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Email Response to Gay Teenagers Article in Providence Journal

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"Email Response to Gay Teenagers Article in Providence Journal" (1995). *The Committee to Eliminate Heterosexism and Homophobia*. Paper 74.

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Washkwich
1729 South Road
Kingston, RI 02881

December 15, 1995

Providence Journal
75 Fountain Street
Providence, RI 02902
Att: Robert Whitcomb, Editor of Editorial Section

Dear Editor,

Your December 7th issue had a thoughtful, informative front page article on harassment of gay teenagers. Coverage of this issue is important and necessary, and we applaud your commitment to unbiased coverage. Yet, when the article continued on page 11, it was surrounded by two articles on HIV/AIDS. The placement of the second part of the article was unfortunate in that it continues the association of HIV/AIDS with the gay and lesbian community. This continued association nurtures the homophobic fears and harassment your article sought to address. It also leads people to distance themselves from a disease that in fact does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Though the AIDS epidemic was initially focused in the gay community in the US, 71% of AIDS cases worldwide are from heterosexual transmission. Homosexual transmission only accounts for 15% of total cases worldwide. Further, recent statistics show the largest rate of increase in AIDS cases has been for persons infected through heterosexual contact.

HIV/AIDS will continue to be falsely stigmatized as a "gay disease" as long as the media continues to link articles about HIV/AIDS with articles about gay and lesbian issues. We all need to be more aware so as to not thoughtlessly perpetuate the very barriers we are trying to break down.

Holly Nichols
Kim Mitchell

Lisa Harlow
Jody Brown

Jacquelynne Washkwich
Gary Burkholder
Rev. Bartels

Jacque Lynne Washkwich
Gary Burkholder
Rev. William Bartels, Ph.D.
Andrew Winters
Holly Nichols
Jody Brown, Ph.D.
Kimberly Mitchell
Lisa Harlow, Ph.D.
Susan Saxon

Andrew Winters
Susan Saxon

cc: Gordon Smith, Diversity Editor
cc: Paul Toohar, Managing Editor