

LESBIAN MOTHERS ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

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Future Plans

By Mona Greenbaum, LMA coordinator

Much has changed for lesbian mothers in Quebec over the past few years and so as the Lesbian Mothers Association passes the benchmark of our 5th anniversary we have come to a turning point. It is time for us now to evaluate where the association is going, what our future goals are and where we want to prioritize our efforts.

From the number of phone calls and e-mails we receive each week it is obvious that the need for an association still exists. Many of these calls are from women who need information on starting their family. We have thus expanded our services for mothers-to-be this year with a series of workshops of interest to future parents. For those of us who already have kids, it isn't hard to remember back to the time when we were first considering parenthood and how important it was at this junction to have support and accurate information.

An ongoing task of the association is to give presentations or do interviews for the public at large. Sensitization of professionals in the health care and education sectors remains an extremely important goal. We believe that the legal recognition that we have obtained is meaningless if it is not accompanied by a social recognition as well.

We would also like to get our members who already have kids more involved in LMA activities. For this reason, we are planning more social events and parties for this year and will try (within our budget) to have exciting entertainment and animation for the kids each time we have a get-together. We always remember one of our founding principles, which was for our children to grow up in an open, supportive milieu where they do not feel that they are alone just because they are part of an alternative family. We remain true to this goal, but of course it can only become true with your involvement on a regular basis.

At this point we would also like to encourage parents and future parents to help out with this newsletter. If any of you would like to write an article we would be more than willing to print it. Also if you have ideas about what you would like to hear more about, please send them to us. We will happily do the research. Otherwise you'll have to read Mona's stream of consciousness issue after issue.

This year we would also like to begin branching out beyond the confines of Quebec. Our motto is networking and we intend to do so by a number of means. As a result of the pan-Canadian Egale conference last May, we decided to put together a cross-Canada internet network for people who are actively involved in promoting social change for LGBT families. Whether you advocate in the LGBT community, in the schools, in health care, at work or in your everyday neighbourhood setting, if you consider yourself to be an activist, you may be interested in joining this list where we plan to share information and resources. We are hoping that the list will be up and running by early December. Check the Egale web site (www.egale.ca) for more information.

We have also begun to work hard to organize an international conference for LGBT parents for the summer of 2006 in conjunction with the "Gay Games." A committee which was supposed to come together this fall to begin the planning of this huge international conference has been put on hold for now because of the difficulties that Montreal organizers have had in negotiations with the Federation of Gay Games (see story inside). For now it seems that Montreal will hold its own games, outside of the FGG umbrella and so we are still hopeful about continuing our own plans for a conference. We are collaborating for this with Dr. Danielle Julien and her *Equipe de recherche sur les familles homoparentales* at the *Université de Québec à Montréal*.

Meanwhile the LMA has begun to develop a huge list of gay and lesbian parents and parenting organizations around the world. Naturally a large percentage of the respondents to our initial outreach have been from Canada, the United States, Western Europe (especially Scotland and Scandinavia) and the United Kingdom. In a world where many countries still consider homosexuality to be a crime (in some, even meriting the death penalty) it is impossible for our conference to be completely international. For example a woman from India wrote:

"Thank you for your email. I am G. K. a lesbian in Mumbai who has started an organization to support lesbian and bisexual women in Mumbai City.

I am afraid that you are jumping the gun here if I may be liberal with my ideas to you. There is no support system or rights for lesbian and bisexual women here in India, so talking about gay parenting is something I do not see for quite sometime. Not to say that there aren't women or men who are gay parents here, but they keep their sexuality under wraps. Sometimes not even the children know about their parents' sexuality. It is hard enough for a single lesbian to come out, leave aside LGBT parents".

Despite these limitations, we are beginning to increase the number of positive contacts in Asia and Africa. For example we recently made contact with a group in the Philippines:

"Rainbow Greetings from LeAP!

Your group's effort to organize an LGBT conference on parenting for LGBT parents is very timely and is a very welcome endeavor. We attended the Sydney Gay Games and unfortunately we did not see any conference of that nature.

In the Philippines there are numerous lesbian and gay parents but an organization of such is not yet in the making. Some of our members are lesbian parents and would-be parents. Some have kids from a previous heterosexual relationship and some are planning to have some in the future.

Yes, you can send thru our organizations the questionnaire so we can distribute them to as many LGBT organizations and individuals here in the Philippines".

We have received positive responses like this from organizations in places as diverse as Hong Kong, Japan, Hungary, the Ukraine, Costa Rica, Israel, South Africa, Peru, etc.

Imagine meeting and sharing experiences with lesbian moms from countries all around the world. At this point in time we are looking for volunteers from within the association to help with organizing this big event. Although the conference may seem far off, it is not too soon to start planning the numerous aspects that are involved in making a conference work. We will need people to help orient and welcome conference attendants, to facilitate work-shops, to do Spanish translations, to help with child care during the conference, to accommodate guests in their homes,

to put together the program, etc. We are also thinking of getting together a children's choir who will hopefully perform at the opening ceremony of the games. If you or your kids would like to get involved, please let us know as soon as you can. Contact us at info@aml-lma.org or 514-846-1543.

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- September 2003-November 2003

MONTREAL

September 6th, 2003 - Rendezvous Montreal 2006, the organizers of the **Gay Games**, announce that **Radio Canada** will air the opening and closing ceremonies of the gay games as well as one hour each day of the sporting events. In addition, the governments of Montreal, Quebec and Canada have pledged over **\$5 million in grants and services** to the games.

October 31st, 2003 - A bitter feud has placed the Montreal Gay Games in jeopardy. The **Montreal Organizing Committee and the Federation of Gay Games (FGG) are at loggerheads over financing and control of the 2006 event**, says Mark Tewksbury, the co-president of the 2006 Organizing Committee. Although the FGG voted on and accepted Montreal's plans back in 2001 they are now getting nervous. Montreal has already agreed to downsize their budget to 16 million and 16,000 participants to assuage fears that the Montreal gay games will lose disastrous amounts of money like their predecessors in NYC, Sydney and Amsterdam.

But now the FGG wants even further reductions projecting athlete participation for the 2006 Montreal games at only 12,000 and demanding full control of the budget. The organizers claim this lower number will lead to "financial disaster."

The FGG has not commented on the committee's allegations. No Gay Games has made money. The Sydney 2002 games, which at the time were to have been the biggest in the 20 year history of the Gay Games, were scaled back several times and almost cancelled over money problems.

FGG demands that Montreal acquiesce before November 7th when the FGG has its annual convention in Chicago.

November 12th, 2003 - After a weekend of unsuccessful negotiations Montreal walked away unsatisfied from the Federation of Gay Games annual convention. Shortly afterwards, the **FGG which licenses the event, rejected Montreal's plans to hold the games under its logo**, but Montreal organizers say that a huge athletics event for gays will still be held in Montreal in 2006.

The FGG wanted complete control of the budget without any legal obligations and they would not have participated in fund-raising for the games but still would have collected almost \$1 million for the trademark rights.

Asked whether the federation would hold the Gay Games elsewhere in 2006 at the same time as Montreal's games, Richard Hogan, the FGG's vice-president said the board is discussing a contingency plan to select a new city. The three candidates are Atlanta, Chicago or Los Angeles. The results will be announced in about 4 months.

Louise Roy, Montreal 2006 chief executive director said the federation's decision will not affect Montreal's plans. "If you give the choice to an American to come to Montreal or Atlanta for gay games, he or she will come to Montreal," she said. "Montreal is one of the world's top 10 gay destinations. All we lost is the logo of the federation but nothing else".

QUEBEC

September 25th, 2003 - **The appeal by two religious groups of last year's Quebec Superior Court decision in favour of same-sex marriage has been postponed.** In September 2002 a Quebec Superior Court justice ruled that denying gays and lesbians the right to marry is a violation of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This landmark decision was similar to decisions by the Ontario Superior Court and the British Columbia Court of Appeals. The ruling said that the creation of civil unions in Quebec, the most complete legal union for same-sex couples to date in Canada, "does not replace the right of access to marriage."

Although the federal government decided not to appeal the ruling, two religious groups, the Catholic League for Human Rights and the Evangelical Order of Canada decided to take Michael Hendricks and René Leboeuf back to court by appealing Judge Lemelin's decision.

Just days before the scheduled hearing however, the lawyer for the two religious groups was hospitalized with an advanced cancer. He asked for a 6-month postponement to the trial. No other lawyer is available to plead the case. The chief Judge Michel Robert was unhappy with this postponement and was determined to hear the case before the Supreme Court reviews the parliament's draft bill on same-sex marriage. He therefore has scheduled the hearing for January 26th, 2004. So it looks like Quebec will still have to wait a little while longer before hearing gay wedding bells.

CANADA

September 17th, 2003 - *365Gay.com* - **Ottawa** - The Canadian House of Commons has passed legislation making it **illegal to promote hatred of gays and lesbians**. The private member's bill, authored by gay New Democrat Svend Robinson adds sexuality to a law which bans hatred towards minorities in speech, publications, on radio and television (bill C-250).

The vote in the House of Commons passed at 141-110.

"If we're going to say no to the promotion of hatred and violence based on religion, color, race and ethnic origin, surely we should say that gay bashing and promotion of hatred and violence against gay and lesbian people is just as unacceptable," Robinson said during debate on the bill.

But, like gay marriage, the issue of adding sexuality to hate crime legislation was highly contentious with a wide variety of conservative religious groups vocally opposed. An umbrella group of conservative organizations took out full-page newspaper ads showing pictures of families with tape over their mouths and warnings that Robinson's bill could make the Bible illegal.

October 23rd, 2003 - *365Gay.com* - **Toronto** - **George Smitherman has become Ontario's first openly gay cabinet minister.** Smitherman was elected to a second term in the legislature earlier this month, part of a massive Liberal victory that swept the Conservatives from office.

Smitherman, who becomes Minister of Health, was sworn in at a ceremony at the Ontario legislature along with the other members of Premier Dalton McGuinty's new cabinet. He has also been named one of three members of the powerful policy and priorities committee of the cabinet, which serves as an inner cabinet and makes many key decisions.

Smitherman represents downtown Toronto. As Minister of Health, he will oversee an annual budget of \$27.5-billion, up \$10-billion from that of the previous Tory government.

October 28th, 2003 - *CBC-NEWS-online* - **Ottawa** - Members of Parliament have passed the **federal government's reproductive technology bill, C-13**, which includes regulations on human cloning, stem-cell research and sperm donors. The bill passed by a vote of 149-109. Canada is one of the last countries in the world not to regulate in that area. Parliament had been debating Bill C-13 since the spring.

The bill will ban human cloning and prohibit the sale of human sperm, eggs and embryos, but permit embryonic stem-cell research. Some MPs believe embryos are the beginning of life and should not be used for stem-cell research. This debate, as well as numerous other ethical issues has delayed the passage of this bill which has been under discussion since 1993.

Important for lesbians, but not often mentioned in the news, is a passage in the bill, which states that all women must have access to fertility treatments regardless of marital status or sexual orientation. Although 3 fertility clinics in Quebec currently provide access to lesbians, there are still a number of clinics that will only see married women. If the bill passes it will become illegal for any clinic to discriminate.

Another aspect that affects lesbians is the sale of sperm. Despite the prohibition on sperm sale, the bill does contain a clause that states that although donors cannot sell their sperm, they can nevertheless be compensated for their expenses (e.g. missed morning of work, transportation, etc). With this loophole, sperm banks will probably be able to continue as they do.

The bill still has to go to the Senate for approval, and there is a possibility Parliament may rise before the bill receives royal assent.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

(skip over this section if you've had enough on marriage)

August 29th, 2003- Parliamentarians in **Poland** debate legislation that is designed to grant same-sex couples rights similar to married couples.

August 30th, 2003 - **Ottawa** - The federal government's plan to legalize same-sex marriage faces challenges at the Supreme Court from Alberta and Quebec, and British Columbia reserves the right to step in as well. The proposed legislation has been referred to the Supreme Court for an opinion on its constitutionality before being put to a free vote in Parliament. Quebec is not opposed to same-sex marriages but wants to preserve civil unions in that province as well as its rights over marriage licenses and registries.

September 2nd, 2003 – Netherlands - In response to the Vatican's fight against same-sex unions, Dutch gay rights groups publish a guide to gay marriage. The 60-page manual outlines how and why the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize gay marriage. The Netherlands has seen more than 4,000 gay couples marry since it was made legal in 2002.

September 5th, 2003 – Ottawa - A new public opinion poll suggests the debate over same-sex marriage continues to divide Canadians, especially along generational lines. The poll, conducted by the firm NFOCF Group, finds Canadians younger than 35 far more supportive of legalizing gay and lesbian marriages than people of retirement age. But the results also suggest that Canadians on both sides of the issue have little appetite for marriage to be left exclusively to churches. There's also a feeling that the courts in Canada have too much power.

52% say there is nothing morally wrong with homosexuality

57% say that homosexual marriage does not threaten the institution of marriage

65% say homosexual couples should be treated the same as heterosexual couples

September 10th, 2003 - The **Human Rights Campaign** expresses its great disappointment at a statement from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), supporting the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA), a bill proposed in Congress that would permanently deny same-sex couples the rights and protections of civil marriage. Passage of the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment would mark the first time in U.S. history that the Constitution was amended to specifically deny rights and protections to a single group of Americans.

September 10th, 2003 - Roman Catholic Archbishop of **Montreal**, Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, denounces same-sex marriages, calling it the first step toward legalized incest.

September 11th, 2003 - Despite showing support for legislation that would give the marriage rights to gay couples, **Scotland** decides to hold back from creating a specific law.

September 12th, 2003 - Quebec - a province-wide rights group begins a postcard campaign to rally support for gay marriage. *La Fondation Emergence*, the organizers of the *Journée de Lutte Contre l'Homophobie* prints 10,000 postcards - to be mailed to MPs.

September 15th, 2003 - A new nation-wide Coalition - **Canadians for Equal Marriage** - is launched. Canadians for Equal Marriage is a non-partisan, grassroots initiative that includes religious leaders, parents, youth, labour groups, children of same-sex parents and countless others committed to upholding the Canadian values of inclusion, equality and respect. As one of their first initiatives, Canadians for Equal Marriage present MPs with more than 20,000 signatures gathered on petitions from all regions of the country.

September 16th, 2003 – Ottawa - Heated national debate over gay marriage intensifies, as opponents in Parliament almost block the government's proposed same-sex marriage legislation. Stephen Harper, leader of the conservative Canadian Alliance party, introduces a motion that calls on Parliament to "take all necessary steps" to deny same-sex couples access to civil marriage. Harper says he wants Parliament to deal with the issue, not the courts. The reference to taking "all necessary steps" to defend opposite-sex marriage is a veiled reference to the "notwithstanding clause", which enables Parliament to override court decisions and deny same-sex couples their basic constitutional rights. Parliament has never before invoked the notwithstanding clause. The motion to legally define marriage as a union between one man and one woman is defeated in the House of Commons by a 137-132 vote.

September 17th, 2003 – Ottawa - Nervous politicians in Canada's governing Liberal party ratchet up the pressure on Prime Minister Jean Chretien to call a fall vote on legislation to give same-sex couples the right to marry. The closeness of the vote in Parliament on a motion to support marriage as being between a man a woman is causing concern for some Liberals frightened gay marriage will become the dominant issue in an election expected in the spring. MPs from rural ridings and those facing stiff competition say the issue could mean their defeat and possibly that of the government. They want the divisive issue dealt with as quickly as possible.

But, the Supreme Court will not hear the issue before spring. Chretien would rather wait for the legal opinion from the high court before calling a vote. His reasoning is that if the court endorses the draft bill there could not be a constitutional challenge to the legislation in the future.

September 18th, 2003 – Toronto - The first gay couple to be legally married in Canada is refused entry into the United States. US Customs and Immigration officers turn Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell back at Toronto's Pearson International Airport when they attempt to board a flight to Georgia. The couple is rejected after filling out a form identifying themselves as a family.

September 25th, 2003 - Ottawa - With only one week of existence the Canadians for Equal Marriage web site manages to gather and send 1.3 million e-mails to all the members of the House of Commons.

October 2nd, 2003 - Washington, D.C. - The proposed Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) banning same-sex marriage now has 90 sponsors in Congress. The sponsors are all members of the Republican Party and, proponents of the ban say support is growing.

October 6th, 2003 - Washington, D.C. -To the alarm of many gay rights advocates, President George W. Bush signs a proclamation endorsing the "Marriage Protection Week," to be held Oct. 12-18. Defining marriage as "a union between a man and a woman," the proclamation calls on "all Americans to join (Bush) in expressing support for the institution of marriage with all its benefits to our people, our culture and our society."

"Marriage is a sacred institution," the proclamation states, "and its protection is essential to the continued strength of our society." The campaign clearly excludes same-sex marriages from this "protection".

October 6th, 2003 – Ottawa - Two conservative Christian lobby groups ask the Supreme Court of Canada to allow them to appeal an Ontario court ruling that gave same-sex couples the right to marry. It is highly unusual for an appeal to be launched by a party not directly involved in the original case.

October 7th, 2003 - Hong Kong - A gay couple who flew from Hong Kong to Toronto to marry are fighting to have their union recognized at home. Roddy Shaw and Nelson Ng are preparing to take the Hong Kong government to court to win tax status as a married couple. They say that the government is breaking its own laws by not recognizing their marriage.

October 7th, 2003 - Moscow - A Russian Orthodox priest is defrocked for performing the country's first gay wedding ceremony. The church's Holy Synod rules to defrock Rev. Vladimir Enert for the wedding, which it calls "blasphemy against the sacrament." Denis Gogolev and Mikhail Morozov were married September 1st in a highly publicized ceremony in the Volga River city of Nizhny Novgorod.

October 9th, 2003 – Ottawa - The Canadian Supreme Court wastes no time in dismissing an effort to reopen the Ontario marriage case that legalized same-sex marriage in the province last June. In a unanimous decision a five-judge panel says that conservative religious and family groups cannot appeal the provincial decisions. This decision means that those same-sex marriages already performed in Ontario and British Columbia cannot be challenged, and future gay marriages cannot be prevented. The two provinces comprise more than 50% of the population of Canada, and under provincial law, there is no residency requirement impeding same-sex couples from the rest of Canada or abroad from marrying in Ontario and B.C.

October 19th, 2003 - Fredericton - More than 2,500 people stage a protest in the capital of New Brunswick denouncing the Canadian government's plan to legalize same-sex marriage. The demonstration, on the lawn of the legislature of the Maritime province, is one of the largest yet held by an umbrella group of conservative religious organizations. The Canada Family Action Coalition, which bills itself as a grassroots organization promoting a Christian point of view is made up of Focus on the Family Canada, Real Women of Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, and a collection of fundamentalist Protestant, Sikh, and Moslem churches and mosques.

October 22nd, 2003 – Toronto - A new poll shows that despite a massive campaign by conservative lobby groups, support for same-sex marriage remains high. The Environics Research poll, taken between September 18th and October 10th shows that 56 percent of all Canadians support gay marriage. This is a three-point increase over a similar survey done during the summer. 42 percent are opposed, a drop of one percent.

October 23rd 2003 - Sweden's national church takes a step to make its same-sex marriage blessing service legally binding, as senior clerics vote to consider a draft proposal next year.

October 23rd, 2003 - Madrid - Three same-sex couples, supported by area politicians, apply for marriage licenses in two Spanish cities, Madrid and Valencia, throwing the legal system into confusion.

October 27th, 2003 – Taipei - The government of Taiwan announces that it will bring in legislation to legalize same-sex marriage. It will make the island nation, the first in Asia to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry. The cabinet and the president of Taiwan are preparing the legislation jointly. In a statement, the government says that the new law will be ready for parliamentary review in December. The bill would give same-sex couples all of the rights currently enjoyed by those in heterosexual marriages, including the right to adopt children.

October 28th, 2003 – Vancouver - Seven Vancouver area Anglican priests face formal charges in an ecclesiastical court in connection with a feud over blessing ceremonies for same-sex couples. The seven, all in the Diocese of New Westminster, have been in conflict with their bishop, Michael Ingham after the diocese voted last year to allow parishes to perform the ceremonies. All 7 are part of a coalition of parishes formally opposed to the blessings, who refer to themselves as the Anglican Communion in New Westminster. The movement is behind a vocal campaign to stop the elevation of Gene Robinson, a gay priest in the US to become bishop of New Hampshire.

November 10th, 2003 - The **Human Rights Campaign (HRC)** reveals its \$1 million ad campaign aimed at educating the public about why same-sex couples deserve civil marriage licenses.

November 10th, 2003 – London -The British government says it will bring in legislation in the upcoming session of Parliament to recognize same-sex couples. The Civil Partnerships Bill would be the most far-reaching change to British laws relating to homosexuality since gay sex was

legalized in the 1960s. It will amount to legal recognition of "gay marriage," but not use the term "marriage".

November 18th, 2003 - The **Massachusetts** Supreme Judicial Court rules that same- and opposite-sex couples must be given equal civil marriage rights under the state constitution. The ruling in Goodridge et al. v. Department of Public Health makes the state the first in the US to grant same-sex couples the right to a civil marriage license. Ruling that civil marriage in Massachusetts means "the voluntary union of two persons as spouses, to the exclusion of all others," the Court allows the Legislature 180 days to change the civil marriage statutes accordingly.

INTERNATIONAL

September 15th, 2003 - *Gay.com U.K* - The **Indian government** has come under attack from gay rights groups over its **refusal to decriminalize homosexuality**. The government told its courts that it had no intention to ditch section 377 of the Penal Code, which says gay people can face up to 10 years in prison. It added that homosexuality was against the beliefs of the majority of the country, and therefore shouldn't be legalized.

However, civil rights groups have told the country's media that the government is clinging to an archaic and prejudiced law, which is embarrassing for the country. The existing law is also dangerous for gay men, they claim. "The government's stand makes gay men vulnerable to extortion, abuse and violence," said gay activist Ashtok Row Kavi.

September 18th, 2003 - *365Gay.com* – **London** - British gays are **celebrating the end of the notorious Section 28, the law that prohibited "the promotion of homosexuality" in schools**. The law repealing Section 28 has received royal assent. Section 28 was enacted under Margaret Thatcher in 1988 and was considered the single most homophobic piece of legislation on the books. Although it has never been used in a prosecution it became a focal point in the struggle for equal rights.

September 19th, 2003 – *HRC news*- **California** - Gov. Gray Davis signs **Assembly Bill 205** into law. The landmark bill, sponsored by Equality California and authored by Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg, grants **registered domestic partners** in California nearly all of the state level legal protections and rights currently available only to married couples.

AB 205 provides couples who are registered as domestic partners with protections such as child custody and child support requirements, the right to make funeral arrangements, community property, financial support during and after a relationship, mutual responsibility for debts, and death benefits for surviving partners of police and firefighters.

By September 22nd, **Melissa Etheridge** and her current partner got "married" (<http://www.365gay.com/NewsContent/092203etheridgePartner.htm>) and **Gov. Davis was sued** by a republican lawmaker in California: (http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=34739)

September 24th, 2003 - *365Gay.com* - **Tashkent, Uzbekistan** - A **gay journalist imprisoned** in Uzbekistan on what human rights groups call trumped up charges has been denied release while his case is being appealed. Ruslan Sharipov was sentenced in August to 5 1/2 years in prison after pleading guilty to charges of sodomy, having sex with minors and running a brothel. An

outspoken critic of the Uzbek government, Shapirov denies the charges and says he was forced into confessing as a result of torture by prison guards while he was awaiting trial.

September 24th, 2003 - In yet another massive crackdown, **police in Egypt arrested 62 men** from a well-known gay cruising area, booking each of the men on charges of "debauchery."
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/09/24/2>

October 6th, 2003 -365Gay.com – **Kampala - Ugandan gays** tired of decades of anti-gay policies have issued a direct **challenge to president Yoweri Museveni, demanding civil rights** or they will form their own political party. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Uganda, Gala, made the threat in a letter sent October 4, to the minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and copied to the Speaker of Parliament, the Uganda Human Rights Commission and political parties and organizations.

Gala wants constitutional protections for gays and lesbians, homosexuality decriminalized, and laws forbidding same-sex couples from marrying overturned. Next to Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Museveni runs the most repressive anti-gay regime in Africa. Homosexuality remains illegal in Uganda. Gays are routinely arrested on the streets of Kampala, the capital, and often beaten and tortured while in prison.

October 9th, 2003 - PlanetOut.com - A **Vatican official's claim that condoms do not work** in protecting people from HIV -- a claim repeated in many parts of the world -- has been attacked as "dangerous."

The head of the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for the Family, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, claimed in a British TV report that condoms are useless in blocking transmission of the virus because of tiny holes that allow the HIV through. Trujillo added that governments should not advise people to use condoms at all. The World Health Organization (WHO) attacked the claims, reported in *The Guardian*.

"These incorrect statements about condoms and HIV are dangerous when we are facing a global pandemic which has already killed more than 20 million people and currently affects around 42 million," a spokeswoman said.

In a Panorama program shown on BBC1, the cardinal, bishops and nuns in various parts of the world were shown to tell people, many of whom are HIV-positive, not to use condoms with their sexual partners.

October 27th, 2003 -365Gay.com – **Sydney** - The **Australian government** has passed **new pension laws**, but refused to consider granting pension rights to same-sex couples. The new law delivers tax cuts for high-income earners and extra pension money to the poor. It allows partners in heterosexual relationships to inherit each other's pensions and death benefits.

The government had brokered a deal with the small Australian Democrats party to ensure the bill's passage, but midway through the process in the Senate, the Democrats said they would not support the bill unless it contained provisions treating same-sex couples on par with heterosexual couples. The government, which had so far **refused any recognition for same-sex couples**, refused and with the support of independent senators the bill passed nevertheless.

Greens Senator Bob Brown said the defeat of the amendment was a sad day for Australian human rights.

November 3rd, 2003 - *365Gay.com / HRC news / Planet Out / CBC News* – (A story of incredible courage!) - **Durham, New Hampshire - Gene Robinson, the first openly gay man to be made a bishop in the worldwide Anglican faith** was installed in a glittering ceremony as mounted police separated noisy protestors outside. The 56-year-old priest was presented by his daughters, his ex-wife and his partner, Mark Andrew. Security was tight around the ceremony, as Robinson had received death threats and is under 24-hour FBI guard.

A statement from the New Hampshire diocese made a few days prior to the ceremony said that, "Robinson was elected based on his nearly three decades of ministry in the diocese, his considerable pastoral skills, and his vision for ministry. His sexuality was incidental to his call to serve as our bishop".

But days earlier a summit of the leaders of the Anglican faith from around the world warned that Robinson's consecration could split the church and urged him to step down. The 2.3 million-member Episcopal Church is the U.S. branch of Anglicanism, which has 77 million members worldwide. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, there is no centralized authority in Anglican Communion.

In a service that combined pageantry and ritual, Robinson was overcome with emotion several times. The service was conducted by the head of the Episcopal Church, presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. The highlight came as some 45 bishops laid hands on Robinson confirming him in his new post.

The three-hour service also contained room for dissent. Assistant Bishop David Bena of Albany, N.Y., spoke for 38 opposing bishops in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. Reading from a statement, Bena said Robinson's "'chosen lifestyle' is incompatible with Scripture and the teaching of this church." He said that his group and many other bishops in the worldwide Anglican Communion will not recognize Robinson as a fellow bishop.

The Rev. Earl Fox of the Diocese of Pittsburgh then stood and delivered a description of gay sex so graphic that many in the congregation of 4,000 were visibly uncomfortable. Griswold finally told him to "get to the point." Fox said the "health consequences" of homosexuality were "devastating". He then stormed from the building.

Outside, more than 200 representatives of LGBT groups and gay Episcopalians rallied in support of Robinson's elevation. But, a short distance away, separated by police on horseback were a handful of demonstrators from the Fred Phelps clan, carrying "God Hates Fags" placards.

Conservative Episcopalians opposed to gays in the Church held a prayer service in a nearby church. The American Anglican Council, the largest and most outspoken of the traditionalist elements in the faith, organized the service. The AAC released a statement calling Robinson's elevation "a grievous day in the history of our church. Heresy has been held up as holy," the council said. "Blasphemy has been redefined as blessing".

In London, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams - the spiritual head of the Anglican Communion, which includes the Episcopal Church - issued a statement that night saying that the divisions caused by Robinson's elevation "are a matter of deep regret." He warned that Robinson's consecration could precipitate a "huge crisis" that could result in a schism.

Anglican church leaders in Nigeria condemned the consecration. With more than 17 million worshippers, the Nigerian Church is the largest community in the Anglican Communion, and its leaders have been at the forefront of opposition to Gene Robinson's appointment as bishop. They have already "excommunicated" New Hampshire, and the Canadian diocese of New Westminster which permits priests to perform Blessing Ceremonies for same-sex couples.

Robinson reached out to disgruntled Church conservatives during his address. "They must know if they must leave, they will always be welcomed back," Robinson said to cheers.

Bishop Michael Ingham, who presides over the Vancouver-area diocese where the same-sex blessings rite was approved last year, agreed the blessing has caused distress among conservative Anglicans around the world.

But he added: "We would say as well for our part that the act of rejecting and discriminating against homosexual people around the world causes pain and distress around the world too," he said. "Nobody has a monopoly on pain."

And, the man Robinson is replacing, retiring bishop Douglas Theuner said he was overjoyed at Robinson's election. "[Robinson] will stand as a symbol of the unity of the church in a way none of the rest of us can" because he will "bring into our fellowship an entire group of Christians hitherto unacknowledged in the church."

MISCELLANEOUS

Sept 23rd, 2003 - *submitted by an LGBT Parenting Network member – Toronto* - "Just wanted to share some good news! When I submitted my taxes this year I included the **costs of sperm as a medical expense** (sent in all the receipts). I wasn't sure if it would be accepted but decided to try it. Well, it was accepted and resulted in a rather nice rebate!! Just thought you should know. Pass this on to anyone you know who is using costly sperm bank services!"

October 8th, 2003 - The long-running U.K. soap opera *Coronation Street* featured a gay kiss that was watched by nearly 14 million people.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2003/10/08/4>

October 19th, 2003 - *365Gay.com* - **Bombay - LGBT film festivals** are nothing new for most western gay communities, but for India's gays the country's first film festival was major step forward in self-identity. In a country where homosexuality remains a criminal offence punishable with sentences from 10 years to life imprisonment, just buying a ticket to the film festival, held this weekend in Bombay, was a major political statement.

Hundreds of people, including lesbian and gay activists, their parents, relatives and college students packed into the small auditorium to watch the films that delved into the angst of being gay in tradition-bound India. The festival featured more than 40 films, including documentaries and experimental films from 16 countries, including the US, Britain, Germany, South Korea and France.

"We need to create public awareness and confront prejudice," said Chatura, an activist with Humjinsi, a Bombay-based lesbian support group, who uses only one name. "We hope the film festival will dispel ignorance about us and our lives and spark debate."

Most Indian gays live at home with their parents, meet their partners at private parties and invite them home as "friends" for fear of being disowned by their families. Nevertheless, LGBT groups are becoming increasingly vocal. In June there was a gay pride parade in Calcutta, in eastern India.

October 21st, 2003 - A groundbreaking **documentary on name-calling and bullying--solely in the voices of youth**--has been released to kick off an American campaign to prevent violence in junior high schools. ***Let's Get Real*** is the latest production in the highly acclaimed series of films about diversity from the *Respect for All Project*.

"*Let's Get Real* lets students speak for themselves about the dangers they face in the classroom. This film should be required viewing for anyone interested in providing safe schools for young people," said Jerry Newberry, Executive Director, National Education Association Health Information Network.

The film, directed by Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Debra Chasnoff and produced by Chasnoff, Helen S. Cohen and Kate Stillely, is designed to support students speaking up both to their peers and the adults in their lives, and to encourage empathy in order to prevent acts of aggression and violence.

"Ask most junior high school students or teachers about name-calling and bullying, and they'll tell you the problem is raging out of control," Chasnoff said. "While schools respond by trying to implement zero-tolerance policies, they're often at a loss for how to address the problem. We hope *Let's Get Real* will help youth and adults talk much more openly about what's really going on in the hallways."

Unlike other resources on the topic of bullying, *Let's Get Real* does not shy away from the sensitive social issues that often fuel conflicts at school. The students in the film speak directly, for example, about racial tension, anti-gay taunting, and sexual harassment.

Let's Get Real is the latest film from the *Respect for All Project*, which encompasses a series of films for youth, as well as printed curriculum guides and diversity-training programs for the adults who guide their development. Other films from the Project include *That's a Family!* (2000), a film for kids about family diversity that was screened at the White House, and *It's Elementary--Talking About Gay Issues in School* (1996), one of the most hotly discussed documentaries ever to air on public television.

The *Respect for All Project* is a program of Women's Educational Media, a nonprofit film production company that creates and distributes documentary films on economic and social justice issues. For additional information about the *Respect for All Project*, visit **www.respectforall.org**

November 2003: Check out the brand new **Canadian Transsexuals Fight For Rights Web Site: www.ctffr.org**. They are a newly formed group of activists who are courageously fighting for rights and proper health care. Read the excellent interview with Viviane Namaste. Yes, there are issues other than same-sex marriage!

RESEARCH

October 29th, 2003 - *Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network* - **Adoption agencies in the United States are increasingly willing to place children with lesbian and gay parents**, according to a national survey. Almost 60 percent of the nation's adoption agencies accept applications from openly lesbian and gay people, the survey found, while 40 percent have placed children in lesbian and gay homes.

"This is a very good sign for kids who need homes," said Adam Pertman, executive director of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute that conducted the survey. "It means that kids who need loving homes have improved prospects of getting them. The good news for the gay and lesbian community is that if you want to adopt, it's much easier to do than you probably thought it was."

One in five agencies said they rejected applicants who were gay or lesbian. About 25 percent also reported that on at least one occasion, birth parents have requested their child not be placed with gay or lesbian parents. Conversely, 15 percent reported that on at least one occasion birth parents specifically asked for or chose gay and lesbian parents.

The survey found that lesbians and gay men are more likely than heterosexuals to adopt "special needs" children, that is, older children, children of color or children with any kind of disability, including HIV infection. Agencies that work with special needs children were more likely to accept applications from gay parents. Two-thirds of international adoption agencies also accepted applications from gays.

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

DECEMBER:

Adults and kids: **On Saturday December 6th, from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.** we will be having our **6th annual Holiday Potluck Lunch**. It will be held as usual at the **Unitarian Church which is located at 5035 de Maisonneuve O., corner Claremont (metro Vendôme)**. If you're planning on attending please **contact us before December 1st** to let us know what you plan to bring. We suggest bringing enough for approximately 8 people. You can bring something in the categories of either **salad, main dish, dessert or beverage (e.g. juice or soft-drinks)**. Please do not to bring anything with peanuts onto the premises because of allergies. This year we will also have a special show for the kids with 2 clowns from **Clown Express** as well as a craft activity to celebrate the holidays! We are suggesting a donation of **\$5 per family (if possible)** in order to cover the expenses which include the rental of the space, the gate-keeper's salary, paper plates, napkins, etc as well as entertainment provided for the kids. Please call to let us know if you are planning on attending and what you would like to bring at **514-846-1543 before December 1st**.

JANUARY 2004:

For adults only: Saturday January 17th 2004: Workshop #3 for mama-wannabes: "Getting Down to Details"

Time: 6-7 p.m.: Hors d'œuvres (Middle-Eastern food) and from 7-10 p.m.: Two Guest Speakers: Diane Tkalec from the Montreal Fertility Center will give a presentation on all the services that the fertility clinic provides and Rena Rubin from Batshaw Youth and Family Services will speak about fostering and adoption. A Question and Answer Period will follow.

Place: 6642A Christophe Colomb (metro Beaubien)

Please RSVP with Sylvia or Sylvie at 514-521-9783 (so we can know how much food to prepare!)

FEBRUARY 2004:

For adults only: Friday February 6th at 7 p.m. A meeting for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual Parents and our allies. The Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec and (LMA-Québec) and L'Association des pères gais de Montréal (APGM) have the pleasure to co-jointly present: **Martine Fortier** speaking on **Homophobia in the Schools: New Tools Available to Combat Prejudices** (see enclosed flier).

Place: CCGLM, located at 2075 rue Plessis

Please copy this flier and distribute it to whoever you think might be interested (teachers, principals, school administrators, etc).

For more info please call Mona at 514-846-1543

BULLETIN BOARD

BIRTHS AND ADOPTIONS:

Namta Gupta and Sarah Cartwright are pleased to announce the birth of their son **Nalin Taylor Gupta-Cartwright**. Nalin was born on **July 10th, 2003**. The family is definitely settling into domestic bliss and enjoying the time that Nalin is still ultra portable!

Sylvie Jolin and Carleen Harrison are proud to announce the arrival of their son **Alex**, brother of **Amy (3)** and **Julia (18 months)**. He was born on **August 12th, 2003** weighing a total of 7 pounds, 5 ounces. We're a very happy and active family and still smiling!!

Shyann Morin and Lisa Lavoie are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter **Nelly** on **August 15th, 2003**. Nelly weighed 9 pounds 14 oz! And was 21 inches long. The family is doing physically and emotionally super well and are busy building a new home in the country!

Samuel Zola Mead-Williams was born at the Maison des Naissances Lac St Louis on **August 28th, 2003**, weighing in at a mighty nine pounds. Mummies **Hannah Williams and Es Mead** are thrilled, and all are well. "We can only sing the praises of everyone at the birth centre, who treated us with respect and have been totally supportive and caring of all of us".

MISCELLANEOUS:

Traductrices , redactrices, etc: We are looking for volunteers to help translate this newsletter from English to French. Any contribution (even 1-2 pages a month) would be appreciated. If you are available and willing, **please contact us at: info@aml-lma.org**

Are there any new moms out there who want to get together for coffee and conversation? If interested, call Suzie at 514-842-6884.

Bonjour à toutes ! Nous venons tout récemment d'amménager dans la ville de Québec et nous trouverions enrichissant de rencontrer d'autres mères et futurs mères lesbiennes comme que nous. Alors si ça vous intéresse, écrivez-nous ! À bientôt! Marie-Christyne Élie & Mélanie Lambert Mariechristyne@hotmail.com

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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.**

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.

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THERE IS NO FREEDOM WITHOUT FINANCIAL FREEDOM - LA LIBERTÉ PERSONNELLE PASSE PAR LA LIBERTÉ FINANCIÈRE. Financial services for individuals and small businesses: budgeting, debt management, investments, future planning, personal taxes, wealth enhancement strategies. No charge for initial consultations, 20% of all subsequent fees will be donated to the LMA. J. Freed, 514-483-5130, jfreed@videotron.ca