous presidential election six years ago, the PRI allegedly hired transvestites to attend an opposition campaign rally in Veracruz state in an attempt to represent the party in any way, the ad said, adding: In a Fox administration, there will be freedom for people to live without masks.

Anti-Gay Ads in Mexico "past.

"It's incredible to hear the word 'homophobia' being used even by the right."

Mormons attack gay relationships in Nevada

CARSON CITY (AP) — A Mormon church-endorsed ban on same-sex marriages cleared one hurdle recently when the secretary of state's office said a ballot petition contained enough signatures. The ruling by Deputy Secretary for Elections Susan Morandi advanced the constitutional referendum to its final step — a test sampling of signatures on the petition for registered voters. County clerks and voter registrants were given until July 7 to verify that registered voters signed the petition.

Morandi's office said the Coalition for the Protection of Marriage got 120,558 people to sign its petition, which is almost three times the number of registered voters needed to put a question on the Nevada ballot. Under the measure, Nevada would recognize marriages only of a man and a woman. That already is part of state law, but advocates want to make it up in the state constitution.

The Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada and about 20 other groups across the state formed the Coalition for Unity to campaign against the ballot measure.

The Coalition for the Protection of Marriage is heavily supported by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whose members were central to anti-Gay marriage efforts in Hawaii and Alaska, and most recently, in California. However, the former Catholic bishop of Las Vegas, Daniel Walsh, asked priests and parish officials to support the "traditional family" but not to support Ziser's effort because it fosters ill will toward Gays.

Mormons Attack Gay Relationships in Nevada

Gays and Lesbians, and friction developed between the neighborhoods and park users. Martinez said police got the Cheesman Park West Neighborhood Association and Equality Colorado, a statewide Gay civil rights organization, directly involved.

Representatives on both sides said the strategy has worked. "For one thing, our work with the Denver police has become a model for how an organization like ours can work with law enforcement," said Lori Dirwan, director of Equality Colorado. DeDe DePercy, who heads Equality's Anti-Violence Project, said cooperation with police has "built bridges" over the Gay community's prevalent, persistent fear and mistrust of law enforcement.

Joe Burrows of the Cheesman Park West Neighborhood Association said he and neighborhood frequenters called police with complaints before the community policing campaign. Now complaints are rare. The result has been a positive change in the disputes in the neighborhood. It's been a positive experience all the way around," he said.

Mormons Attack Gay Relationships in Nevada

Denver Cops & Gays Work Together

DENVER (AP) — Gays and Lesbians have formed an alliance with police to deal with late-night cruising, loud noise and sex in public around Cheesman Park. Police, Gay civil rights activists and park neighbors have been handing out fliers to motorists for the past few weeks warning that police will crack down on traffic, park curfew violations and inappropriate activity on surrounding streets.

The joint effort would not have been possible in the past. Mistrust of police was once so pervasive that hate crimes and same-sex domestic violence went unreported, activists said.

"I think there was, clearly, some traditional stereotyping on both sides, but that has changed a lot," said Lt. Jimmy Martinez, who leads a community-policing team in the Cheesman Park area. Martinez said police Chief Jerry Whitman devised the strategy when he was captain of District 6 surrounding Cheesman. Once the "Fort Apache" of city police districts, District 6 is now a model for community policing programs.

Cheesman is a well-known gathering place for Gays and Lesbians, and friction developed between the neighborhoods and park users. Martinez said police got the Cheesman Park West Neighborhood Association and Equality Colorado, a statewide Gay civil rights organization, directly involved.

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second parent of her partner’s biological son. In 1994, same sex unions were recognized for benefit purposes. The court rulings have coincided with growing public acceptance of Gays. Just a few years ago, public displays of Gay pride were unheard of in Israel. By contrast, today, there are open displays of love and affection in Tel Aviv’s central Rabin Square in 1998 to celebrate the Eurovision Song Contest. Over the last few years, the Gay pride parade has drawn more and more people. On Friday, Rabin Square was lined with Israeli flags and the rainbow balloons of the Gay pride movement. Tens of thousands of truckloads of confetti were unloaded on trucks. Some in the parade donned elaborate costumes, while others wore shorts and T-shirts. Families brought their children, and some heterosexual couples held hands in-hand. There were no religious protests. Tel Aviv is an overwhelmingly secular city, and the parade was being held just before the onset of the Jewish Sabbath during which observant Jews refrain from work and travel.

Taking a break from the blazing heat, Kimmerel Golan said the scene made her feel that Israel was no different from other countries. “You only see pictures of Israel when rocks are being thrown. I’m proud that despite everything we still can do this,” she said. Golan said that in the increasing hater culture which between Israel’s secular majority and the devout minority, the distrust is so great that “each side defines itself as the opposite of the other.” Therefore, she said, many secular Israelis will support causes as long as they are denounced by the religious community.

Lapid, standard bearer of the secular fight against what he calls religious coercion, said his party and the homosexual movement are natural partners. Next week, a bill proposing recognition of same-sex civil unions will be up for approval. However, Lapid said it will likely fail because of the influence of the religious parties. But some of those dancing in the parade said they paid little heed to politics. “Who cares what they do in the Knesset? Look at this celebration,” said Anat Schumacher, one of the participants. “We’re here and they can’t do anything to stop us.”

**Minneapolis 'Sodomy' Law Under Challenge**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - A state law that makes oral and anal sex a crime is unconstitutional and should be thrown out, the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union claimed in a lawsuit filed at the end of June. The MCLU and the Lesbian and Gay Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union are challenging Minnesota’s sodomy statute, saying the law violates the right of privacy guaranteed by the state constitution. The law—which applies to all consenting adults, even married heterosexuals—makes violations punishable by a year in prison and up to $3,000 in fines. The American Civil Liberties Union, a defender of Minnesota’s gay and lesbian rights, said the law is such a violation of civil rights that the courts have a duty to strike it down immediately. Other civil rights groups have already filed a lawsuit in the state and have asked the courts to declare the statute unconstitutional.

The plaintiffs include two married heterosexuals who say they risk prosecution, a woman who fears eviction because her lease prohibits illegal activity, a gay law student who fears being dismissed, a divorced gay man who fears losing his right to visit his children, and a group of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered lawyers and law students.

According to the MCLU, 18 states still have sodomy statutes, down from all 50 in 1961. In five of those states, the law applies only to Gays [editor’s note: Oklahoma is one of those with laws only directed at Gay people]. The American Civil Liberties Union has been fighting to repeal sodomy laws in 25 states, while courts have overturned them in others. In one of the most recent cases, an appeals court in Texas voided that state’s sodomy law two weeks ago.

Attorney General Mike Hatch was out of state and unavailable for comment on the lawsuit, said his spokesman, Leslie Sandberg.

Tom Prince, executive director of the Minnesota Family Council, which has helped fight off attempts to repeal the law at the Legislature, said the law should stay on the books. He criticized the MCLU for filing the lawsuit. “They’re trying to do an end run by getting the courts to strike it down instead of going through the appropriate channel, which is the Legislature,” Frichard said.
**Health Officials to Focus Gay Needs**

**BOSTON** (AP) - Boston public health officials have agreed to try to better meet the needs of the city’s Gay community by collecting data on illnesses, raising awareness of health issues and seeking funding for new programs. Their decision follows the lead of other big U.S. cities, where officials have already taken action to address the health needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender residents.

“There is clear data that shows there are health differences between the Gay and larger communities,” said Stephen Boswell, executive director of the Fenway Community Health Center, which serves a high percentage of Boston’s Gay population. “If those problems are addressed, we can make a significant impact.

At a conference held in Boston in May, officials from public health agencies around the country cited studies showing Gays are at risk for a range of health problems, including depression, breast cancer and substance abuse.

After years of focusing solely on HIV and AIDS, Boston’s public health officials decided soon after the conference to develop a more efficient way to deal with the community’s other pressing needs, said John Auerbach, executive director of the Boston Health Commission.

“This is the first time the health department has acknowledged it needs to specifically address the health needs of the Gay community,” he said. “This is a significant step forward.”

Health departments in New York, Chicago and San Francisco have already created offices to deal specifically with Gay health issues. Officials in Seattle have developed a specialized campaign to vaccinate Gay men for hepatitis.

**Feds to Fund AIDS Vaccine Search**

**WASHINGTON** (AP) - Four new partnerships were announced by a federal health agency Tuesday to provide funding to groups attempting to bring an AIDS vaccine to market.

These partnerships, called HIV vaccine design and development teams, were prompted by a presidential directive to increase public-private cooperation in developing vaccines to major diseases, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the section of the National Institutes of Health that set up the deals.

“Many vaccines in use today resulted from both government-sponsored and private research,” said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of NIAID.

The awards are incentive-based, aimed at teams that have a vaccine in development but have not yet reached human testing. The teams will receive funds as they achieve preset goals.

- Three U.S. companies - Advanced BioScience Laboratories in Kensington, Md.; Chiron Corporation in Emeryville, Calif.; and Wyeth Lederle Vaccines and Nutrition in Pearl River, N.Y. - as well as a consortium of Australian universities led by the University of New South Wales all have different tactics on how to create a serum that will protect humans from HIV infection, which causes AIDS.

**Pride from p. 1**

While Louisans left immediately after the parade to fly out of the city, Cammermeyer spoke briefly in the rain, noting that the really might have preferred not to come to Tulsa, thinking that it might not really be safe or welcoming, but that the parade and the need to come to Tulsa for precisely that reason.

Another group which received great attention was ORU.out.com, a new Lesbian and Gay alumni organization for Oral Roberts University (ORU). While Gay alumni groups exist around the country, ORU.out.com is unusual in that ORU has a policy of banning Gays as students, faculty or staff. Regardless, the group numbered about 20 and group organizer, Jeff McKissic notes that about 60 people have gotten involved.

Organizers of the Parade and Festival, Tulsa Oklahomans for Human Rights estimated that some 3,000 participated or attended.

More than 100,000 march in Paris Gay Pride parade

**PARIS** (AP) - In a festive celebration of Gay pride, more than 100,000 people marched and danced on the last weekend in June through the streets of Paris behind a giant banner with the slogan for this year’s parade: “Homophobia - a social plague.”

French Education Minister Jack Lang and the Socialist Party’s mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi, were among the politicians that kicked off Gay Pride 2000 behind dozens of motorcyclists from the Gay Bikers Club.

Rainbow-colored flags waved under overcast skies as the parade wound from southern Paris to its destination at the Place de la Bastille, near the city’s Gay district. Booming techno and disco music played as drag queens and other elaborately costumed men and women danced on colorful floats and along the sidelines of the parade. Police estimated the crowd size at between 100,000 and 130,000 people, while organizers said that 250,000 people turned out for the event.

Coinciding with the weekend of the parade, Social Affairs Minister Martine Aubry said the government planned to introduce new laws outlawing discrimination against homosexuals. Aubry said she had not received any news of the new legislation would appear as an amendment to a “social modernization” bill currently going through Parliament.

**Denver Pride Draws 100,000**

**DENVER** (AP) - More than 100,000 attended Denver PrideFest 2000. The festival, organized by the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Community Services Center, is in its 10th year. No violence was reported during the parade between Cheesman Park and Civic Center Park that featured 160 floats. The festival also featured 230 booths and a family zone with the signs: “drug-, alcohol-, hate-free zone.”

Activists told a crowd at the Civic Center that good people standing up to bigotry, not legislation, will protect Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals from violence.

“In every case, a mass mobilization of people changed the political climate,” said Leslie Feinberg, author of “Transgender Warriors” and “Stone Butch Blues.”

**Gay Pride Elsewhere**

- **SAN FRANCISCO** (AP) - A rollicking Gay pride parade replete with dancing "nuns," all-male cheerleading squads and drag queens in stilettos attracted a half-million revelers as it made its way from the waterfront to City Hall.

- As David Ellard watched the procession, see Pride, p. 8

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Raging Lesbian: Coming Out

by Karin Gregory

Even the words evoke an ominous, almost surreal scene, like the Great and Powerful Wizard, whose deep, sonorous echoes resounded throughout the room. In my case, my 44-year-old self was assembled from the ground up, and I couldn't hear the echo even if I tried. I finally sprang up, machete in hand, ready to tell everyone that I was Lesbian! Well, two or three people, anyway.

Because I didn't know what was all involved in "coming out." I had no good role models to speak of in that area. And don't tell me Melissa Etheridge and Ellen DeGeneres - because famous people will always speak and don't have to repeat themselves. I, on the other hand, have two close friends individually and hear such remarks as: "Oh, I always knew that!"; "Yeah, I was wondering when you were going to tell me," and the ever-popular: "YES! We knew it! We win the bet!"

Umm, friends, if you knew it for so long, how come I JUST found out? You could have let me in on it! (Best friend's note: I tried! You just don't sit someone in that area. And don't easily slip out, machete ready to tell everyone that I was Lesbian!)

When your mantra for a summer is "She's just my friend, she's just friend, she's just friend," she's not JUST your friend.

-Karin Gregory

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PSO
Public Service Company of Oklahoma
aMUSEments

by Jim Christjohn, entertainment editor

Some of you might ask, "What's he chuckling about this time?" And well you might, run, don't walk, to see Chicken Run. Created by "Wallace and Gromit" impresario Nick Parks, this rollicking comedy about chickens dreaming of a better place, far away from the concentration camp chicken farm they're in, is a witty, intelligent film.

I have had my suspicions about Nicks family status given some subtle references in the Wallace & Gromit shorts (available on video, and well worth it, such as Gromit (a dog) knitting a rainbow striped sweater. The Wallace and Gromit shorts are guaranteed to cheer up the most depressed person in the world, and watch for the subtle touches he puts in, like the newspaper headlines in the papers the characters read.

While the films are claymation, they are not children's films. With Chicken Run, the reality of what happens to chickens who don't lay their share of eggs is brought home in an unflinchingly touching way. And yes, you will relate to the characters -- and never look at chicken pot pies the same way again.

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KD Lang

KD Lang's new CD is a delight. Remember those lazy weekends when mom (in some case, you) would put her favorite records on the changer in the late 60's early 70's Barbra Streisand's "Stoney End", and Sergio Mendes' Brazil '66 come to mind. Well, KD has taken that sound and updated it in a seriously cosmically groovy kinda way. The album's theme is a summer fling that grows into a bit more, a serious thing.

And it is the perfect album for a cloudy Sunday afternoon with your loved one, your summertime fling, or even an imaginary lover. The album's title is "Invisible Summer," and La Lang has never sounded better. The album progresses with the nervous, first contact, first date, first time. The memories may be buried deep, but it's there somewhere! The albums builds to a quieter climax than one might imagine, as the seriousness of the relationship deepens.

"Love's Great Ocean" is a winner, and has a mysterious feel to it, but still manages to take the listener on a journey. The rest are pretty good love songs, pleasant to listen to and great for a dinner-progressing-to makeout album. The retro feel is great, and blends well into the music, capturing the feeling perfectly of some of my favorite songs remembered from childhood and beyond. Highly recommended. It's a great companion piece to Melissa Etheridge's darker "Breakdown". With Melissa, you cover the darker cynical moments, with La Lang, the bright sunny day moments.

I caught Arturo Brachetti on a guest appearance on Drew Carey, and yes, he's family, and yes, he's fantastic. Well worth going to see what he's got up his sleeve! Check prior column for dates.

And next month, the Rent interviews!

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Are You Gay or Bisexual?

Are You Native American?
The probability that you die from AIDS when you are 15 today is over 50% in these countries," Piot told a press conference. "We are going into societies where there are more people in their 60's and 70's than there are in their 40's and 30's," he said. "This is unheard of.

In Washington, the Peace Corps announced a worldwide campaign to push similar measures — training its 2,400 volunteers in Africa in prison reform and forming a 200-member "crisis corps" to help educate communities. "There is no option for any organization working in this region other than to play a role in helping these countries confront the HIV/AIDS crisis," Peace Corps Director Mark Thurman said in a recent statement.

Cambodia, which has the highest rate of infection in Asia at 4.4%, is copying Thailand's successful campaign of prevention coupled with locally produced alternatives to high-cost anti-AIDS drugs has halved the number of deaths and led to huge savings in hospital bills, the report said.

In the West and in Europe, the impact of treatment has been spectacular," Piot said. "Mortality has really collapsed. There is a longer and better life for people with AIDS." On the Net: http://www.unaids.org

In renewing his plea for suspending the law until the central issues go to trial, Stanley argued that there is real harm that could result from the fact that tax money would be spent on providing rights and benefits to same-sex couples. Permitting unions to go forward that may in the future led us to a ruling unpopular with the courts. But Rehnquist wrote, "the forced inclusion of groups that do not want to be included infringes the group's freedom of association and a policy of allowing only some groups to accept women members would therefore, abridge no constitutional right.

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Piot said one of the reasons for the explosion of cases in southern Africa is the legacy of apartheid, which separated the races, leading to huge savings in hospital bills, the report said.

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Gay Studies: Cut or Uncut?
by Lamont Lindstrom, Ph.D.

Is it the unkishest cut? That's what a foreskin-challenged writer to Dear Abby recently claimed. He bitterly reproached his mom for letting him be circumcised — a condition he blamed for his regrettable shortcomings in bed.

Circumcision is a body modification ritual that has fascinated anthropologists. People everywhere redesign their bodies. Modification may be as simple as a haircut and a shave, or more invasive foot-binding, ear-piercing, head-molding, tattooing, or scarring. Modifying the body carries social and personal meaning. Individuals may remake themselves — and how they think about themselves — by altering their bodies. These alterations have social implications as well. We usually know what to think when we see someone dieting, or sporting a new tattoo, or a tongue piercing, or a shaved head. Humans modify lots of body parts - elbows, fingers, chins, bellies — but it's no surprise that many societies have fixated upon the foreskin. Like earlobes, foreskins are easily pierced, sliced, or cut away without much endangering human functioning. Unlike earlobes, however, foreskins attach to the chief organ of male pleasure and reproduction. Many cultures have elaborated the powerful symbolic uses of snipping off a piece of men's genitals.

Circumcision is often the key component of male initiation rituals, as it is on Tanna, an island in the South Pacific where I lived for some years. The Tannese gather their sons between the ages of six and twelve and lead them away to a secret forest to be snipped. Traditionally, boys were cut with bamboo knives — their foreskins sliced down the top — an superincision rather than a circumcision. Nowadays, island fathers and uncles might take the boys down to a local dime for a full-blown Western circumcision.

The loss of foreskin marks the boy's journey into manhood. Fijian kids tease boys who are yet to be circumcised. They call them a name that means something like "pulls back skin." A Presbyterian missionary from New Zealand lived on Tanna in the 1960s with his triplet sons. My island friends were scandalized that these boys remained uncircumcised as they approached their teen years. Every time the boys wandered by, they knew local men were pondering bamboo knives. New Zealanders, like most people in the world, leave their foreskins alone. Circumcision is uncommon in Europe, Asia, and Latin America and is disappearing in Australia and Canada. We Americans share the ritual mostly with sundry Pacific Islanders and Australian Aborigines, peoples of the Middle East (notably Jews and Arabs), and various northern and central African societies.

Artistic depictions of circumcision in Egypt dated to 4500 years ago suggest that the ritual has a long history. But Americans haven't been snipping foreskins for very long. Early medical science of the late 19th century seized on the operation as a cure for excessive masturbation and also to treat an odd collection of other conditions. Once circumcision became part of the modern medical toolkit, doctors were loath to give it up. They invented a series of spurious rationales for the operation. The latest defense of circumcision argues that uncircumcised men are three to eight times more likely (different studies give different numbers) to catch HIV. The virus — so says this hypothesis — attaches itself more readily to cells that have been kept tender underneath a foreskin.

Whether or not this latest medical rationale for circumcision holds up, cutting has powerful social meanings that go far beyond the merely hygienic. Just why do we mess with foreskins? Is this a male attempt to appropriate natural female fertility? Men bleed their genitals to mimic menstruation? Or are men concerned to drain away dangerous female blood from their family line — as a mark of loyalty to their tribe? Or do boys undergo symbolic castration as a price they pay fathers to join the men? Anthropologists have proposed all these explanations.

It's pretty clear that in 20th century America circumcision became a marker of class and status. Only people with money could afford doctors and genital surgery. And only trendy parents who supported mainstream beliefs about public hygiene would accept new scientific rationalizations for the operation. Circumcision rates were far higher among the urban and the wealthy than they were among poorer, rural, immigrant, or minority-group families. Middle-class white boys carried on their bodies the mark of their family's status claims.

By the 1940s, the medical industry had captured control of childbirth. A majority of women went into hospital to give birth. And for the first time a majority of American boys were circumcised. Circumcision rates peaked at around 85% in the 1970s. Since then, these numbers have dropped — as an anthropologist would predict — down to 60% in the mid 1990s. When everyone shares the same practice, that practice no longer serves to create distinctions of class and status among us. The fact that many HMOs nowadays force parents to pay for the operation actually spares many sons' foreskins.

Still, being cut continues to symbolize "clean," "healthy," and "modern." Much of America. Until these meanings erode, it's likely that many of us will yet be able to hold our heads up high, should we happen to run into any teasting Pacific island boys.

Lamont Lindstrom teaches anthropology at the University of Tulsa.
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Joseph + His Dreamcoat
by Jim Christian, entertainment editor
Sam Harris returns to Tulsa as Joseph in the Arkansas Repertory Theatre Arts' production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat". Headed up a cast of thousands of locals - well, ok, maybe not quite thousands, but it's a pretty long cast list.

The cast includes John Orsulak and Patrick Hobbs, members of the Council Oak Men's Chorale's (we really need a good acronym here!) and formerly Finales, along with David Hubbard, Kathy LaFortune, Brad Gillespie, Larry Gray, and Eric Cornell (an actor and singer to watch, as he's got a lotta talent, and he's dedicated to performing enough to go far). Directed by New York's Jon Grecki, the musical is a lively rethinking of the biblical tale of Joseph and his jealous brothers.

Sam Harris, a Sand Springs native, left home at 15 to pursue the dream of performing on Broadway. Everyone knows about Star Search, and the recording career that followed. His latest endeavors have included the critically acclaimed "In the Life," a Broadway musical; Grease on Broadway, and his latest CD, "Revival," a return to his pop and soul roots. He also wrote the TBS sitcom "Down to Earth.

More importantly, the woman with her arms around me was the woman I wanted to be with. My heart was telling me this was right, true, and just. Then the song ended, and that insidious thing called my brain took over. Years of living in the Bible Belt made me once again think too much, and I acted straight again. Which is funny since I obviously don't know from straight. Too many missed opportunities later, and my inextricable love affair with Marilyn (I didn't think about this at the time!) ended when she moved away.

Want to get involved?
Need to get tested for HIV or AIDS? Call 743-GAYS (4297)
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TULSA FAMILY NEWS, July 2000, page 11
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