

LESBIAN MOTHERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

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What's New with the LMA

By Mona Greenbaum

Some of you must be wondering what happened at the association's last annual general meeting (AGM). In the previous newsletter the members of our board had proposed the idea of opening the group to gay fathers thereby making the association mixed. Well, long before the meeting actually took place, many of our members began to send and call in their opinions on this subject. At first it seemed that a number of women were in favour of the idea, and yet there was often a sense of sadness and a reluctance to change what many considered a precious resource. Although many of our members had had very positive interactions with gay fathers, there was still the regret that Montreal would lose yet another place that had been for lesbians only. Some members also felt strongly that the dynamic of the group would change if men were allowed in. And so in the end, we decided to put the question on hold.

What did come out of this group reflection was that many lesbian mothers saw the benefit of doing activities, on an occasional basis, with gay dads and their children. Aside from the fact that we share many common concerns, we also felt that doing some activities together with gay dads was a way that we could teach our children about family diversity and present them with wonderful nurturing role models.

The association des pères gais de Montréal is a group for gay men who are coming out later in life. The vast majority of these men do not have custody of their children. And so at our last AGM we decided to put some effort into kick-starting a new group for gay dads who have children in their custody or who are planning to start a family. In the fall we will organize an activity for gay men on the theme of parenting. Our hope is that a leader will emerge who is interested and willing to coordinate a group. If this does happen, we can eventually plan various activities together from time to time. The board was given the mandate to attempt to start such a group.

One of the interesting points that came out of our AGM was that our members were amazed at all the LMA accomplishes over a year. They were also impressed with our plans for the year to come. Because only a small percentage of our members actually attended the AGM (bad weather didn't help the situation) we thought it would be a good idea to let the rest of you know what went on.

Our annual report covered the period between April 1st 2002- and March 31st 2003. The previous year's report had been extensive because of the flurry of activity surrounding the debate on Civil Union and parental rights. For the most part this occurred in February 2002 (before this fiscal year). Although this year has been somewhat quieter, we were still proud to present our many accomplishments.

LMA members sit on the board of the *Table de concertation des lesbiennes et gais du Québec*, which is the main lobbying group in this province. This year, Diane Labelle is the co-president of the *Table*. She is also a lesbian mom on LMA's board of directors and so we have a direct link to the *Table*. Being a teacher, Diane is particularly active in the dossier of education. She is in the process of organizing a special group dedicated to education issues so that pressure can be put directly on the government to deal with the problem of homophobia in the schools.

Sylvie Gascon of the LMA also represents us on the board of ALGI - the *Association des Lesbiennes et Gais sur l'Internet*. She moderates an on-line discussion group for gay and lesbian parents called "*Parents Aussi.*"

This year our members also participated in *la Coalition québécoise pour la reconnaissance des conjoint et conjointes de même sexe*, *l'Association canadienne pour la santé mentale (ACSM)*, *la Fédération des femmes du Québec*, *la Centrale des syndicats du Québec*, *Égale Canada* and the *Centre communautaire des gais et lesbiennes du Montréal*.

Over the year, various board members did presentations on gay and lesbian parenting. We presented in universities, at conferences and to various health professionals. We also helped the ACSM organize a hugely successful colloquium on homophobia in the schools which took place in October 2002.

In terms of media presentations our members took part in the making of videos and TV programs. Especially notable were members' contributions to the video *Silence SVP* (the first French-language video on homophobia in the schools) and the participation of Gabriel Pinkstone and Monica Perazzo in the TV program "Out in the City - Out à Montréal " a docu-drama that has earned them quasi-star status!

In a less glamorous vein we participated in numerous television interviews on subjects ranging from civil union and marriage, to fertility clinics, lesbian health, parenting and gay rights advocacy. We also did 35 newspaper interviews and wrote a number of editorial comment pieces, four of which were published. We also did a lot of radio and Internet interviews.

On the political and social level we made progress. Although as you know, the main public hearings for the Civil Union Bill took place in February 2002, there was a second parliamentary commission in May 2002 to further study the question of parental rights. The LMA presented a second brief at this hearing and in the same month also presented seperately to the Liberal caucus, as Liberal party members resisted, till the end, in giving us full parental rights.

On the federal level, in February 2003, the LMA presented a brief in the House of Commons in Ottawa asking for access to the institution of marriage. Individual members also presented briefs later on. Although many of our members are not personally interested in getting married, there seems to be a strong consensus that the choice should be available to those who are. We also believe that we will not make full progress in other important dossiers such as education and lesbian health unless we are made full and equal citizens under all Canadian laws. This is an essential first step.

In terms of research on our families, we continue to collaborate with Dr. Danielle Julien at UQAM. Her research on our families is funded until September 2005 and is the most extensive Canadian research that was ever carried out on our families. We also participated on a smaller scale in research projects with Health Canada and *le Réseau québécois pour la santé des femmes*. In addition we

continue to respond regularly to calls from students who are doing papers on same-sex parents and their children.

We were very proud this year to have put together two new guides. Firstly, we updated our *Alternative Family Guide*, which is now in its third edition. This update was needed because, unlike previous years, we now have access to some of the fertility clinics in Quebec. This access was in large part due to interventions initiated by the LMA. Starting back in the fall of 2001 we submitted a brief in Ottawa in the context of the New Reproductive Technologies Bill. Last December 2002 a clause was finally added into the slated legislation that would prohibit barring lesbians access to fertility treatments. The bill is about to be adopted and the clause has remained intact (see inside story). This means that, in the near future, it will actually be illegal to deny lesbians, anywhere in Canada, access to fertility treatments. Our new family guide reflects the fact that we can access professional fertility services and that here in Quebec the laws now fully support our families.

Our other publication this year is our *Civil Union Guide* that was written by Marie-France Bureau, a specialist in family law and Mona Greenbaum, LMA's coordinator. Although there was initially a small fee to obtain the guide, we now have covered our expenses and can give it away for free. This is important, as many lesbians across Quebec are still vague on the many positive advances that were made in the past year.

To honour all this activity we were given two separate acknowledgements last year. The AML won the *prix Arc-en-ciel* in 2002 for social activism, a prize that is awarded by the community to individuals or groups who have advanced the rights of gays and lesbians. Mona Greenbaum and Nicole Paquette (LMA's president) were also chosen by *Coup de Pouce* magazine as amongst the 20 most influential women of the year 2002. As humorous as it was to find ourselves in-between brownie recipes and horoscopes, appearing in a mainstream magazine such as this reveals the progress that we, as a community, have made in terms of acceptance of our families.

We also had the pleasure at our AGM to present a number of future projects. One that is near and very dear to the hearts of a number of our members is a project to develop a

French language book geared to elementary-school age children that will embrace the theme of family diversity, including of course, gay and lesbian parents. We are currently working with *les Éditions Remue-ménage* to get this project underway.

With all the legal recognition that our families have obtained in the past year, social recognition is still lacking in many areas. Our children feel this in the schoolyards, and we feel it as well when we deal with health care practitioners or professionals in the social services. Our strategy to deal with this is two-fold. We would like to begin contacting and networking with heterosexual parenting groups, cultural and community organizations, as well as health services. We plan to attempt this outreach in the context of the *Journée nationale de lutte contre l'homophobie* that will be held for the first time this year on June 4th, 2003.

We would also like to start searching for answers by reaching out to other gay and lesbian parents and community organizations who have perhaps found solutions to problems that we can learn from. We explored the idea of a cross-Canada parenting network at the Égale conference in May 2003 and would eventually like to organize an International parenting conference in the year 2006, in conjunction with Montreal's Gay Games. These are plans that will surely enrich our own community here in Quebec and we hope to get as many LMA members as possible involved.

Finally we would like to put together another resource for our members as well as lesbians in general who contact us. We plan to develop a series of guides about coming out. In these guides we will touch upon strategies to come out to family members and friends, at the workplace and to health care providers. We hope to be able to distribute these as widely as possible.

We would like to hear from you! Your ideas and plans are what make the AML grow! Please feel free to contact us at any time if you would like to get more involved or have ideas that you would like to implement.

Interested in writing for our newsletter? Send your articles at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8

News Briefs- February 2003-May 2003

Montreal News

February 14th 2003 - The community organization "***Dire enfin la violence***" has announced that it will **cease functioning** due to a lack of consistent financial support.

Dire enfin has helped 1000s of gays and lesbians who have been the target of hate crimes. They have worked with the Montreal police department to help them develop greater understanding and awareness, gave sensitization trainings, conferences and provided a milieu for numerous student internships.

Despite the many volunteers who worked for the organization over the years and despite attempts to cut expenses in every way possible, *Dire enfin* has finally been forced to stop functioning. Another sad loss for the community directly related to a lack of government subvention.

April 4th, 2003 - ***Les Archives gaies du Québec*** has celebrated its **20th anniversary**. The *Archives gaies* consists of an excellent collection of queer cultural and historical memorabilia: magazines, newspaper cuttings, books, photos, posters, etc., etc. The *archives gais* has also succeeded over the years in their mandate to disseminate gay and lesbian culture by hosting dozens of exhibitions, screenings and conferences.

Provincial news

May 1st 2003 - A new **pedagogical "tool box" that teachers can use to fight homophobia in the schools** has finally been put together. **Paul Trottier**, an openly gay school commissioner with the **Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM)** stated that this important first step is the result of a resolution that was made three years ago by the council of school commissioners in order to fight homophobia and deal with the high rate of adolescent suicide.

The kit is called **"Pour une nouvelle vision de l'homosexualité"** (" For a new vision of homosexuality").

It was put together conjointly by the CSDM, la **Direction de la santé publique (DSP)** and a number of gay and lesbian community organizations, such as Gai-Écoute, GRIS-Montreal and Séro-Zéro. **Martine Fortier** of the DSP coordinated the whole project.

In this extensive kit teachers can find activities for sensitization and demystification, various resource guides, a pedagogical guide with lesson plans, videos, a CD-ROM and even stickers! The target audience is both primary and secondary schools. While the kit is currently available exclusively in French, several community organizations have begun an English adaptation and are currently seeking funding to support this project.

The kit, which is sure to have a huge impact in the schools, is available to any school that participates in a free one-day **training session** given by the DSP. For more info on the training session and the kit please call Collège Maisonneuve (where the training session takes place) at **514-254-7131**.

May 6th, 2003 - *The Gazette* - Gay and lesbian groups will begin to mark **June 4th as an annual day to combat homophobia in Quebec**. This event, initiated by la **Fondation Emergence** was designed mainly to educate the public. "It is not a party or a picnic," said **Alain Johnson**, general director of *Fondation Emergence*. "It is a moment in the year where we try to stop and talk about what is the situation for us in Quebec." Speakers and researchers from McGill University, the Université du Québec à Montréal and Université Laval will give lectures on issues related to fighting homophobia.

The foundation will also distribute documents to schools and community groups in Quebec to raise awareness about the problems gays and lesbians face.

"If there is some understanding there will be less prejudice and eventually less homophobia," Johnson said.

Canadian News

January 30, 2003 - *365Gay.com* - For the first time Canada will try to figure out just how many gays and lesbians there are in the country. **Statistics Canada** announced that it will conduct a **national survey to ask people if they are**

gay, lesbian or bisexual. The telephone survey is a follow up on the last census, which for the first time asked how many common-law couples were of the same gender.

Called the **Canadian Community Health Study, it will survey 130,000 Canadians.** The study is conducted every two years, but this is the first time questions about sexuality will be asked. The information will be provided to community health centers to help them better understand their clientele, but it will also be made available to human rights commissions across the country.

April 2nd 2003 - Ottawa - MP Svend Robinson has presented a Private Member's Bill C-250, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, that seeks to add "sexual orientation" to the list of included grounds under hate propaganda legislation in Canada. Currently the grounds included are race, religion, colour and ethnic origin. The House of Commons Justice Committee is currently studying this bill, after it received agreement in principle in the House last May 2002 with the support of all parties except the Canadian Alliance. The Committee will decide whether people who are victims of propaganda promoting hatred, violence or even genocide directed at gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered people should have equal protection under the Criminal Code. The next month will decide whether or not this bill becomes law.

April 11th, 2003 - WorldNetDaily.com and 365 Gay.com - In a case that could have legally redefined the Canadian family, a mother asked a court to **declare her same-sex partner a third parent.** Rather than replace a parent, which adoption does, a **London, Ontario,** boy's biological mother and father were seeking to "add a parent" said Grace Kerr, lawyer for the woman who sought to be declared a mother.

The lesbian couple, who exchanged public vows in 1992, decided to ask a friend to be the father rather than using an anonymous sperm donor. The man does not live at the boy's home but is considered a member of the household.

Many "family values" opponents to the case quickly got involved. "If we go to three parents, then there is no grounds to prevent it from going to four or five or whatever number," said Brian Rushfeldt, executive director of the Canada Family Action Coalition. "Once you've

destroyed the standard of one woman and one man, you've broken down the whole basis of the system."

Rather than viewing legal recognition of the boy's parents as a way to protect the child's best interests, Gwendolyn Landolt, vice president of REAL Women of Canada believes the three adults who sought the declaration were "attempting to restructure society to suit their own private interests."

In a written decision issued April 11th 2003, **Justice David Aston, rejected the request**, stating that the Children's Law Reform Act does not give the authority to make such a decision.

April 24th 2003- *Le Devoir* - Ottawa - The federal government is on the verge of passing a **law that will explicitly make it illegal to bar lesbians' access to new reproductive technologies, including artificial insemination.**

The slated legislation, **Bill C-13** on assisted reproduction will soon be voted upon. The amendment, which was just recently added onto a bill that deals with issues as wide-ranging as cloning, stem-cell research and surrogacy, says that it is discriminatory to prohibit access to reproductive technologies on the basis of sexual orientation or marital status. In other words, lesbians and unmarried women in general cannot be denied access to fertility treatments.

Bloq Québécois deputy Réal Ménard helped to push through the amendment. The idea to include this in the bill was initiated by the Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec who met up with M. Ménard in the fall of 2001. In November of that year Mona Greenbaum, the groups' coordinator presented a brief in the House of Commons, to the Standing Committee on Health, explaining why lesbians should have access to the same fertility services as heterosexual married women.

Lesbians in the province of Quebec currently have access to 3 fertility clinics (2 in Montreal and one in Quebec city). When the bill passes, the clinics that still deny us access, as well as others across Canada will have to follow suit.

May 1st 2003 - *The Gazette* - **Alberta's new law** giving same-sex couples many of the same rights as married couples will

come into force **June 1st 2003**. The **Adult Interdependent Relations Act**, which passed last fall in the legislature, amends 68 provincial laws and some provincial regulations. The law will mean gay and lesbian couples will have marriage-like obligations and rights, such as financially supporting one another or being eligible for insurance coverage that is currently available only to married people.

Gay marriage - Canada

Similar to the parliamentary commission that preceded the adoption of Quebec's civil union bill, the federal government, carried out **public hearings** from February to April on whether to extend **equal marriage rights to same-sex couples**. Rather than complying immediately with Canada's Charter of Rights, the government claimed to want to hear the views of the Canadian people on this issue.

In **February** on the second day of the hearings, **Gabriel Pinkstone and Monica Perazzo** presented a brief in the House of Commons in the name of the **Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec**.

Later in the month on the eve of **Valentine's Day**, **New Democratic Party MP Svend Robinson** unveiled a **private member's bill to give gays and lesbians the right to marry**. Robinson, his party's Health Critic, is also a member of the parliamentary committee considering how best to recognize gay families.

This is the second time Robinson has introduced legislation to legalize gay marriage. Private member's bills seldom pass without the support of the government however.

In **April**, the **Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights left the House of Commons to travel across Canada**. The Committee heard from individuals and organizations in Vancouver, BC; Edmonton, Alberta; Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan; Steinbach, Manitoba; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Sussex, New Brunswick; Sudbury, Ontario; Toronto, Ontario; Montreal, Quebec and Iqaluit, Nunavut. In Montreal and Toronto two days of hearings took place. AML members **Nathalie Ricard** and **Dr. Karine Igartua** presented briefs on April 29th, 2003.

April 22nd, 2003 -*Equal marriage web-site* -The three judges of the **Ontario Appeals court** heard testimony for the

Ontario same-sex marriage case the week of April 22nd. Without a rational reason to defend ongoing discrimination against gay couples, the **Attorney General of Canada** presented in Ontario's Court of Appeal using circular logic in feeble arguments against same-sex marriage. The government's entire case rests on a single assertion: **marriage "just is" heterosexual**. The legal factum that supports couples who are seeking civil marriage debunks this approach.

The **Canadian Human Rights Commission** was an intervener in the Ontarian case as well. The CHRC compared the Attorney General of Canada's position to racial segregationists in 1896. "The assertion by the AGC that there is a need to protect and promote opposite-sex marriage, presumably from incursion by "other" family forms, is expressly discriminatory and demeaning to all Canadians." The judges have not as of yet rendered judgment.

May 1st 2003 - *Globe and Mail and PlanetOut.com Network* - Eight lesbian and gay couples in British Columbia who had been denied marriage licenses are rejoicing over a **provincial Court of Appeal decision** that says the **federal government's definition of marriage is unconstitutional**. The court reversed a lower court ruling that said the issue had to be decided by Parliament and not the courts. The appeals court declared that **preventing gays and lesbians from marrying is illegal**.

In its written decision the court gave the federal government **until July 12, 2004**, to change the law that defines marriage as "the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others."

"The only reason for the suspension until 2004 is to allow parliament, the federal government, the provincial government, to enact whatever sort of ancillary or consequential legislation they need to, to give effect to the judgment," said Joe Arvay one of the plaintiffs' lawyers.

The court said that appropriate remedy is for Parliament to reformulate the common law definition of marriage to mean: "the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others."

Writing for the court, Madam Justice Jo-Ann Prowse said, "that the common law definition of marriage contravenes the Charter (Bill of Rights) and it cannot be justified in contemporary Canadian society."

The ruling is the third time that a senior provincial court has ruled the existing law unconstitutional. Courts in Ontario and Quebec also ordered the government to rewrite the law. The federal government is appealing those rulings. It has until July 1st, 2003 to appeal the B.C. ruling.

Justice Minister Martin Cauchon hasn't decided whether to appeal the B.C. judgment. He concedes however that the Ontario, Quebec and B.C. judgments "are going exactly in the very same direction. So I have to take that into consideration as well."

May 6th, 2003 - Ottawa Citizen -The federal government has little legal choice but to adopt same-sex marriage in light of a string of court rulings that "in all likelihood" would be upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada, according to a **leaked internal Liberal document**.

The paper, written by the Liberals' research branch, dismisses every other option being considered by Justice Minister Martin Cauchon, including the idea of setting up a national civil registry to legally recognize gay and lesbian unions. Civil registries are under provincial jurisdiction and federal involvement in marriage is confined to deciding who can wed, the paper concludes. Provinces are responsible for the solemnization of marriage vows, including ceremonial aspects and issuing licenses.

Mr. Cauchon has repeatedly referred to a national civil registry as a key option, based on a similar system that Quebec adopted to legally recognize gay unions within the province. But the research paper says the registries still shut gays and lesbians out of marriage while allowing it for heterosexuals.

International News

February 12th, 2003 - 365Gay.com - The European Parliament has called for member states to recognize gay families. In the Netherlands and Belgium, gays and lesbians can legally marry. There are limited civil union rights in France, Germany and some Scandinavian countries. But, spousal

rights cannot be carried from one country to another within the European Union.

While heterosexual marriage is recognized throughout the European Union, gay relationship laws are a jumble of local rules and regulations that cannot be transported.

The positive vote in the E.U. Parliament at Strasbourg, France, calls for a recognition of gay marriage rights throughout Europe and for the legal acceptance of partnership unions by those gay couples who want recognition without actually having a marriage. E.U. member states are now required to adapt to the stance of the European Parliament. It is expected to be a lengthy process, beginning with member states harmonizing existing laws.

February 18th, 2003 - *Gay.com U.K.* - **Scotland** - The **largest survey of its kind ever commissioned** in Scotland has discovered that **one in every five gay people in the country is a parent**, and a further 17 percent would like to have children in the future. The research, conducted for Glasgow-based gay rights group Beyond Barriers, also showed that only 10 percent of existing gay parents had used artificial insemination to conceive. Most children had been born during a previous heterosexual relationship. One-third of all gay parents said their children were living permanently with them.

Ruth Henry, manager of Beyond Barriers, said the high number of gay parents had taken them by surprise. "We will have to look at the issue of parenting and the issues facing the children of lesbian and gay parents," she told the *Scottish Herald*. "We need now to work with education authorities to look at how -- if at all -- they include GLBT issues in the curriculum. It is an area that is not included enough at the moment."

March 3rd, 2003 - A right-to-marry case brought by seven same-sex couples was argued on March 4th before Massachusetts' highest court.

For more details:

<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/03/03/1>

March 3rd, 2003 - Florida's ban on adoptions by single gay men or lesbians was reviewed on March 4th by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

For more details:

<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/03/03/3>

March 12th, 2003 - Associated Press - New Jersey - Both women in a lesbian couple can be listed as parents on the birth certificate of the baby they're expecting in May, a judge ruled. State officials said it was the first time in the state that two women who were both physically tied to an unborn child had tried to make sure they were both listed on the birth certificate. **One woman is carrying the child, and her partner provided the egg.**

The ruling issued by Family Court Judge James A. Farber means the unidentified women will share a financial obligation to the child, and if one parent dies, the other will have custody.

Melissa Brisman, the couple's lawyer, said the ruling was a "victory for reproductive rights," but she doubted it would have a major legal impact.

Few lesbian couples opt to conceive the way her clients did, Brisman said. Typically, when lesbian couples have a child together, the woman who delivers the baby is named as the mother on the birth certificate. The partner is often not genetically related to the child and must then adopt the child to gain parental rights. The court process can take months.

March 13th, 2003 - Human Rights Campaign News - Washington - The Human Rights Campaign applauded the U.S. Census Bureau for a report it released that, for the first time, gives data on the nation's families headed by same-sex partners. The report gives information on the number of same-sex partner households in the nation that are raising children, the average age of same-sex couples, and the racial makeup of same-sex couples.

The report was compiled on data taken during the 2000 U.S. Census. Previously released census data revealed that there are 594,391 reported same-sex households in the country - of those, 301,026 are male partners, and 293,365 are female partners. Those same numbers also showed that gay and lesbian families live in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States.

The new report showed that one third of female partner households (34.3 percent), and one fifth of male partner households (22.3 percent) are raising children. Currently, eight states and the District of Columbia, along with scattered counties across the country, guarantee same-sex couples access to second-parent adoption, which permits both parents to establish a legal relationship to any child they might raise together.

March 17th, 2003 - *Gay.com U.K.*- An **Egyptian court has jailed 21 men** for practicing homosexuality after their original convictions were quashed on presidential orders. The men were arrested in May 2001 at a Cairo nightclub known for being popular with gay men. A special security court in November 2001 found them guilty under the country's morality laws.

President Hosni Mubarak had ordered a retrial after the original sentences handed down to the men led to heavy criticism by global human rights activists. The men have now been sentenced to three years imprisonment each - longer than their original sentences. However, they now have a right to appeal, which had previously been denied to them. Another 29 men were acquitted.

A representative of the US-based group Human Rights Watch, Scott Long, told *Reuters news agency* that the sentences were "appalling" and "based on flimsy evidence."

Human rights organizations had put pressure on Egypt to review the original sentences, heavily criticizing the government and arguing that the men were on trial for their sexual orientation and for exercising freedom of speech.

February and March 2003- *Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network* - An **online poll** conducted between Feb. 19 and Feb. 25 suggests **gay and lesbian Americans were more opposed to a war in Iraq than the average heterosexual**. Harris Interactive drew responses from 2,271 adults, including 142 who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. In general, 56 percent of the GLBT group opposed war, with 30 percent in support and 14 percent uncertain. Straight adults reversed that ratio, with 45 percent in favor of war, 36 percent opposed, and 19 percent undecided.

While many GLBT activists participate in anti-war demonstrations in the United States and Europe, gays and

lesbians in other parts of the world broke new ground as they publicly protested the war in Iraq.

March 26th, 2003 - *Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network / New York Times* - The **U.S. Supreme Court** heard arguments in **Lawrence and Garner v. Texas**, the sodomy challenge that lead counsel Ruth Harlow of Lambda Legal Defense called "**the most important gay rights case in a generation.**"

The case, brought by Lambda Legal, challenges the constitutionality of state sodomy laws, which are frequently used as a tool for discriminating against the gay and lesbian community.

John Lawrence and Tyron Garner pleaded no contest to breaking the **Texas sodomy law** in 1998, when police broke into Lawrence's home in search of an armed intruder and discovered the two men engaged in intercourse. Both men were arrested and then imprisoned overnight. They were fined \$200 each and had to pay court costs. The convictions bar both men from holding several types of jobs in Texas. If they move to other states, they could be required to register as sex offenders. Lambda Legal asked the Supreme Court to hear the case and declare a violation of privacy and equal protection.

Arguing on behalf of Lambda's clients, Houstonians John Lawrence and Tyron Garner, was Paul Smith, a constitutional expert from Jenner & Block, with several Supreme Court appearances under his belt.

Bans on same-sex sodomy, Smith noted, are not long American traditions, but fairly recent developments. As Justice Souter elicited from Smith's opposing counsel, Harris County District Attorney Charles Rosenthal, the Texas Homosexual Conduct law was passed not in 1873, but in 1973. As for the fundamental right to engage in sodomy, the right at issue is more aptly described as the right to conduct a private, consensual, noncommercial sex life without government interference. The court is expected to rule in late June or July.

April 2nd, 2003 - *Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network* - The **Vatican released a new glossary of sexual terms that describes homosexuality as a condition "without any social value," and claims that people with "profoundly disordered minds" populate countries that allow same-sex marriages.** The nearly 1,000-page book was immediately denounced by gay

communities in both Italy and the United States as part of what they said were more stepped-up efforts in the Vatican's anti-gay crusade.

Franco Grillini, honorary chairman of Italy's largest gay rights group, Arcigay, told the *Associated Press*, "In my opinion, it's almost racist and it is at the limit of cruelty. It is precisely because of the Catholic Church's homophobia that homosexuals have difficulties," he said. "If the Catholic Church would just stop its campaign of hate against gays, a good part of the problems of gays would be resolved."

The publishing of this book comes after a string of actions by the Vatican in the last several months against the gay community. In January, Pope John Paul II called same-sex relationships "inauthentic," saying "such a 'caricature' has no future and cannot give future to any society," while in December a second Vatican official publicly stated his support for a ban on the ordination of gay seminarians.

The new book **also condemns the use of condoms for safe sex**, which has led the Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association to submit a letter to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, **asking that the Vatican be stripped of its privileged status at the U.N.**

April 25th, 2003 - HRC news -The United Nations Human Rights Commission deferred a landmark resolution on human rights and sexual orientation until next year, apparently after five Muslim nations - four of them United States allies - maneuvered procedural delays.

The draft resolution, introduced by Brazil, expresses "deep concern at the occurrence of violations of human rights all over the world against persons on grounds of their sexual orientation" and calls on relevant U.N. human rights bodies to "give due attention" to these violations.

"We are very disappointed that the Commission on Human Rights has chosen to postpone action that affirms the basic human rights of the world's gay, lesbian and bisexual population, who along with the transgender community, are routinely subjected to discrimination and inhumane treatment," said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. "Lasting global peace begins with basic human rights for all the world's citizens."

While the Commission on Human Rights adjourned before the resolution could be voted on, reports indicated that the **Bush administration would have abstained from voting**, indicating that other language, not necessarily linked to sexual orientation, was problematic.

"Given the multiple authorities addressing these issues and the wide variety of ways in which these issues arise, the United States was not prepared to endorse the language of this resolution," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters.

Others felt there were reasons for cheer. Suki Beavers of the Canadian Action for Population and Development said via e-mail, "This resolution was not defeated and we will be back with a vengeance next year. Although we didn't get a full out victory, neither is this a defeat and it is clear that this will be the issue for the (U.N.) CHR next year."

The first-of-its-kind resolution in the U.N.'s 60-year history, the measure had expressed deep concern at the occurrence of violations of human rights on grounds of sexual orientation and urged all states to promote and protect the human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation.

According to the Amnesty International, millions of people across the globe face imprisonment, torture, violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

April 25th, 2003 - *Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network* - President George W. Bush praised Republican Sen. Rick Santorum as an "inclusive man", four days after the senator's comments about gays unleashed a storm of bipartisan criticism.

"The president has confidence in Sen. Santorum, both as a senator, (and) as a member of the Senate leadership," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said during a press briefing.

The Pennsylvania lawmaker, 44, is the **third-ranking leader in the Senate**. In an interview published on Monday, **he equated consensual gay sex with polygamy and incest and denied the constitutional right to privacy.**

"The president believes the senator is an inclusive man. And that's what he believes," Fleischer added.

The White House statement drew sharp criticism from the country's gay political groups.

Sen. Santorum's comments were part of a discussion with an *Associated Press* reporter about the pending Supreme Court decision on Texas' sodomy law and his belief that gays should not have a constitutional right of privacy to have sex with each other in their homes.

RESEARCH

April 3rd, 2003 - 365Gay.com - Gay and lesbian seniors are facing a serious health threat from discrimination by health care workers and institutions, a new Canadian study shows. Despite greater acceptance of gays and lesbians, older gays who have felt discrimination over a lifetime are mistrustful of health and social services, the study by Shari Brotman, Bill Ryan and Robert Cormier of the **McGill School of Social Work** shows.

Brotman and her colleagues assessed a broad range of services in Canada to examine the role of health care and social services organizations toward gay and lesbian elders. They then used a focus group design to explore the perceptions and experiences facing gay and lesbian seniors across the country. Four focus groups in three locations across Canada were undertaken.

The researchers found that "the one theme that emerged repeatedly was the profound marginalization experienced by older gays and lesbians in all aspects of social and political life."

Gay and lesbian elders are affected not only by their historical experiences of discrimination, but also by discrimination that continues in many social and institutional environments. "Many gay and lesbian elders who experienced the pervasive social stigma that existed prior to the advent of the gay liberation movement maintain a sense of extreme caution with respect to whether or not societal attitudes have really changed," according to Brotman.

"In light of this reality," Brotman noted, "the possibility of one day having to be reliant on the health care system, on a nursing home facility or any other social institution understandably provokes anxiety and fear in aging lesbians and gay men." Many, she added, may avoid accessing services all together, even when their health, safety and security depend on it.

The study appears in the April 2003 issue of *The Gerontologist*.

Brotman and others argue that given the context of the current reality, health and social services must begin to ask themselves profound questions about how to transform the system to enhance equity.

MISCELLANEOUS

A new website for the European Lesbian Network:
<http://resealesbien.free.fr>

March 25th, 2003 - The first openly transgender rabbinical student has been admitted to the seminary of America's largest branch of Judaism.

For more details:
<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/03/25/2>

April 15th, 2003: OutQ, the first 24-hour U.S. satellite radio channel for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender listeners, started broadcasting on Monday.

For more details:
<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/04/15/2>

April 16th, 2003: ABC will make history as the first of the big three networks to air a same-sex kiss during daytime programming.

For more details:
<http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/04/16/3>

New Resource: Same-sex couples in numerous countries are granted greater rights, benefits and protections than those living in the United States. Visit HRC FamilyNet's new resource on international rights for a survey of marriage rights, domestic partner benefits and immigration benefits worldwide.

<http://www.hrc.org/familynet/chapter.asp?chapter=197>

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

JUNE:

For adults and kids: On **Saturday June 14th** we'll be meeting at **Parc Lafontaine** (on Sherbrooke between Parc Lafontaine and Papineau, bus 24) at **11 a.m.** for a **picnic / BBQ**. The meeting place is at the children's playground (which is near Rachel at the north end of the park). Bring your own food, drinks, blankets, games, music and swimsuits for the kids. If it rains, the picnic will take place on Sunday June 15th, instead.

JULY:

For adults and kids: Sylvie and Sylvia from our association are excited to offer you a **Day out in the country** on their property at **Val Morin** on **Saturday July 5th**. You can swim, kayak, picnic, windsurf, walk, cycle, play volleyball etc., etc. Singing and a camp-fire are planned for later in the evening.

Bring your bathing suits, picnic blankets and everything you'd need for a beautiful day in the country. The BBQ will be available for grilling your hot-dogs and hamburgers, etc. The chalet will be open to you for using the washroom, etc. and parking is easy.

If it rains the activity will take place on July 12th instead. More info on this activity and directions to get to the chalet will be sent to you in June.

AUGUST:

On **Saturday August 2nd**, from **11:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, along with other community organizations, we will have an information kiosk for the **"Journée communautaire"** as part

of the Pride festivities. We encourage you to join us there both to support our group and to find out about other community groups that may be of interest to you. Kiosks will be grouped on **Berri between Ste. Catherine and René-Levesque as well as on Ste-Catherine between St-Denis and St-Hubert.** Food will be available on the site. Special activities are planned for the kids!

The **Gay Pride Parade** will take place on **Sunday August 3rd, beginning at 12:00 p.m.** This year again, the route will begin at **René- Lévesque (Dorchester) corner Guy** and finish at St-Denis. The minute of silence will be at 13:30. We will be contacting you with more information concerning our spot in the parade, a few weeks before the event.

BULLETIN BOARD

MISCELLANEOUS:

THANK-YOU: Hearty thank-you to Nathalie Tremblay who has done the lion's share of translations for this year's newsletters. Nathalie is a professional translator who does this all for us in her spare time. Thanks also to **France Lord** for excellent proofing.

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is encouraging English speaking and bilingual lesbian couples, and singles, to consider becoming **foster parents.** There are babies, pre-schoolers and older children who are waiting for a foster home. For some the plan will be to help them return to their families. For other children, the plan will be to work toward **adoption.** What a remarkable feeling it is to know you have made a difference in the life of a child by providing a stable, safe and loving environment. For more information, please call, **Rena Rubin, Foster Care Recruiter, at 932-7161, local 416, or send an e-mail to rena_rubin@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.**

Research on bilingual children: Ste-Justine Hospital, in conjunction with Dalhousie University in Halifax, is presently looking for **parents of children aged 24 to 42 months who speak English + any other language,** for research on bilingualism and its effects on child development. The study includes 2 visits at the Centre de Réadaptation Marie-Enfant in Montreal. Participant families will be

provided with \$15 to cover any expenses and scheduling will be at your convenience. For further information about the study, or to participate, please call or e-mail **Lisa Campisi**; phone: (514) 374-1710 ext: 8610, email: **recherchelangage@hotmail.com** . (Approved by the committee on ethical research of Ste-Justine Hospital)

The bulletin board is a free forum for members to communicate amongst each other. If you want to post an announcement in the next issue please send it to us at any time to info@aml-lma.org or by post to AML, 2401 Coursol, Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8. If you have something to advertise, sell, rent or buy...anything where money must change hands, you can place an ad in the newsletter. Ads cost 20 cents per word.
