

# The Peninsula BEACON

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## Trolley May Not Come To Beach Says Mayoral Hopeful

By **MICHAEL BURGESS**  
*The Beacon*

**T**he proposed extension of San Diego's trolley system to Ocean Beach will probably never happen, according to Ron Roberts, the Fourth District San Diego county supervisor who says he intends to run in the next election for mayor of San Diego.

Speaking to editors at San Diego Community Newspaper

Group, Roberts said, "I don't want to throw cold water on it [the proposed trolley extension]. But sometimes you can get people excited."

Of the January announcement of a feasibility study he said, "A premature press conference was called," and "a \$50,000 grant for a study is not usually something you get excited about in the world I work in."

While Roberts called the trolley extension "a critical project for San Diego" he said it was "high cost and low priority" and it is "very difficult, especially in Ocean Beach, to figure out the right of ways."

Responding to Roberts' remarks in a telephone interview the following day, Deputy Mayor Byron Wear said, "It is unfortunate that Ron Roberts who represented the beach community for seven years does not understand the traffic and parking problems of the beach community."

Wear, who said he is also considering running for mayor, said that Roberts was among the Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) members who voted for the trolley extension and that "while it is not our top priority it certainly will be one of our priorities."

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Wear said, "If the guideway study shows that there is ridership, this will be a priority. And, as far as the issue of right of way acquisition goes, we are not looking at any right of way issue because the trolley would end in the vicinity of

West Point Loma Boulevard and Sunset Cliffs."

Roberts had said that there may be some way to link Sea World to Old Town but although "Sea World has said they will help, their assistance has been pretty modest" and he said, "I wouldn't be surprised if it (the link) was a ways off."

In response, Wear said, "The other aspect of the guideway study is that we're looking at redevelopment around the area of the Sports Arena, Sea World, Ocean Beach, Mission Beach And if we can get people out of their cars onto a mass transit system it will reduce traffic and be a win-win for the community."

## Inside La Jolla

## 3rd-graders flock to Frank's 'Crazy January' events

By MICHAEL BURGESS  
Village News

Students at La Jolla Elementary are finding it hard to stay away from school — even those who may have flu and whose parents are telling them they should be home in bed. This is because of a motivational initiative called "Crazy January."

Third-grade teacher Holly Frank has assigned an imaginative theme to every school day of this month. She and her class then attend school dressed for the theme of the day. Jan. 11, for instance, was "Inside Out Day." Jan. 12 was "Western Day" and so on.

Book reports and other parts of the regular curriculum now follow the theme. "Silly Sock Day," for example, was used as a basis for journal writing. On "Native American Day" they read from native American books and talked about different cultures.

The idea was to make going back to school a little bit easier after the two-week Christmas vacation, according to Frank.

"The reason I began doing this 'Crazy January' was to create an excitement about school and learning," Frank said. "These



Kids in Holly Frank's third-grade class at La Jolla Elementary have some fun with tropical attire (above) Jan. 21 during "Hawaiian Day" and sport wacky headgear (lower right) on "Hat Day" during Frank's "Crazy January" class events.

students are 8 and 9 years old, and many have 15 more years of schooling ahead of them. If they aren't eager to attend school at this age, when will they be?"

"I had one (student) last week who was sick and wanted to come in her Native American costume," Frank continued. "So her mother brought her, and then took her home. I had one yesterday, in his hockey uniform, who was sick and his mother took him back home."

"How many of you have come to school this month even

*'My brother goes to junior high and he's coming back to the pajama party.'*

— 3rd-grade student

ral lei.

To promote reading and literacy, Jan. 22 was "Favorite Book Character Day" and the entire school was invited to participate dressed as their favorite book character.

"I've not invited the entire school before, but I decided to because everybody seemed so interested in what we're doing."

Frank said.

On Friday, Jan. 29, being the last school day of the month, there will be a reunion for all her former students who are invited to join the class in the afternoon for a "pajama party" celebration and a movie.

"My brother goes to junior high and he's coming back to the pajama party with his robe on," said one girl.

Frank, who came originally from Buffalo, New York, was a Basic Skills teacher at La Jolla Elementary for nine years before she began teaching third or fourth grade here five years ago.

"It makes it fun to come to work when you get a group like this," she said, casting a bright smile towards her class.



# WHY WE'RE PROUD

**The black community traditionally views homosexuality with suspicion and disgust. Yet in major cities across the nation black gays are coming out of the closet. Mike Burgess talks to the men and women who say they're proud to be gay.**

"As a black gay man who's only just come out, it's very difficult because the black community at the moment has been brainwashed to believe that black lesbians and gays do not exist," says Michael Owen, a 19-year-old black gay man living in Brockley, London.

"At one stage people like me did not know that there was a place for us to meet and that we could have a network so that lesbians and black gay men could get together. I felt isolated because, as a gay man, I had met white gay men but I didn't get to meet any black people and I honestly thought I was the only one. So when I first realised my sexuality I completely thought it was a white thing and that I was the only black gay man that existed".

Since April 1987 Michael has been a regular at the South London Lesbian and Gay Young Peoples Group, the youth club which he believes helped him to build a positive image of his own identity.

The Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project is a black group which meets in the London borough of Camden. There's no formal membership and attendance at the group varies from night to night between 10 and 40. Its mailing list exceeds 500 names although one of its organisers has stated that for every one of those, he knows of 10 people who won't join because it's not safe for them to receive mail at home.

## Shunned

Avril is 24 and a black lesbian. "The black community does encourage the belief that there are no black lesbians and gay men. I'm African, and if being a lesbian or a gay man is something you learn about, I learned about that in Africa. But the black community would deny that there's any existence of black lesbians and gay men".

Much of the

repulsion felt by the black community towards homosexuality is because gay practices are considered unnatural. Black homosexuals are shunned for having been seduced into 'the white man's disease'. Avril rejects the criticism.

"It's a big myth that gay black people have simply been corrupted by white people. What makes me angry about the myth is that while I know black lesbians and gay men that are very active in the black community, that are poor because of the black community, you see them in the local labour centre, you see them supporting things for the community regardless of what sexuality that community is".

Some of the harshest criticism of homosexuality has come from the black church. Many denominations have condemned the practice as a sin. Pastor Nelson of the New Testament Church in Brixton is especially repulsed by gay activities. "If God wanted man to have sex with man, he would have created Adam and Adam". Other

influences the black community's attitude.

"A lot of black people are very very religious and my mother really took it very badly last year when I told her I was gay. It's such a taboo subject that black people don't talk about it. To some extent my mother accepts it provided we don't talk about it. It is sad because when I'm at home I almost have to fit into a

heterosexual mould, which isn't me".

Avril's experience was similar, and to some extent responsible for her making the decision to leave her parents' home. "My parents didn't ask me what they did wrong. They just wondered how I came to be a lesbian, whether it was biological, or whether it's a psychological thing. Basically that was their response. We haven't talked about it much in the four years since I told them.

"I don't know if they fully accept me yet. That was one of the reasons why I had to move out and live somewhere else. I suddenly realised that I wanted to explore my sexuality a bit more and I didn't feel I had the freedom to do that at home".

The hostility towards black homosexuals means they can often be in physical danger. Michael suggests that the hostility is based on ignorance.

The black community largely cannot understand that black people can actually be gay or lesbian. He says we have been taught for so long that it is something that affects white people.

In December 1987 there was an incident in Brixton when a number of young gay men were badly beaten while leaving a club. Michael has been receiving threatening letters and phone calls. "That's the sort of thing I have to put up with because of my sexuality. Black people cannot come to terms with the fact that we do exist".

## Racism

But the hostility doesn't all come from the black community. Black homosexuals often find it difficult to

gain acceptance in the white gay community.

"It's a majority white middle class scene", says Ayo Oyeade, 20. "There is racism, really". He went on to allege that there's a tendency for white homosexuals to take advantage of black gays who aren't at ease in the gay scene. "Black people feel more vulnerable".

Lesbian, Denise Worme, 20, confirms that black people often face rejection from their white counterparts. "There's a lot of tokenism as well", she explained. "If you get one black person involved they'll be asked to come to all the marches and get involved with all the protests." Denise detects a growing number of black people willing to 'come out'. She points to an increase in the number of specialist clubs and associations. "There's a black lesbian scene which is very supportive".

After several relationships with white women, Denise decided that she would be happier with a black partner. "I want to be able to be equal," she said. "I want to be able to share my culture, and the way we were brought up".

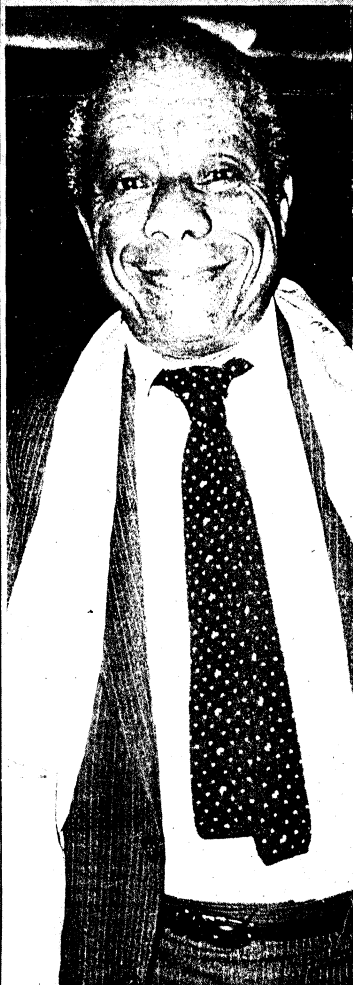
Dirk Aab Richards, of the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre Project, is the senior worker in charge of the South London Lesbian and Gay Young Peoples Group. Both projects are likely to be closed when Clause 27 of The Local Government Bill comes into force prohibiting 'promotion' of homosexuality. Says Dirk, "It's important that everyone unites against this fascist law which is offensive to black people

with any decency".

Eric isn't gay, but as a black barrister at Brent Law Centre he warns that, "Clause 27 could mean lots of things. At its worst interpretation it could probably mean that if we advertise the existence of certain groups that can be seen as promoting or otherwise helping the sort of things Clause 28 (as it now is) is aimed towards stopping, then Law Centres will be breaking the law."

"Whether that means we will be prosecuted or whether that will be used as an excuse to withdraw our grants is another issue. That depends on a buffer being created between the Tories and us by the local authorities. The whole aim of this kind of legislation is to drive the whole thing underground. At this stage we don't know what's going to happen yet. We'll just have to wait and see."

"Clause 27 affects me so much



JAMES BALDWIN: Refused to be closeted



LESBIANS AND G

# D TO BE GAY



Fight to control their image



AYO OYEBADE: "Black people feel more vulnerable"

made to the community by black lesbians and gays in local authorities, on police committees, in business, in music, in entertainment, and in medicine.

People just imagine, because the word *homosexual* is always used in debates about sex, that gay people just go around having sex all the time. They think we're perverts who have it off with children whereas statistics show that 90 per cent of child abuse is heterosexual.

published in the American magazine, *'Ebony'*, reveal that 'women make up 7 per cent of all AIDS cases, and a staggering 52 per cent of them are black'.

One quarter of those women contracted the disease by having sex with men who carried the virus.

Medical experts estimate the number of black gay and bisexual men in America to be about 10 per cent of the black male population.

## Guilt

American Gay Rights Advocate, Gil Gerald, says, "There is usually a strong denial process that gay and bisexual men go through before they can accept their sexual choices. So in order to counteract the feelings of guilt, you develop relationships with women to support the notion that you're really not gay, that maybe it's just a phase you're going through."

"A lot of women with bisexual partners could be at risk," admits Gerald, "since many men do not admit to being gay and do not identify with the gay community where education and AIDS information is available to them."

"Consequently, they aren't receiving the information about safe sexual practices that they, and their partners need for protection. That is one of the reasons why AIDS education and prevention efforts targeted to the black community is so crucial."



DENISE WORME: trapper with a black partner

because I'm young," says Michael, "and if they cut all the ways that people are becoming aware of being lesbian and being gay, people like me would not have anywhere to go."

## Closeted

Avril too is very worried about the younger generations of lesbians and gay men, "...especially the black ones, because, if they don't have the facilities, then we are talking about a life-threatening situation. Already there is quite a high figure of suicides amongst young people and I think not having the facilities and the resources is kind of life-threatening and I'm totally against that. Those facilities weren't available in 1983 and I know that they mean a lot for young people."

"When they are coming to terms with homosexuality they need a lot of support and if they

tell their parents, there's always a possibility that they might get rejected. I don't see why anyone should be driven to being crazy or to committing suicide because they are ashamed of what they are'."

Avril regrets that when she came out there were no resources for young black lesbians and gay men to meet each other. "My role models were the writers, James Baldwin and Audre Lord, and those two people gave so much to the black community."

Not only were they out as gay, they also carried on working within the black community as a whole and refused to be closeted. That's what stops me everytime I think I'm going to become closeted. I think of those two people and the fact that their speaking out was my salvation. And if they'd been silenced then there'd be a lot of things I didn't say'."

"Sometimes I think there is pressure on me to go back into the closet. At the moment I work in a community so it's easier but if I was working with heterosexuals it would be very difficult for me to come out. I might have to stay in the closet just out of survival. It's not because I want to, it's survival."

"We are getting so much bad publicity at the moment," says Glenn, a black health care professional who does not wish to give his correct name. "Gays have a right to be themselves. It isn't always that easy but there's such a positive side to this rather than all that stuff about how gays are physically and verbally attacked. Everybody knows about that because most likely they've done it themselves."

"We should be publicising the positive contribution

"There's more anal sex in the heterosexual community than there is in the gay community. I currently don't recommend that people have anal sex at all at this stage, even with a condom."

The black press is going on about lesbians and gays, who are really doing their best to survive at the moment. As a gay man myself, I can't understand the lack of information in the entire community. Most gay people coming to the hospital are the ones who don't carry the virus because they have been well educated about AIDS. It's the heterosexual community that is not taking much notice at all."

## Statistics

And yet it's the AIDS threat which has created a situation in which a traditional reluctance to accept homosexuality has become a danger to the whole black community. Disturbing statistics





## Something something home sweet home

Chula Vista's movers and shakers are already noticing a foreigner in their midst. During the oath of allegiance at the YMCA's first-Friday breakfast a tall, bearded man in a pinstripe suit was standing respectfully at attention but without hand on heart.

Has the San Diego Country Club been infiltrated by the Taliban? No. It's just the new editor of The Star-News.

When a British journalist is appointed editor of an American newspaper he suddenly finds himself confronted with crises of protocol that the INS don't trouble to warn about. They might at least print the words to "God Bless America" on the back of the Green Card for situations such as the Kiwanis lunch at the Olive Garden restaurant last Tuesday.

It's an inspiring song. And, as we unite to defend the advances of America's revolution against theocratic throwbacks who would have us return to some kind of feudalism, a Permanent Resident Alien could be forgiven for showing solidarity by enthusiastically singing the opening lines, made memorable by Hollywood over the decades. But there inevitably follows a less familiar middle section and then the nightmare scenario of attempting to improvise the rest of the lyric while standing shoulder to shoulder with Police Chief Rick Emerson and Fire Chief Doug Perry.

During this time of war, it's conceivable that one wrongly-guessed rhyme may lead to an international incident and unscheduled career move to Guantanamo Bay's Camp X-ray.

Similar humiliations abound at home. Tell your American wife you're making porridge for breakfast and she replies, "Who do you think you are? Freakin' Goldilocks? The word is oatmeal!"

Every unfamiliar term yields a story. However, nobody seems to know whether the Kiwanis club was named after the Kiwani tribe of native Americans who traditionally sell corn-on-the-cob on Third Avenue Saturday afternoons.

It's all about cultural diversity, and it's axiomatic that America derives great strength from this cultural diversity. There is an abundance of it to be found in Chula Vista's neighborhoods. Anybody who wants to know what on earth ballet folklorico is, should

check out the Agua Dulce stage at the Taste of the Arts by the Bay this Saturday, and be educated by the students of Sweetwater High School District.

Although the Olive Garden restaurant may use the very latest technology to extract anti-social garlic flavors from its fine Italian cuisine, Taste of the Arts seems to work on the opposite principle -putting the flavor back in.

The legacy of French colonialism yields the tradition of Cajun music, which will be brought home by the San Diego Cajun Playboys. Our African American community's tradition of gospel music is embodied in the Martin Luther King Community Gospel Choir. Even the very youngest children are participating in the Chula Vista Children's Choir whose wholesome songs such as "Step by step" have nothing whatever to do with alcoholic rehab.

It's a good rich mixture. And even the limey editor will attempt to blend.

*God bless America, land that I love.  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night with the light from above.  
From the mountains to the prairie  
To the ocean white with foam  
God bless America, my home sweet home.*