

LAS VEGAS

Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 25, ISSUE 31

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

December 9, 2004

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

'Bugchasing' distorting myth of HIV infection

By Makebra M. Anderson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — They spend hours on the Internet looking for the right mate. They use such expressions as "Breed me," "Welcome me into the brotherhood" and "Convert me" to find the right man. They cruise neighborhoods, bars and clubs in search of Mr. Right. It doesn't matter if he's tall or short, rich or poor. All that matters is his status. No, not his economic status — his health status. They are looking for a man who is HIV-positive. And when they find him, they deliberately want to get infected by him.

As incredulous as that might seem, law enforcement and health officials confirm that "bug chasers" — people who become HIV-infected on purpose — exist. More than merely exist, they have their own Web sites where they communicate with one another.

On one site, for example, an African-American man, 34, from New Jersey identifies himself as a "bug chaser." His screen name is "Vertical." He claims to be HIV-negative, but wants to become HIV-positive, preferably by "a down to earth, cool dude with nice thighs."

Another African-American man who calls himself "Relentless" says he is also a "bug chaser." He says he is a 41-year-old New Yorker who is HIV negative. Others on the site include "Blksexyfreak," a 30-year-old Black man from Detroit, and "Jayson," 35, an African-American from San Francisco. They both claim to be HIV-positive and are givers and chasers of the bug.

"Bug chasing" (people who want to become infected with HIV) and "gift giving" (people who give someone HIV) is only a tiny section of gay men," says Walter Armstrong, Editor-in-Chief of POZ magazine, a publication for people living with HIV. "Of the few men we've interviewed, many are young gay men who are on drugs and they get slipped into the elaborate Internet sex hook up stuff and they really don't know very much about the reality of what it means to have HIV."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, HIV-related illness and death has historically affected men who sleep with men more than it has any other group, though Black women are increasingly infected through heterosexual relations. In 2000, according to the CDC, 13,562 (42 percent) of new AIDS cases were reported among men who sleep with men, compared with 8,531 (25 percent) among injection drug users and 6,530 (33 percent) among men and women who acquired HIV heterosexually. No one has reliable figures on "bug chasers" and there is concern about their mental stability.

"Psychologically we need to look at these behaviors. There are two things — conscious and unconscious intentions. The younger generation of gay men has not been as much affected by grief and losses because of HIV as the older generation," says Antoine Douaihy, medical director of Addiction Medicine Services at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic in Pittsburgh. "There is a sense of a lack of connection. They [bug chasers] are reaching out for some kind of intimacy. They want to feel accepted and

(See Bugchasers, Page 5)

Supreme Court rejects KKK case

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court passed up a chance Monday to consider if states can ban members of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups from wearing masks at public gatherings.

Justices without comment rejected an appeal from an offshoot of the KKK whose members wear White robes, hoods and masks.

The Church of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan had challenged as unconstitutional a New York law that allows loitering charges against someone who is "masked or in any manner disguised by unusual or unnatural attire or facial alteration."

American Civil Liberties Union attorney Beth Haroules, representing the church and some church members, told justices that people have been allowed to demonstrate with masks before in New York without facing arrest.

"Even the most reviled



members of our society are entitled to the fair and even-handed application of the law," she wrote in the appeal.

The church describes itself as a descendant of the original Klan, and Haroules said members want to be masked "to reinforce and to convey dramatically its message of White separatism and White pride."

New York city attorney

Michael Cardozo told justices that masquerade parties are acceptable, but that other events with masked people create public safety hazards. He said members can wear robes and hoods, but not masks that cover their faces.

The church had lost at the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. "While the First Amendment protects the rights of citizens to ex-

press their viewpoints, however unpopular, it does not guarantee ideal conditions for doing so," the appeals court said in a ruling earlier this year. The Klan members sued for the right to wear masks after a 1999 event in Manhattan in which they assembled without them.

The case is Church of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan v. Kelly, 04-223.

Watt to lead Congressional Black Caucus

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Mel Watt, a North Carolina Democrat whose document condemning the war with Iraq became policy for the Congressional Black Cau-

cus, was elected the group's leader Monday.

He pledged to pursue more frequent meetings with the White House.

"My attitude would be to

treat this new election as a possibility of a new beginning and to aggressively say to the president, 'We would like to reinstate our regular meetings with you if you

would be willing to do that," Watt said.

Despite that olive branch to the Republican White House, Watt gave little signal the all-Democratic group of Black lawmakers would change its historically left-leaning policies.

Even if the Democratic Party finds the need to reinvent itself after last month's losses, Watt said he didn't expect a metamorphosis for the caucus.

"I'm sure political activism will be part of the Congressional Black Caucus' agenda," he said.

The caucus next year will have 43 members, including 42 House lawmakers and incoming Senate freshman Barack Obama, D-Ill.

Watt was unanimously elected chairman for a two-year term beginning in January, succeeding Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md.

One of Congress' more outspoken Bush critics, Rep. (See CBC, Page 3)



ARTISTS OF DESTINY

Artists honor Century Award Winner Stevie Wonder (second from left) at the 2004 Billboard Music Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Wednesday. Joining Wonder on stage were (left to right) Diana Ross, Quincy Jones, Mary J. Blige and Michelle Williams, Kelly Rowland and Beyonce Knowles of Destiny's Child.

(See story and additional photos on Page 9)