

# OUTBOUND NEWS

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**J**oseph Epstein, noted essayist and author, once wrote, "All men and women are born, live suffer and die; what distinguishes us one from another is our dreams, whether they be dreams about worldly or unworldly things, and what we do to make them come about... We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents. We do not choose our historical epoch, the country of our birth, or the immediate circumstances of our upbringing. We do not, most of us, choose to die; nor do we choose the time and conditions of our death. But within this realm of choicelessness, we do choose how we live."

He's right, of course. Life is all about choices. Every day we make myriad choices, from the mundane (What will I eat for

breakfast?), to the momentous (Should I come out?).

In 1970, Epstein caused a firestorm of controversy when he wrote a cover story for Harper's magazine titled: "Homo/Hetero: The Struggle For Sexual Identity." In the article, Epstein wrote: "If I had the power to do so, I would wish homosexuality off the face of this earth." He went on to say, "I do think homosexuality an anathema, and hence homosexuals cursed, and thus the importance, for me if for no one else, of my defining a homosexual as someone who has physical relations, for it leaves room for my admiration for the man who is pulled toward homosexuality and resists, at what psychic price I cannot hope even to begin to imagine."

In other words, if you "give in" to the pull of homosexuality, you

are cursed, but if you resist that choice then you're okay. Despite the fact that Epstein is a proud Jewish man, this is a common belief held by many in the Religious Right. They believe that homosexuality is a choice.

This belief is at the core of the debate over gay rights. Should gays be allowed to marry? Should gays be protected from discrimination? Is being gay a sin? It all boils down to one question: Is being gay a choice?

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There is no definitive answer to this, but a growing body of scientific evidence may be pointing to a genetic or, at the very least, biological basis for sexual orientation. According to the American Psychological Association's website, "There are numerous theories about the origins of a person's sexual orientation; most scientists today agree that sexual orientation is most likely the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors. In most people, sexual orientation is shaped at an early age. There is also considerable recent evidence to suggest that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, play a significant role in a person's sexuality. In summary, it is important to recognize that there are probably many reasons for a person's sexual orientation and the reasons may be different for different people."

*Born for Love - page 15*

## Prevention Still the Key

By Prevention Still the Key

Those of us who witnessed the emergence of the AIDS epidemic during the 1980s remember the stigma associated with infection and the tragic neglect of those who fell ill. We remember callous politicians who would not even acknowledge the crisis or - when they did - advocated quarantine. We remember those we have lost and we remember the heroes who brought our community together.

For both good and bad, a lot has changed since then. We've seen organizations and institutions build and grow - helping to provide care and treatment for those living with the disease. We've witnessed breakthroughs in medications allowing people to live long healthy lives. We've seen awareness rise but face continued misperceptions and discrimination.

One thing hasn't changed. Nearly twenty-five years after the first cases of AIDS were detected, we still have no cure - no proven vaccine. We still face 40,000 new infections every year in this country because many people still do not think they are at risk for contracting HIV.

With news of a possible new, more virulent strain in the United States, this is a new era of the epidemic that desperately needs new approaches. We need a redoubled effort to create new prevention strategies, marshal the best research, provide thorough care and treatment and deal with the pandemic on the global level.

While all of the facts are not in, these developments remind us how important prevention is - no matter what kinds of new strains may develop. Whether a new strain materializes or not, we must never lose focus on preventing the spread of any form of HIV.

*Continued - page 15*

### Cyndi Lauper & Kate Clinton at 40th Anniv. GLBT Civil Rights Celebration in Philadelphia



Cyndi Lauper will headline the free afternoon concert at the National Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the GLBT Civil Rights Movement at Independence Hall on Sunday, May 1.

*Cyndi Lauper - page 10*

### Child Welfare Official Accuses Gay Groups of Endorsing Pedophilia



(St. Petersburg, FL) - A member of the Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board has a pair of nationally recognized gay and lesbian advocacy

groups up in arms for saying the groups endorse sex between youths and adults.

*Child Welfare Official Accuses - page 14*

### Jury Awards Thousands to Former Lesbian UPS Worker



(San Francisco, CA) - An openly lesbian former United Parcel Service (UPS) worker was awarded \$63,000 this week in her hostile work environment sexual

harassment suit against the world's largest package delivery company.

*Jury Awards - page 6*

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