

# THE TRIANGLE

The Monthly Newspaper from Gay & Lesbian Community Services of Central Florida, Inc.  
Serving Orlando's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

## Dr. Joycelyn Elders Speaks Out: Vindication?

Triangle Exclusive  
By Rob Heffeman

This year at the Republican National Committee meeting in Philadelphia, Newt Gingrich called for a vote on the legalizing of drugs. In December 1993, the Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, at the National Press Club, stated that she favored legalizing drugs to reduce the crime rate in the United States. She called for further study admitting she did not know all the "ramifications" of this decision. This was one of many statements Dr. Elders would make as Surgeon General which would cause national controversy. The last such statement was whether masturbation should be taught to school age children. The statement caused President Clinton in December of 94 to ask for her resignation as Surgeon General which she complied. This sudden drift to the extreme left by the Speaker of the House begged for a response from Dr. Elders.

I found her at her new place of employment at The Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock where she works in the Dept. of Pediatrics and Endocrinology. Dr. Elders stated that the community of Arkansas has welcomed her back with open arms, both in home and at work. The only people who were less than enthused

were the same ones who fought her on issues that preceded her appointment to Surgeon General. When pressed for who these people were, she admitted it was basically the religious community in Arkansas. So I asked her if she would ever seek a public office again and her answer was fast and to the point "NO". I asked her if she felt vindicated now that Newt had suggested that legalizing drugs should be voted on and she said "No I do not feel vindicated, I believed it when I said that the issue of legalizing drugs should be studied. I said it before Newt and I believe there are smarter people out there who are also discussing the subject".

I moved on to homosexuality and topics that surround the issue such as employment, marriage, adoption, interracial couples and the military policy of "Don't ask Don't tell". Dr. Elders is very clear on these subjects and not afraid to answer them head on. She stated that in employment, either private or in the military, that its no ones business and they have no right to ask about your sexual preference or what consenting adults do in the privacy of their bedrooms. "It has no bearing on some ones ability to perform their job". When asked about homosexuals marrying or adopting children, she believes that all people deserve the same benefits and rights that come with a

loving relationship such as health benefits, property rights and recognition. As far as adopting or raising children, she only cares that the adults be responsible to the needs of children, and can give them a loving and stable environment regardless what the colors of their skin may be, or the sexes of the parents. She was very clear on the struggle for civil rights for all people and she believes that there has been a parallel between the movement for Blacks as well as

homosexuals and even white women. In fact she believes that white women have benefited the most from the struggle for civil rights. She remarked how white women were always the secretaries or the person who did the work for a man who took all the credit for himself. Claiming white women have now moved from the typing pool to the boardroom and are advancing in all areas which is how we began our discussion regarding Affirmative Action.

When asked about the discussion to put an end to Affirmative Action, she remarked how as a black female, it helped her get into college but Dr. Elders made it known Affirmative Action might have opened up the door for her. It was hard work and dedication that kept

her there and has moved her through the years. She believes being both black and female was probably the reason she was first picked as Health Director in Arkansas. "It has been very good for me" and has given her the opportunities to advance in her life that might not have been possible otherwise. Dr. Elders believes that Affirmative Action, in regard to race, sex and sexual preference is still needed. Dr. Elders said "it galls me that the very same people who for 400 years gave no opportunities to and enslaved blacks separating black families and selling them off into slavery are the same people who are advocating family values for this country". When I asked her if those people she was referring to were white males she said "yes, southern white males".

Speaking of opportunity I asked if she felt there was a place for People of Color in the Republican Party and her response was very optimistic. "Yes, Black people belong in the Republican Party and they must stand up and fight for what they believe in". So I asked her what she thought the Republican Party stood for and she listed her beliefs. "1. You have to pull yourself up by your boot straps. 2. White is right. 3. Rich is best. 4. That the people at the bottom had to wait for things to trickle down to them". She believes that this is the Republican philosophy in every-



## Candace Gingrich Is Coming To Orlando

By Carol Bartsch

The lesbian sister of ultraconservative Republican US House Speaker Newt Gingrich is currently on a 51 city tour being sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF). Her six month national tour, which began April 25th in Seattle, will feature appearances across the country,



from Anchorage to Orlando.

At 7:00 PM on August 16th, Ms. Gingrich will speak at the Orlando Public Library. This town hall meeting is open to the public and free of charge. Ms. Gingrich will speak about efforts currently under way to protect AIDS funding in Congress, ending discrimination against gays and lesbians in the workplace, and stopping anti-gay hate legislation in the 104th Congress.

"When my brother became Speaker of the House, I recognized that I had an opportunity and obligation to get involved in the movement for gay and lesbian equality in a meaningful way," reflects Ms. Gingrich. "Working with HRCF, I will be asking more and more people to join this effort and help meet the challenges presented by a more conservative political landscape. When people realize that they have gay friends, families and co-workers, they are more likely to understand the problem of discrimination and support equal rights."

Candace Gingrich is on tour as spokesperson for HRCF's National Coming Out Project, which encourages gays and lesbians to be open and honest about their sexual orientation. Ms. Gingrich is also urging people to get involved in the effort to educate Congress about the problem of discrimination and the lack of equal rights for gay and lesbian Americans. October 11th, National Coming Out Day, serves to remind us of the importance of coming out.

"Many Members of Congress remain out of touch with the rest of the country on the issue of gay and lesbian equality," says Elizabeth Birch, HRCF's Executive Director. "Candace will deliver this message

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