

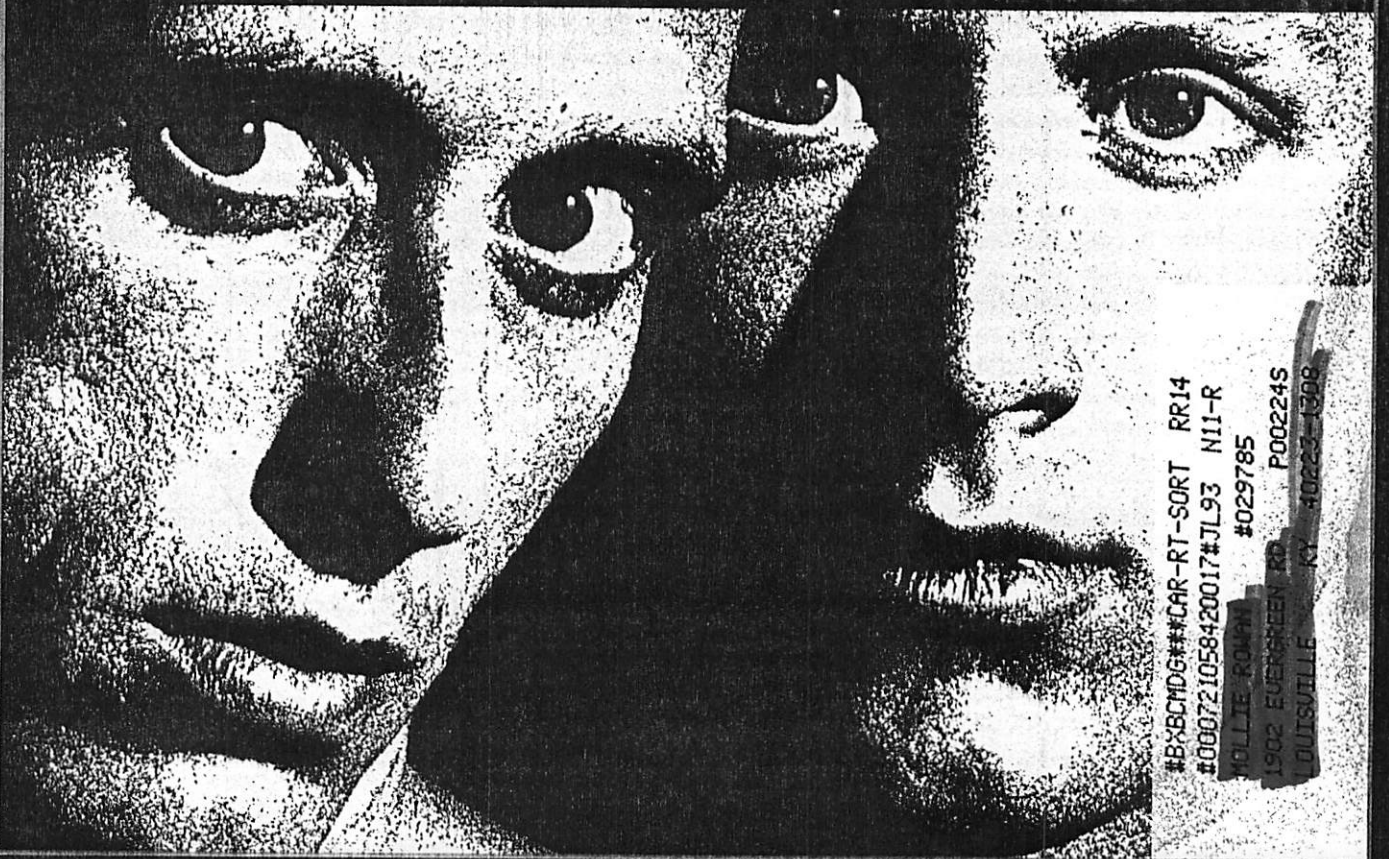
**AFTER THE HURRICANE**  
Lessons for the Next Disaster

# Newsweek®

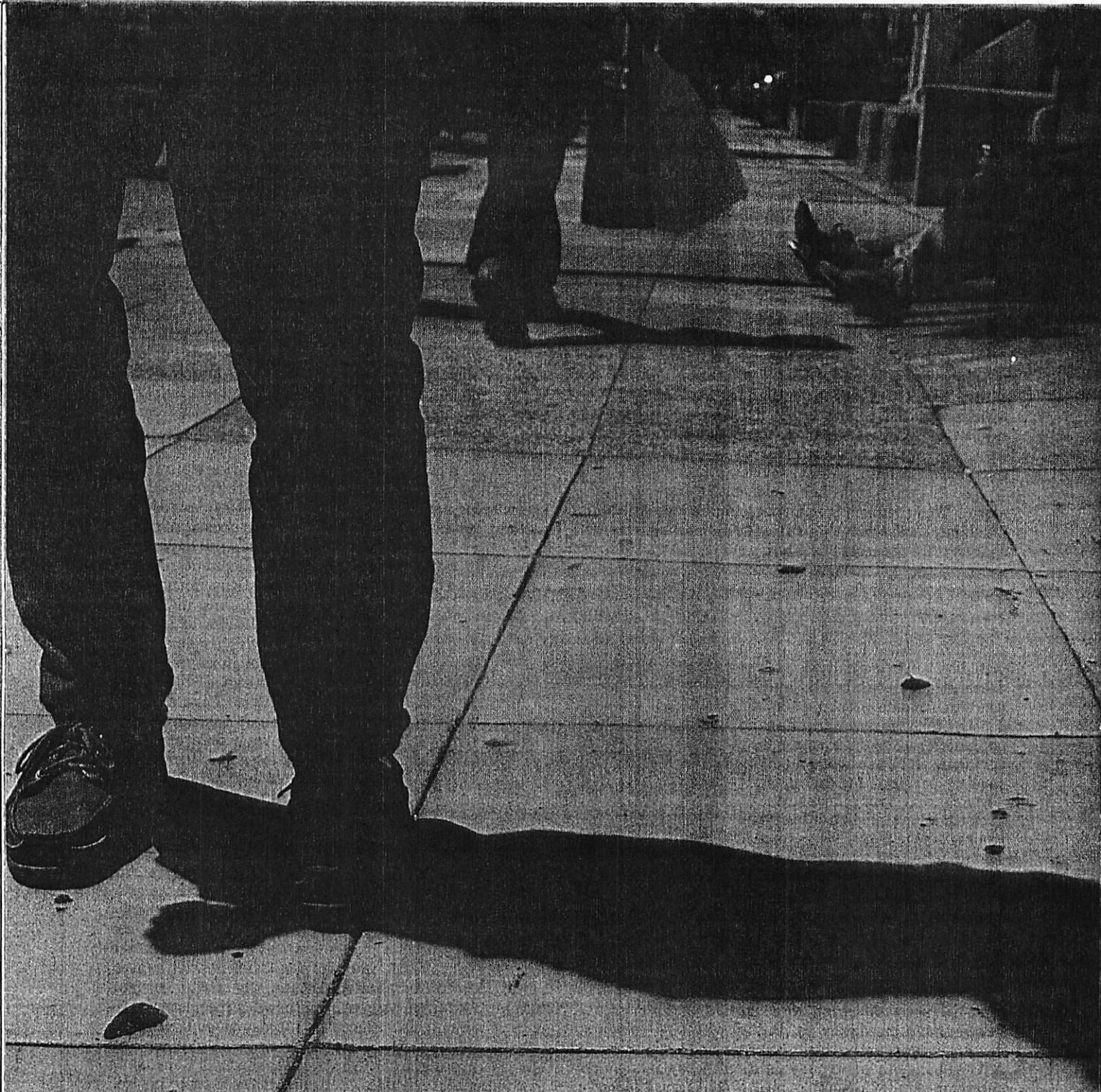
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# GAYS UNDER FIRE

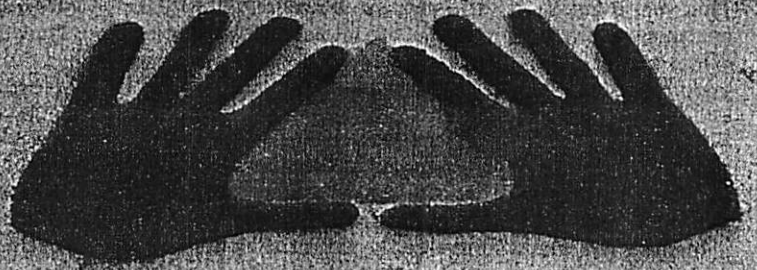
What America Thinks — A Newsweek Poll



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A QUEER WAS



BASHED HERE

Homosexuals face an angry new backlash in city halls, school boards and the workplace. How far will public tolerance go?

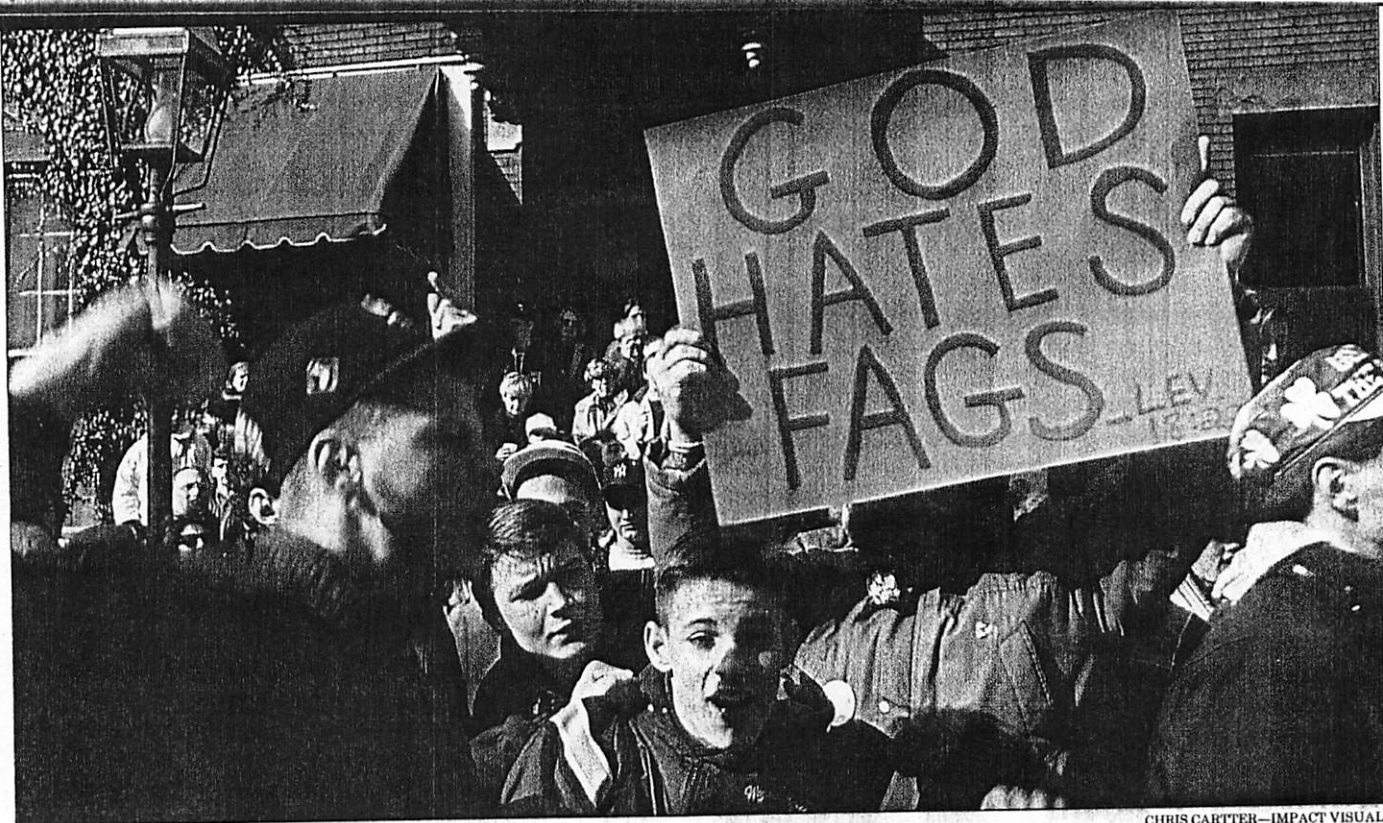
# GAYS Under Fire

**P**eter O'Donnell, a city councilor in Portland, Maine, had seen enough. In the early morning hours last Feb. 2, Benjamin Kowalsky, a 33-year-old community-development worker suffering from AIDS, was chased down and attacked by three rock-throwing youths who yelled, "Hey faggot, we're going to get you." Ten days later another gay man was severely beaten by a gang of 10 men. This time police collared some of the assailants, but the victim declined to press charges for fear of losing his job. After eight other attacks, O'Donnell introduced an ordinance barring anti-gay discrimination in housing, employment and credit. The city council passed it by a 7-1 vote on May 12.

The reaction was swift and angry. Within three weeks a group called Concerned Portland Citizens gathered 2,000 signatures—enough to put the issue to a November referendum. Organizers claim the ordinance will send the city of 61,500 down a slippery slope of gay promiscuity, AIDS and pedophilia. The Christian Civic League of Maine, another group fighting the law, called it "the most critically significant moral issue facing Maine people, probably in the history of our state." O'Donnell is astonished. "It blows me away that people who profess to Christian values and family values take up shields and spears to defend discrimination."

Portland's lavender scare is no isolated case. Gay America's struggle for acceptance has reached a new and uncertain phase. A series of modest gains over the last several years—in civil rights, national political clout, funding for AIDS research and visibility in popular culture—has provoked a powerful backlash. A well-coordinated counteroffensive by the religious right is underway in city halls, school boards and state legislatures to stymie—and even roll back—what its

Leaving an imprint: At the site of an anti-gay attack in San Francisco



CHRIS CARTTER—IMPACT VISUALS

Trying to halt the modest gains of recent years: Homophobic signs were an ugly feature of the St. Patrick's Day parade in Boston

leaders regard as an intolerable gay advance out of the closet and into the social mainstream. In November, Oregon voters will be asked to classify homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse," and bar the state from passing any law protecting citizens on the basis of sexual orientation. A similar measure is on the fall ballot in Colorado. This month California Gov. Pete Wilson, under pressure from the fundamentalist wing of the state Republican Party, is expected to veto an anti-gay-discrimination bill for the second time in a year. For many gays, a symbolic low point came during the Republican National Convention in Houston last month, where repeated attacks on "the homosexual lifestyle" evoked images of moral decay and unraveling family life. Conservative Doberman Pat Buchanan told delegates that gay rights have no place "in a nation we still call God's country."

The blatant rhetoric only turned off most Americans, and Republican campaign strategists quickly backed President George Bush and his surrogates away from overt gay-bashing. But the public remains deeply ambivalent about gay and lesbian aspirations—torn between a basic impulse to be tolerant and a visceral discomfort with gay culture. A

NEWSWEEK Poll found that an overwhelming 78 percent of the public believes gay men and women should enjoy the same access to job opportunities as heterosexuals. By better than a two-thirds majority, those surveyed approve of health insurance and inheritance rights for gay spouses. But on issues closer to the emotional core of family life, the public senti-

ment cools. Only 32 percent believe gays should be able to adopt children; just 35 percent approve of legally sanctioned gay marriages. Fifty-three percent still don't consider homosexuality "acceptable" behavior. Asked whether gay rights was a threat to the American family and its values, 45 percent said yes.

For many gays and lesbians, the threats are more than rhetorical: anti-gay harassment and violence increased 31 percent last year in five major U.S. cities (New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and Minneapolis-St. Paul), according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Gay advocates acknowledge that an increased sense of social approval has made victims more likely to report incidents. But they also say that the escalating numbers don't describe the qualitative change in the violence. Drive-by slurs and egg-tossings have given way with more frequency to nail-studded baseball bats and switchblades. "You've got people who get picked up outside of a bar and tied up with duct tape and are beaten. They are sliced with razors," says Peg Yeates, leader of San Francisco's Street Patrol, a Guardian Angels-style organization. The new attacks take a range of forms, from fundamentalist gay-bashing to ridicule in the workplace.

#### NEWSWEEK POLL

Should homosexuals have equal rights in job opportunities?

78% Yes 17% No

Is homosexuality an acceptable alternative lifestyle?

41% Yes 53% No

Are gay rights a threat to the American family and its values?

45% Yes 51% No

Which apply to you?

43% Have a friend or acquaintance who is gay  
20% Work with someone you know who is gay  
9% Have a gay person in your family

Should homosexuals be hired in each of the following occupations (percent saying yes):

83% Salesperson  
64% A member of the president's cabinet  
59% Armed forces  
59% Doctors  
54% High-school teachers  
51% Elementary-school teachers  
48% Clergy

NEWSWEEK Poll, Aug. 27, 1992

## Rage on the Right

It's possible to trace the right wing's anti-gay campaign to a bullwhip. It was photographed hanging from the late Robert Mapplethorpe's derrière and featured in his 1989 retrospective partially funded by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The bullwhip came at an opportune moment for the religious right. The Berlin wall and the contras had fallen; Reagan was a memory. Gay-bashing was always a staple for right-wing fund raisers. But taxpayer-subsidized dirty art—homosexual art, no less—kindled a new and lucrative source of outrage. Morris Chapman, president-elect of the 15 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, predicts that "in the 1990s homosexuality will be what the abortion issue has been in the 1980s."

For fundamentalists, the anti-gay animus is rooted in Biblical injunctions against same-sex unions. Corinthians promises that homosexuals (along with fornicators, idolaters, adulterers and thieves) shall never inherit the kingdom of God. Other conservatives are opposed to creating a class of people legally protected on the basis of sexual behavior they regard as abhorrent. "We surely love their souls," Jerry Falwell wrote in a 1991 letter to followers, describing his "national battle plan" to fight gay rights. "But we must awaken to their wicked agenda for America!"

Other familiar faces on the right are mobilizing as well. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition—with 2.2 million names in its computer files—will convene a meeting of a thousand activists in Virginia Beach, Va., this fall to discuss "the homosexual-rights agenda and how to defeat it," according to executive director Ralph Reed. The Rev. Lou Sheldon, a former Robertson protégé whose Anaheim-based Traditional Values Coalition has affiliates in 15 states and a web of interrelated fund-raising arms, pushed for the 1989 repeal of gay-rights ordinances in Irvine and Concord, Calif. Last month he helped force California educators to withdraw proposed sex-education and health-curriculum guidelines that described "families headed by parents of the same sex" as "part of contemporary society." He's also coordinating an attempt to block congressional approval of a law that would allow unmarried District of Columbia employees (gay and straight) to register as partners and enroll in city-sponsored health-care plans. "We're just protecting the heterosexual ethic," he says.

## NEWSWEEK POLL

How do you feel about each of the following homosexual rights?

	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE
Health insurance for gay spouses	67%	27%
Inheritance rights for gay spouses	70%	25%
Social security for gay spouses	58%	35%
Legally sanctioned gay marriages	35%	58%
Adoption rights for gay spouses	32%	61%

In general, how important is the issue of gay rights to your presidential vote?

40% Very, or somewhat important  
57% Not too, or not at all important

Do you think the candidates have:

	CLINTON	BUSH
Gone too far in supporting gay rights	16%	5%
A position that is about right	44%	41%
Gone too far in opposing gay rights	3%	27%

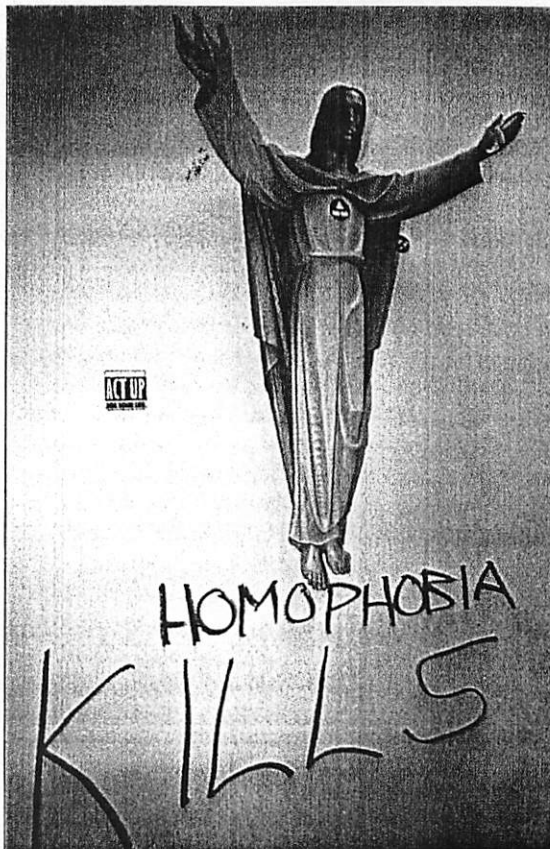
For this NEWSWEEK Poll, The Gallup Organization interviewed 547 registered voters by phone Aug. 27, 1992. Margin of error +/- 5 percentage points. "Don't know" and other responses not shown. The NEWSWEEK Poll © 1992 by NEWSWEEK, Inc.

## Backlash at the Ballot Box

The most bitter battleground is Oregon, where a movement heavily financed by Christian fundamentalists is attempting to all but codify gays and lesbians out of existence. A petition drive by the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA) has produced Ballot Measure 9, which would void portions of the state's hate-crimes law and invali-

### A cultural war: Graffiti in a New York hospital

MARK PETERSON—JB PICTURES



date the phrase "sexual orientation" in any statute where it now appears. It also requires educators to set curriculum standards equating homosexuality with pedophilia, sadism and masochism as behaviors "to be discouraged and avoided." Despite new scientific evidence that homosexuality may have genetic origins, OCA members talk openly of "curing" gays.

Gays and lesbians, fearing they'll be effectively stripped of their citizenship, are fighting desperately. "If we lose, we lose everything," says Donna Red Wing of Portland's Lesbian Community Project. "Our children could be taken from us, our lives could be wiped out at the ballot box." Despite big-name opposition, from Rep. Les AuCoin to the Roman Catholic Church to Gov. Barbara Roberts, state political experts give the measure an even chance of passage.

The campaign has spawned a mean season in a state with a national image for tolerance and progressive politics. Opponents of the measure have documented an escalating volume of violence, burglaries and verbal intimidation. In the rural southern Oregon town of Wolf Creek, Dean Decent says violence against him and eight other gay men in the area has grown more brazen. "Now that the homophobes have blown up the car and shot at the trailer, when they drive by and yell it doesn't seem so bad," says Decent, a 32-year-old professional quilt maker. Unlikely alliances have formed. In an emotional meeting recently, gay activists and migrant farm workers in the Willamette Valley shared stories about racism and homophobia, pledging to support one another's struggles. Fear has bolted some closet doors but opened others. The Rev. Gary Wilson, of Portland's Metropolitan Community Church, says gay parishioners are "sitting down writing letters to everybody they know that they've never come out to saying, 'I am a gay person, I am a lesbian person; if you support Measure 9, you're destroying my life.'"

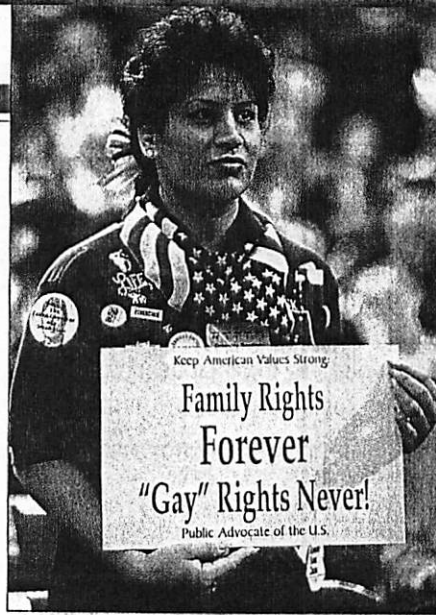
A new strain of gay-bashing has entered local races in other states. Six months ago Dick Mallory was a pro-choice Texas

**NATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Republican courting gay votes in his campaign to unseat state Rep. Glen Maxey, the only openly gay member of the state legislature. Mallory recently ran radio ads in the Austin area asking voters if they want to be represented by "an avowed homosexual." Mallory says he's found Christ. Maxey argues that he's found a Republican consultant. Perhaps the most virulent gay-baiting campaign is in Kansas. Supporters of Baptist minister Fred Phelps, who lost the August Democratic senatorial primary to state legislator Gloria O'Dell, continue to picket the Topeka streets with signs reading BULL DIKE (sic) O'DELL and NO SPECIAL LAWS FOR FAGS. O'Dell, 46, says she's heterosexual.

**Closet in the Office**

Some private employers have tried to minimize homophobia in the workplace, offering bias workshops and opportunities for gay employees to meet. A smaller handful have established spousal benefit programs for same-sex couples. But office culture still can be a bleak frontier. Gay workers tread warily, coming out to a trusted few, usually remaining closeted to higher-ups. Steven Greenberg and Mikael Hollinger, two gay administrative assist-

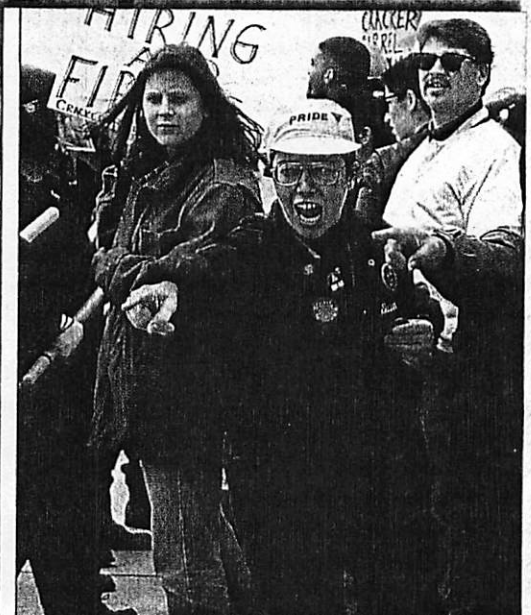


BILL GENTILE FOR NEWSWEEK

**'Not in God's country': GOP convention**

ants at San Francisco's Nestlé Beverage Co., would take lunch-hour walks down the city's Embarcadero to speak freely. Soon their strolls had mutated into a vicious office rumor—that they were having sex together in a company restroom.

Last March they were fired. Nestlé denies any anti-gay bias and says they were terminated for poor performance, al-



**Anti-gay sentiment often strikes at work:**

though Greenberg says he had been given a raise three weeks earlier. The two joined five other gay men last month in filing job-discrimination lawsuits against several San Francisco area employers, including Ricoh Corp. and Transworld Systems, alleging that they were harassed, ridiculed and dismissed because they were gay.

Even in companies that take gay-bash-

**Discrimination: The Limits of the Law**

Seven years ago Jeffrey Collins's professional future seemed solid. A 19-year veteran of Shell Oil, he was earning \$115,000 a year as a manager at a biotechnology subsidiary in California. But a simple oversight changed everything. After Collins left an invitation to a gay "safe sex" party in the photocopy room, officials summarily fired him. He took a job at a pet-shipping company for about one fifth of his former salary. Angry and humiliated, Collins filed a discrimination suit. Under a state labor law, he won a record \$5.3 million in damages last year.

Cheryl Summerville of Georgia wasn't so fortunate. She was among a dozen or more gay and lesbian workers fired last year from a Cracker Barrel restaurant, a chain with headquarters in Tennessee. Out of the blue, the company announced that it would no longer employ people "whose... fail to dem-

onstrate normal heterosexual values which have been the foundation of families in our society." With no gay anti-discrimination laws on the Georgia books, even the ACLU refused to represent Summerville in court. "What do you mean, I don't have a case," she told them. "How can they do this to me?"

Easy. Homosexuals have little legal recourse against even blatant bias. There is no federal law protecting gays and lesbians from losing their jobs, being evicted from their homes or being denied a bank loan because of sexual preference. For 15 years gay groups have lobbied unsuccessfully to amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act—



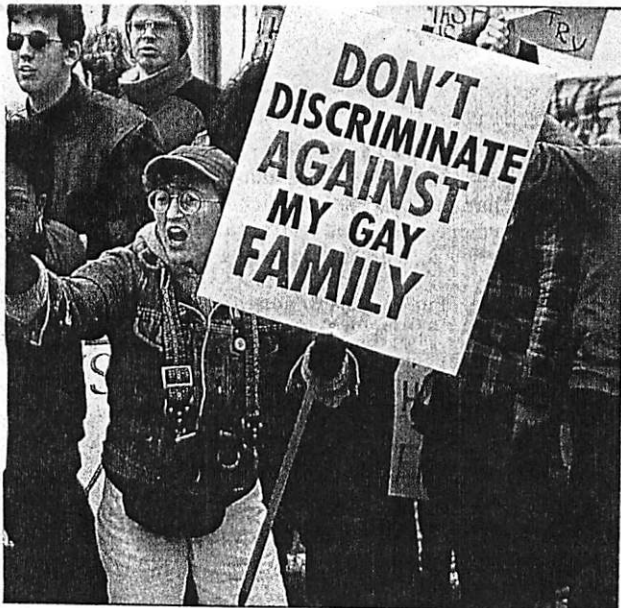
JAMES D. WILSON—NEWSWEEK

**Family ties: Petra Liljestraud and Alice Phillipson, daughter Maya**

which bans bias based on race, ethnicity, gender and religion—to include sexual orientation. Only six states and about 110 municipalities have statutes barring discrimination against gays. The resulting patchwork of state and local laws has produced a situation notable chiefly for its confusion and inconsistency. "A federal anti-discrimination law is desperately needed," says Paul F. Wotman, a San Francisco attorney with a large gay practice.

Advocates of legal reform have achieved a measure of success in the area of domestic partnership laws, which apply equally to gay and unmarried straight couples. While no state recognizes gay marriage, about a dozen cities, including San Francisco, Seattle and Ithaca, N.Y., provide some level of benefits to the partners of municipal employees. A handful of private companies, including Levi Strauss and software giant Lotus Development, provide health benefits to gay partners. The AIDS cri-

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JIM WEST—IMPACT VISUALS

**Protest at a Cracker Barrel restaurant in Michigan**

ing seriously, the atmosphere among co-workers can be oppressive. When Nancy Logan worked as an auditor for a major Cleveland bank three years ago, a colleague would shake in a repulsed manner as she passed her desk. "Any time I walked into the ladies' room and she was there, she would walk out," says Logan. She complained to management, which

ence that included 108 openly gay delegates, alternates and party officials. Twenty-one states and 130 municipalities now offer gays and lesbians some form of legal protection against discrimination. An estimated 10,000 children are being raised by lesbians who conceived them through artificial insemination. Hollywood, which has lagged far behind televi-

transferred the other employee. But Logan says she was told that the only reason the company supported her was that she was "low key," in other words, not out. She quit shortly afterward and remains closeted in her new job.

**The Next Battle**

Even in the chill of resurgent gay-hating, there's a sense of victory at hand for many American gays and lesbians. The struggle against AIDS has matured into a broad political and social movement. Last July's Democratic National Convention symbolized the sea change: 13 pro-gay speakers addressed a Madison Square Garden audi-

sion in realistic portrayals of gays, is changing its act. At least six major gay or AIDS-themed films are in development, including Gus Van Sant's "The Mayor of Castro Street," about martyred San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk.

For some activists, the signs of greater acceptance make the new vehemence even more shocking. "It's reminded us of our precarious position in society, and just how deep homophobia runs," says Cathy Siemens, a Portland, Ore., real-estate agent. "Should we withdraw and protect ourselves or continue to march out of the closet?" Nearly all say no—that the backlash is affirmation of their new power and a last hurrah for the kind of blatant gay-bashing on display at the convention in Houston. "It's the bellows of dying elephants," says Peter Gomes, minister of Harvard University's Memorial Church.

If there's a consensus among gay political strategists, it's that the best defense is a good offense. In some cases, that means renewed "outings" of closeted public officials who have promoted anti-gay policies. The Advocate, a gay magazine, recently exposed a congressman with an anti-gay voting record. Others say that press atten-

sis has added an element of urgency to the push for such rights. The partners of gay men who die intestate often have no claim on property that would automatically go to a spouse; others are subject to eviction from their homes because their names aren't on the lease.

Conservatives say the push for gay rights is tantamount to one more form of affirmative action. That charge resonates in a political climate where minority groups seeking protection often are denounced as quotamongers. But gay activists insist they don't want special treatment, just equal consideration under the law.

Legally, gays occupy a sort of no man's land. Some conservatives have argued that gays shouldn't have civil-rights protections since their conduct is criminal in states with anti-sodomy laws—a total of 24, plus the District of Columbia. Over the last 30 years, similar laws have been repealed or invalidated in 23 states. But that campaign suf-

fered a setback in 1986, when the Supreme Court held 5-4 in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that prosecuting a Georgia gay couple for engaging in consensual sex in their own bedroom did not violate the federal right to privacy. Gay activists take little comfort in the fact that anti-sodomy laws rarely are enforced. "The problem with the sword of Damocles is not that it always falls on you," says Evan Wolfson, attorney with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. "The problem is that it's always hanging over you."

Many gay activists believe their best hope is in the courts, where women, blacks and other groups have secured their rights. Gays argue that they too have faced a history of discrimination. But so far courts have been reluctant to make sexual orientation a "suspect class" that, like race and to a slightly lesser extent gender, warrants legal protection.

To the frustration of the gay community, conservatives still control the legal-rights

### A Record of Gain—And Pain

- States with statutes outlawing sodomy (including nine that prohibit only homosexual sodomy): 24
- Gay and bisexual men who have died of AIDS since 1980: 91,789
- Openly gay elected officials nationwide—congressmen, judges, mayors, city councilors: 61
- Rise in anti-gay crimes reported between 1990 and 1991 in five major U.S. cities (New York, San Francisco, Boston, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago): 31 percent
- Gay men and lesbians expelled from U.S. military each year because of sexual orientation: 1,000
- Gay and lesbian organizations nationwide, including political, social, activist and student groups: 1,580

debate. And many political moderates also believe homosexuality is just plain wrong. Supreme Court insiders say that some justices made homophobic jokes during a private conference about the *Bowers* case. Bias against gays, "while offensive, doesn't rise to the same level of outrage as race and gender,"

says Clint Bolick, a Reagan Justice Department official. "There are greater justifications to discriminate against people on the basis of sexual preference." As long as such views prevail along the corridors of power, gays will remain second-class citizens under the law.

BOB COHN in Washington

tion to Republican hypocrisy in its condemnation of gays will also help. Last week's Washington Post Style section profiled Dee Mosbacher, the lesbian daughter of former Bush-Quayle campaign chairman Robert Mosbacher.

Others are pursuing a legislative agenda that will deliver basic civil liberties. "The right to have a job without losing it and the right to walk down the street without getting beaten up" would be a good start, says

Gregory King of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, a gay political-action committee. Topping the list is passage of the Civil Rights Amendments Act of 1991, a federal law that would offer sexual orientation the same protections as race, creed, color, national origin and disability. Another priority is increased funding for AIDS research. New victories will certainly bring new scapegoating. "As we become more visible we become targets," says

Houston lesbian activist Annise Parker. In time, though, Parker hopes that the Buchanans and the Robertsons will seem evermore shrill and marginal. In time, she believes, "the basic decency of the American people will take over."

BILL TURQUE with CAROLYN FRIDAY in Boston, JEANNE GORDON in Los Angeles, DANIEL GLICK in Washington, KATRIN SNOW in Portland, PETER ANNIN in Houston, FARAI CHIDEYA in Chicago, ANTHONY DUIGNAN-CABRERA in San Francisco, PATRICK ROGERS in New York, LYNN HAESSLY in Cleveland and bureau reports

## How the Candidates Play to Gays

Last spring Bill Clinton met in Los Angeles at a gala with 600 gay and lesbian activists. In an emotional speech, he told them, "I have a vision and you're part of it." The dinner raised \$100,000 for the Clinton campaign coffers. News photographs showed dozens of gay men eagerly reaching out to touch the candidate. It was an image designed to appeal to a powerful voting block. But the photographs may well be put to another use this fall: as fodder for ads to boost George Bush's re-election chances.

Both parties are using homosexuality for political advantage. Clinton is the first presidential standard-bearer to openly seek gay votes. If elected, he says, he would lift the ban against gays in the military and sign gay-rights legislation. The Republicans are more than content to see Clinton endorse gay rights. Despite a lull in the family-values offensive, gay-bashing has overtaken opposition to abortion as the best way to rally the religious right, the GOP's core constituency.

With more than 9 million voters, the homosexual community is organized and rich enough to command attention. The Human Rights Campaign Fund, the largest gay-and-lesbian political group, with 60,000 members, is among the fastest-growing political-action committees. It will contribute up to \$1 million to campaigns this year. Sexual preference does not dictate party loyalty, and



DONNA BINDER—IMPACT VISUALS

### Angry rhetoric: Pat Buchanan at the Republican convention

there has been no "gay gap" in voting behavior. Indeed, George Bush won close to 40 percent of the gay vote in 1988. "If you're well off, there's no reason to think you haven't moved with your income to the Republicans," says Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the communications school at the University of Pennsylvania. As president, Bush initially had considerable support in the gay community. He endorsed the recommendations of the AIDS commission, he invited gay activists to the White House for two bill signings, and he and Barbara met with AIDS-afflicted gay men.

But then came a bruising primary fight with arch-conservative Pat Buchanan. Bush has always been fearful of the right, and to shore up his conservative base, his operatives stooped to gay-

bashing. Speakers at the Republican convention portrayed gays as abnormal and immoral, and Bush did nothing to temper the attacks. The GOP's angry words could turn gays into single-issue voters for Clinton. "I don't know a single gay Republican who is planning to vote for George Bush," says Gregory King, spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign Fund, which has endorsed Clinton.

Many Republicans are uncomfortable with the harsh rhetoric of Houston. Social progressives like Massachusetts Gov. William Weld support gay rights as a bulwark against government interference in private lives. With polls showing that the attacks in Houston backfired, Bush's top aides have disavowed open gay-bashing. That does not mean that they will stop

their surrogates from taking the low road, especially if Bush falls further behind. In selected spots, such as the Bible-belt South, the GOP will almost certainly use anti-gay ads against the Democrats. "You can't control the groups that support the campaign, and sometimes you don't want to," says a GOP official.

**Moral thicket:** For Clinton, embracing gay voters seems to undermine his moderate image. But if he can keep the debate out of the moral thicket, it's a plus. Most Americans oppose job discrimination (78 percent in NEWSWEEK's Poll). But a clear majority are also uncomfortable with same-sex marriages. Clinton is on record as opposing gay marriage, but so far he has avoided saying whether he thinks being gay is "normal." Clinton started talking about gay rights only when he became a presidential candidate, a fact that strikes some Bush aides as hypocritical. They point out that Arkansas has an anti-sodomy law, which Clinton has done nothing about.

Gay activists will be as important to Clinton's get-out-the-vote effort as the Christian Coalition will be for Bush. The sharp differences between the parties generate the worker bees that are essential for victory. But both sides risk turning off many voters if their rhetoric seems too polarized. As NEWSWEEK's Poll shows, most voters are in the middle. The candidates are struggling to find that safety zone without losing the political benefits of exploiting the lavender revolution.

ELEANOR CLIFT in Washington

# 'They're Not Telling the Truth'

An author's personal response to the attacks from anti-gay crusaders

BY ERIC MARCUS

It started in the middle of the night over Labor Day weekend three years ago. Barry and I were fast asleep when our new downstairs neighbor and his friends, all federal Drug Enforcement Administration officers, began pounding on the ceiling below our bedroom. In their drunken stupor they yelled, "We're coming to get the faggots! We've got an AK-47 in the car! Bang, bang, you're dead!" Listening to what the religious right and the Republican Party have been saying about us lately, I imagine our old neighbor has felt vindicated. After all, he and his buddies were simply trying to scare a couple of "anti-family" homosexuals, people the president told them are not normal, who the vice president said made the wrong choice, who Pat Robertson believes are not fit to be parents and for whom Pat Buchanan said AIDS was "nature's retribution."

Hearing these and other statements about who I am, I've felt the same anger, disgust and confusion I felt in the days after Barry and I were threatened in our own home. "Why are they attacking us?" "Did we do anything to deserve this?" Very quickly, I realized that we hadn't done anything wrong. It was our neighbor who was wrong. And the anti-gay crusaders are also wrong. They're not telling the truth about who I am.

The life Barry and I live is not the Ozzie and Harriet ideal, but we're not the only Americans who don't live that near-mythical model—including Ozzie and Harriet. Nonetheless, most people would find our family life very familiar and anything but anti-family. Just last month we attended Barry's twin brother's wedding, where Barry and his brother James were best men. In January, when my mother had a heart attack, I flew home to look after her. We've had both families over for holidays, gone to my niece's and nephew's birthdays, attended funerals together and helped our friends through hard times.

President Bush said I'm not normal. I don't know what he means. Bush's left-handedness isn't normal either, if "normal" means "in the majority." But like being left-handed, being gay doesn't diminish my humanity, my normal wish to love, be loved, contribute and prosper. When I heard Dan Quayle say on "Good Morning America" and "Prime Time Live" that I had made the "wrong choice," I wanted to ask him what choice he was referring to. When I realized I was gay I also realized I *did* have a choice, but not between homosexuality and heterosexuality. I could choose to live in the closet, maybe even marry a woman and pretend to be who I'm not, or I could be honest about who I am and live my life openly—no easy thing to do. I didn't choose to be gay, but I did choose to tell the truth. That's what my parents taught me.

During the presidential campaign I've heard many people say that gay and lesbian people are unfit parents and that we shouldn't be allowed to adopt. There's no question that some gay people make rotten parents. Same with some heterosexual parents. Those who condemn us won't come right out and say it, but they'd like you to believe we'll "make our kids gay" or that we'll molest them. But that's not what our siblings and heterosexual friends with kids think. They know you can't make somebody gay who isn't gay by nature. They also know that if their kids are going to be molested that overwhelmingly the most likely person to do the molesting is a heterosexual male. And if their kids happen to be gay, they know

that we're fine role models. Two heterosexual couples have asked us if we would be the guardians of their children should something happen to them. And Barry is godfather to a little boy named Lucas, who just celebrated his first birthday.

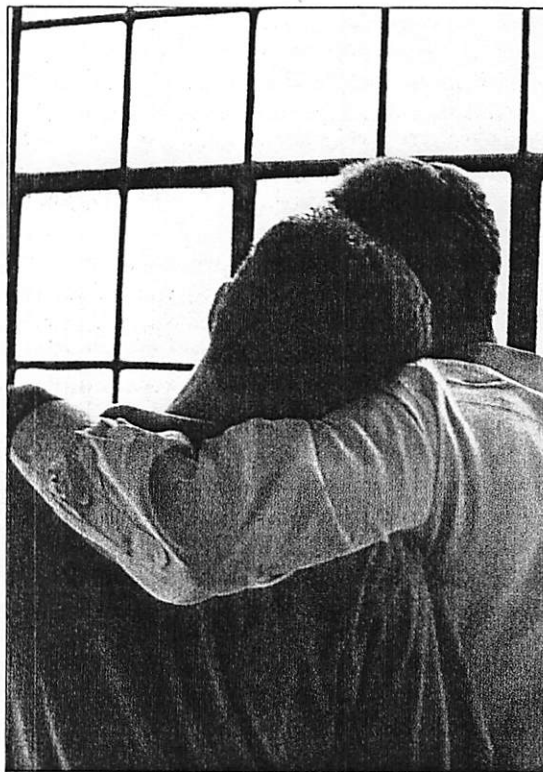
**City lifestyle:** In a television interview last month, President Bush said that he would still love his grandchild if he found out he was gay, but he wouldn't want him to promote his gay lifestyle. Would somebody please tell me what a gay lifestyle is? One may choose a country-club lifestyle, a Western lifestyle, a city lifestyle, but there is no such thing as a gay lifestyle—just as there is no such thing as a heterosexual lifestyle. Homosexual lifestyles, like heterosexual lifestyles, run the gamut. They defy classification. And the only way I can "promote" my sexual orientation is to show other gay and lesbian people by my example that you can be homosexual, live outside the closet and lead a full, happy, family-centered life.

I'm convinced the president doesn't really believe what he and some of his supporters are saying about me. If he did, he wouldn't tolerate the many gay men and women he and those in his administration have appointed to re-

sponsible jobs in the White House, the Department of Defense, the National Endowment for the Arts and virtually every other government agency. But the anti-gay campaign has nothing to do with telling the truth. Instead, it's about trying to scare Americans into thinking that if they vote for Bill Clinton, the awful homosexuals—me included!—will destroy America's family values.

Barry and I were lucky with our bigoted downstairs neighbor. Our landlords, a lovely heterosexual couple, evicted him without hesitation. While we now feel safe in our own home, as long as the anti-gay campaigners continue to spread their message of ignorance and hate, our nation will remain a hostile, dangerous and sometimes deadly place for us, our friends and millions of America's gay and lesbian citizens.

*Eric Marcus, a former associate producer for "Good Morning America," is the author of "Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990" (HarperCollins, 1992).*



ANN RHONEY

Not Ozzie and Harriet, but 'a full, family-centered life'