



2401, rue Coursol
Montreal, Quebec, H3J 1C8
Tel.: 514-846-1543
Email: info@aml-lma.org
Website: www.aml-lma.org

NEWSLETTER - VOLUME VI - No. III - March 2005

White Gold!

By Mona Greenbaum, LMA coordinator

For lesbian future-moms sperm is white gold! As coordinator of this group I have heard more talk about sperm than probably any other lesbian in Quebec (what a claim to fame). But it seems that we are not the only ones talking about it these days. The Ontario Court of Appeal is in the process of reviewing a case about the federal sperm regulations in which the Attorney General of Canada is facing off with a couple of lesbians and their donor.

This appeal was brought forward by Jane Doe (a pseudonym) and her female partner, in response to a court case that they lost in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Jane Doe is asking that the definition of "assisted conception" contained in the *Semen Regulations* be changed because, according to the couple and their lawyers, it infringes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Here's the story:

Jane Doe ("Jane") is a 39 year old lesbian who wanted to have a child. She has been in a monogamous relationship with her partner "W" for 13 years. W is the biological mother of "L" who was born in 1998. Jane legally adopted L. Jane wanted to give birth to a child as well and wanted her biological child and her adopted child, L, to be biologically related. They thus asked "B" a personal friend of Jane and W's and the biological father of "L" to be their donor. Jane had been trying to get pregnant since April 2000 with inseminations at home but was unsuccessful and sought medical help in the following year to get pregnant.

In February 2001, Jane visited a fertility clinic in Toronto. The doctor sent her for tests which showed that she had one blocked fallopian tube. He told Jane that that because of the law, he could only perform an insemination with semen from an anonymous donor or from a woman's spouse or sexual partner. We've heard this many times in Montreal as well. The doctor could not inseminate Jane using B's fresh semen. Jane was shocked. She was not interested in an anonymous donor because she wanted her children to be biologically related.

The only other option open to her, she was told, was to go to the sperm bank (Repromed) and have B's sperm screened and banked for six months. When she called Repromed to inquire about this she was told that because of the law B would have to be under 40 and heterosexual in order for them to process his sperm. B is neither.

Throughout this all Jane continued to try to get pregnant at home. Finally Jane became pregnant in May 2002 as a result of self-insemination at home. She gave birth to a baby boy in February 2003.

During her pregnancy Jane discovered a "Special Access Program" under the sperm regulations. The guidelines for this program suggest that the semen from a donor who was otherwise excluded based on criteria such as age or sexual orientation could perhaps qualify.

From the Canadian government's point of view, the *Semen Regulations* were enacted in response to evidence of inadequate safety standards in Canada's stored semen supply and concerns over the possibility of contamination (similar to the concerns with the blood supply in the 1980s). They impose stringent qualifications for semen donors and onerous testing, storage and record-keeping requirements. Although the *Semen Regulations* apply to "assisted conception", women who are using semen from a "spouse or sexual partner" are exempted from this regulation.

The lawyers argue that a lesbian who seeks to have a child using the semen from a known donor who is not her spouse or sexual partner should be in the same position as a heterosexual woman using her partner's sperm regarding the voluntary assumption of the risk and should similarly be exempted from the application of the *Semen Regulations*.

The government asserts that the *Special Access Program* allows a woman, who is otherwise prohibited from using the semen of certain known donors— such as those who are over 40 or gay – to ask her doctor to apply to the Minister of Health for special permission to use that semen if she can demonstrate "exceptional circumstances". The program however creates a number of significant disadvantages:

- 1) A lesbian, by definition can never be exempted from the regulations. She must ask the government for "permission" to use the semen of the donor of her choice. She must obtain a "permit" to procreate.
- 2) The law interferes with a woman's personal autonomy and her fundamental personal choice of who will be the father of her child.

On top of this, the *Special Access Program* is in conflict with the clear terms of the *Semen Regulations*. The regulations require a sperm bank at the outset, to reject donors who are gay and/or over 40. The Special Access Program however requires that the doctor apply only *after* the semen has been donated, tested, quarantined for six months and retested. The *Special Access* request must identify the semen that has been stored, reveal the results of all tests, and include a certification from the sperm bank. A woman seeking *Special Access* authorization would seem to be caught in a Catch-22: she cannot apply for special access until the semen has been banked but the banks are prohibited from accepting semen from donors who do not meet the criteria that special access seeks to override!

The lawyers in Jane Doe's case are arguing that, aside from these contradictions, being forced to have a known donor's sperm banked is against the charter of rights because: 1) women are thereby forced to wait 6 months, 2) fresh sperm is more effective for conception and 3) banking sperm is very expensive.

I have to admit that I am somewhat torn on this issue. Part of me irks at the idea of a big brother type of control by the state on how and with whom we procreate. The idea of applying for a permit seems outrageous. On the other hand I am not sure that I agree with Jane Doe's lawyers arguments on the use of fresh sperm. Doctors will do inseminations with fresh sperm if there is a sexual relationship because the assumption is that if the partner carries an STD then the patient will have already been exposed to it through normal sexual relations. When a doctor inseminates a woman with her husband's sperm he is not exposing her to a *new* risk.

Insemination with the fresh sperm of a known donor who is not a sexual partner is, from a medical standpoint, a risky procedure. Currently physicians have no way to ascertain that sperm given at any point in time is "clean". The best they can do is have a donor's sperm banked and tested.

Many would argue that we could sign an informed consent, acknowledging the risks and assuming full responsibility. In this way health care decisions are put into our own hands. People are allowed to take these risks in their own privacy, but should a doctor be forced to help people take them? Some doctors would refuse to perform an act that they would consider to put both mother and child at risk. Regardless of informed consent.

If a woman walks into a doctor's office with her donor, recruited yesterday from a want ad in the *Journal de Montreal*, must the doctor agree to carry out the insemination? It's a question of medical ethics: individual rights vs. professional responsibility. Tough one.

For those who do decide to bank their donor's sperm however the issue is much clearer. It should be done automatically, without government intervention and without the criteria that are currently applied. The point of banking sperm is so that we can be ensured of its safety. By making it complicated, and asking women to apply for permits, as in Jane's case, women are actually deflected from the health care system and toward what the government considers high risk behaviour : at-home inseminations.

Justice Brennan dismissed Jane Doe's 1st application on the basis of mootness. Jane had her baby and so the case was no longer relevant, he said. The case is going into appeal however. Jane may want to have a second child with the same donor and will be a few years older this time around and probably even more in need of medical intervention. Also the case has a broader impact for all of us who want to use known donors but prefer to do so with the aid and medical assurance of a fertility clinic.

A case to follow.

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 – December 2004 to February 2005

Montreal and Quebec News

January 13, 2005 - Sherbrooke University Hospital, in Eastern Quebec, is accused of refusing to give fertility treatment to lesbians. The *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* reports that two lesbian couples have been turned away by the hospital's fertility clinic because of their sexuality.

One of the couples who has filed a complaint with the province's Human Rights Commission called the CHUS to ask about in vitro fertilization. She told the *CBC* that she was told on the phone the clinic would not do the procedure for a lesbian. Another lesbian couple came forward with a similar story. The women say they were denied by the CHUS two years ago and went to a private clinic.

But, the hospital denies the allegations. Spokesperson Annie Perreault told the network that the fertility clinic has never discriminated against lesbian women wanting in vitro fertilization. "The CHUS is following the law and the law is clear. We are not doing any discrimination," she says.

Perreault says the fertility clinic has been performing in vitro fertilizations on lesbian women for years.

January 30, 2005- Joelle Perras and Brook Morrison were walking hand in hand on January 21st in the Plateau Mont-Royal district when they decided to kiss each other at a traffic light. Police say within seconds, Morrison was hit in the head from behind, pushing her into her companion with such force that Perras broke her nose.

Montreal police stopped short of calling the attack a gay-bashing incident.

The pair organised a "kiss-in " On January 30th at the intersection near where the couple was attacked in order to protest the attack.

"This is not a protest or a demonstration. This is an act that I and my partner decided we want to take on for ourselves in order to come back to the corner and to feel safe in our community," said Perras.

Other same-sex couples, mostly young women, joined in the celebration, kissing and chanting at a busy corner in the Plateau, home to a sizable gay population.

The incident happened just weeks before the Liberal government tabled its same-sex marriage legislation. Morrison said she doesn't believe the man who barreled into them was directly influenced by the ongoing public debate over same-sex marriage in Canada.

Canadian News

November 17th, 2004 – CBC – Toronto - The Ontario government is urging Muslim parents not to take their children out of classes that discuss same-sex marriages. The response comes after some Muslim parents asked that their children be excluded from anti-homophobia education at a downtown Toronto school. The Toronto District School Board rejected the parents' request, saying that allowing some students to be excluded from the class would violate the rights of children with same-sex parents.

But Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said, "It's important that all our children have the opportunity to learn about those things that distinguish one of us from the other, and that they learn to respect those differences."

Education Minister Gerard Kennedy echoed McGuinty's remarks, saying, "Our public schools are there to engender respect, respect for people of different faiths and different sexual orientations."

He said he didn't think "there's any harm done to parents who find their children exposed to ideas that are different than the ones they teach at home."

The parents are upset that their children were shown videos during classes that depicted the feelings of children who get taunted at school because their own parents are homosexuals. The Muslim parents complained that the classes infringed on their religious beliefs.

November 18th, 2004 - There has been a lot of speculation and concern in Canadian LGBT communities about the fact that the new *Assisted Human Reproduction Act* can be interpreted as making it illegal to do home inseminations. On Thursday, November 18th *Health Canada* held a technical briefing in Montreal with regards to the Act which Mona of the *Lesbian Mothers Association* was able to attend. Mona asked directly whether or not the legislation is intended to criminalize home insemination, and the answer was clearly, "no." Quoting Pierre Elliott Trudeau with regards to the state's business in the bedrooms of the nation, the *Health Canada* representative stated very clearly that it is not their intent to stop or regulate home inseminations and he referred us to Section 65 (z.2) which gives the Governor in Council the right to make regulations "exempting controlled activities or classes of controlled activities, generally or in circumstances prescribed by the regulations, from the provisions of this Act, subject to any terms and conditions prescribed in the regulations."

In short, Health Canada officials stated that it is not illegal to do home inseminations.

Other concerns about the Act remain however, particularly with regards to a potential shortage of sperm and egg donors, given that the Act makes it illegal to pay donors for other than "receptable expenses." A process is being established to determine what will be allowed as "receptable expenses." More info on this to come.

December 5, 2004 - 365 Gay.com - **(London, Ontario)** The father of a London, Ontario area teenager says his son killed himself because of endless anti-gay taunts that school officials did nothing to stop.

"I had to cut my son down from the tree. I told the kids at the funeral that if you don't get together and confront the bullies, it will be your parents cutting you down," John Melo told the *London Free Press*.

Joshua Melo was a Grade 10 student at Strathroy District Collegiate Institute. He was bullied, harassed and forced to endure anti-gay epithets on a daily basis his family say. Shortly before he walked outside his home and hanged himself from a tree he had received an instant message on his computer his aunt, Natalie Moniz told the *Free Press*.

"Nothing was done and it's too late now," said Moniz.

Joshua was not gay, his aunt said, but he took the taunts personally. His father said that the pressure on his son had been building for some time. Melo said the family heard of problems a couple of months ago and spoke to Joshua, but said he told them everything was fine.

Local police have begun an investigation.

"What we're looking at is what's going on now at the school," said Sgt. Rich Holmes.

The *Free Press* reported that some students refused to stand when the school held a moment of silence for Joshua and others said he deserved to die.

"All we've got is political stuff from the principal. They say they couldn't control what was happening in the hallways. What kind of a system do we have?" Melo told the paper.

GAY MARRIAGE- A TIME LINE

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

Please note: In the United States the marriage debate has gone completely out of control!!! There are initiatives for and against marriage in almost every state. Because of this it would be impossible to cover it all in the context of a newsletter. An excellent coverage of the news in the States, however, is available on the web site of the *Human Rights Campaign* in their marriage center: www.hrc.org/marriage/

A well-organized table of the state-by-state progress can be found if you click on "States with Anti-Gay marriage laws" within this site.

We will still continue to cover general American stories related to the debate.

November 18 - Lawmakers in **Norway** reject a measure that would have granted marriage rights to same-sex couples, including the right to adopt children.

November 25 (Ottawa) - A Private Members' Bill, C-268, introduced by Rob Moore, (Conservative) for Fundy, NB, defining marriage as "the lawful union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all other persons" is ruled by the Procedures Committee to be unconstitutional and therefore non-votable.

November 29 - The **U.S.** Supreme Court declines to play a role in a long-shot effort to undo the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's ruling in favor of marriage equality.

November 30 (Cape Town, South Africa) -The South African Supreme Court of Appeal rules 4-1 in favor of ending the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage rights, and activists hail it as a major step.

December 9, 9:45 a.m. (Ottawa) - The Supreme Court rules that the government's proposed equal marriage legislation is within Parliament's exclusive jurisdiction and consistent with the Charter. It also rules that the Charter protects religious officials from being compelled to perform marriages for same-sex couples. The Court says there is no need to question the decisions of courts in 7 provinces and territories. Shortly after the ruling, both the Prime Minister and Justice Minister state the government will introduce equal marriage legislation as soon as Parliament resumes in January. Liberal MP Pat O'Brien calls on Parliament to use the notwithstanding clause to set aside the Charter.

December 13 (Toronto) - Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin turns down a call to put same-sex marriage to voters. Following the Supreme Court ruling the province of Alberta had called for the issue to be put before the electorate in a national referendum.

December 14 (Edmonton) - After reviewing, with provincial Justice Minister Ron Stevens, the Supreme Court ruling on redefining marriage, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein says the province has no chance to block a federal same-sex marriage law.

"Invoking the notwithstanding clause, amending our own Marriage Act, all of those things will be challengeable and we would lose in court," admitted Klein.

December 21 (St. John's) - Chief Justice Derek Green of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador orders that the definition of marriage in the province include same-sex couples. Newfoundland becomes the seventh Canadian province to legalize same-sex marriage. 87% of Canada's population now has equal marriage

January 4 - As **Canada** moves closer to legalizing same-sex marriages, a handful of civil marriage commissioners resign their posts in protest saying gay marriage is against their religion.

January 13 (TORONTO) - There have been no problems with anyone in Ontario being forced to perform same-sex marriages against their will after more than 1,000 such weddings in the past 18 months, says Attorney General Michael Bryant.

January 16 (Washington) - President Bush says that he will not press the Senate to pass a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. In an interview with the *Washington Post* Bush says that he remains opposed to gay marriage but believes there aren't the votes in the Senate to ensure the amendment would be adopted.

January 16 (Calgary, Alberta) - The Roman Catholic Bishop of Calgary calls on Catholics to stamp out same-sex marriage. In a pastoral letter read in every church in the diocese Bishop Frederick Henry equates homosexuality with adultery, prostitution and pornography. Henry says that the government has a duty to suppress public expressions of homosexuality.

January 18 (Moscow) - A Russian politician and a gay journalist apply for a marriage license in Moscow. The application is expected to be rejected but the men say it will pave the way for a court battle to determine the legality of same-sex marriage in the country.

January 18 (New Delhi) - Prime Minister Paul Martin visits India during his tour of tsunami-affected areas. Joginder Singh Vedanti, spiritual leader of the Sikhs, directs his followers to reject the legalization of gay marriage and urges Sikhs to prevent such marriages from occurring in Sikh temples anywhere in the world. Vedanti is quoted as saying, "Same-sex marriage originates from a sick mind."

Mr. Martin says such concerns are misplaced. "This is a question of civil marriage, not religious marriage," he tells reporters after his visit with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

January 18 - Cardinal Ambrozic, Archbishop of the Catholic diocese of **Toronto**, writes an open letter in the *Globe and Mail*, calling on the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause and not move forward with equal marriage. Ambrozic urges Martin to maintain marriage as a heterosexual rite and use the Constitution's notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Cardinal Ambrozic asks: "Is it fair to put children in the position of having to reconcile the values and beliefs of their parents with a [new] state-sponsored understanding of marriage?"

January 19 (OTTAWA) - Gay and lesbian army couples can now get married on military bases. The Canadian Forces quietly drafts a policy calling for military chaplains to formally bless same-sex weddings. Guidelines - considered "interim" until the federal government passes a law redefining marriage - outline the process for pre-nuptial counseling and using the on-base chapel for same-sex ceremonies.

January 19 (QUEBEC CITY) - The federal Conservative party confirms it will be launching an advertising campaign against gay marriage that will make an appeal to ethnic groups. Conservative Leader Stephen Harper says the party needs to send a clear message against the proposed change to the legal definition of marriage. Advertisements will appear in a number of ridings the Conservatives don't currently hold, along with print ads in a number of foreign-language weeklies across the country.

January 21 -The *National Anti-Racism Council of Canada* (NARCC), along with the Chair of the *Canadian Race Relations Foundation* (CRRF) and two hundred prominent religious, ethnic, racial and labour representatives from across **Canada**, call on Stephen Harper to stop his campaign against the government's equal marriage legislation and to stop targeting communities based on race, religious and ethnicity.

"The Charter of Rights that protects gays and lesbians from discrimination is the same law that also protects members of religious, ethnic and racial minorities," says Pat Case, Chair of the *Canadian Race Relations Foundation*. "Canadians should be very wary of a political leader who is willing to switch on and switch off the Charter of Rights. Who will be targeted next?"

January 25 (Ottawa) - Canada's two major parties meet in opposite ends of the country, and the stormy sessions over same-sex marriage mirror the weather outside. Although Members of Parliament in both the Liberal and Conservative parties have been promised a free vote the outcome will be an indication of how much strength the respective party leaders have.

Prime Minister Paul Martin is believed to have enough support both within his minority government and from the small New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois to pass the gay marriage bill when it comes before the House of Commons next month, but by all accounts it will be with the slimmest of margins.

January 26 (EDMONTON) – James Dobson, An evangelical leader from the **U.S.** Christian right urges Canadians to oppose same-sex marriage in a broadcast heard on more than 130 radio stations across the country.

February 1 - Justice Minister Irwin Cotler tables legislation that entrenches marriage equality for lesbian and gay couples across Canada. In invoking the Charter, the bill protects lesbian and gay people from being excluded from civil marriage while protecting the rights of religious organizations to continue to define marriage as they choose.

Just 139 members of Parliament surveyed by *The Globe and Mail* say they would vote in favour of legislation to change the legal definition of marriage to include same-sex couples. Another 118 MPs say they would vote against the legislation, while 49 are undecided or would not state a position. To pass into law, the bill needs the support of 154 MPs.

The bill, introduced by Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, is the first piece of legislation offered by the government in the winter session of Parliament, but it will be several months before it will come to a final vote. That could spell disaster for the legislation.

While Prime Minister Paul Martin has said the marriage bill will not constitute a confidence vote for his minority government, March's budget will. If the budget fails the government would fall and the marriage bill would die.

February 1 (OTTAWA) -The *Muslim Canadian Congress*, welcomes the legislation presented by Justice Minister Irwin Cotler that re-defines marriage to include same-sex partners, and urges Muslims and other minority groups to stand in solidarity with gays and lesbians.

February 3 (Washington) - For the second year in a row President George W. Bush uses his State of the Union speech to call for an amendment to the US Constitution to bar same-sex marriage. Just two weeks earlier Bush said he would not push for a vote on the amendment.

February 4 (New York) - A New York State court rules that same-sex couples must be allowed to marry, in a decision that *Lambda Legal* calls "a historic ruling that delivers the state Constitution's promise of equality to all New Yorkers." *Lambda Legal* filed the lawsuit last year, representing five same-sex couples seeking marriage licenses in New York City.

February 6 (New York City) - Mayor Michael Bloomberg announces that the city will appeal the landmark ruling that allows gay marriage. Bloomberg says that while he believes such marriages should be permitted, he fears the same sort of legal confusion that followed San Francisco's decision last year. The mayor says that the only way to avoid this is to allow the state's highest court to rule.

February 16 (Ottawa) - Prime Minister Paul Martin leads the debate during the second reading on Bill C-38 (*The Civil Marriage Act*).

International

November 17 - PlanetOut.com- The **British** House of Lords voted to back same-sex civil partnerships. Couples across England, Wales and Northern Ireland will be legally recognized for the first time.
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/11/17/1>

December 8 – 365Gay.com - (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) - Hundreds of gay demonstrators have staged a noisy rally at Rio de Janeiro's legislature to protest legislation that would use public funds to "convert" them into heterosexuals. The bill has gained the support of three committees and heads to a vote in the full House. The legislation calls homosexuality an illness and allows health officials to fund groups that claim to "correct the abnormality".

The rally was organized by the gay rights group *Arco-Iris*.

Rio has South America's largest LGBT community. Its equality laws are some of the most advanced in the region. Since May 2002, the state has been able to impose stiff fines against individuals or institutions found guilty of anti-gay prejudice. Its governors also have the power to close hotels, restaurants and nightclubs that discriminate against gays. And same-sex relationships – considered "stable unions" by the government – are legally recognized.

December 8 - PlanetOut.com - Same-sex couples in **Israel** will now have the same rights as common law spouses when it comes to matters of property, taxation and inheritance.
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/12/08/3>

December 9 - PlanetOut.com - An explosion of applause greeted the passing of **New Zealand's** Civil Union Bill in the country's parliament. The measure passed during its third and final reading, 65-55.
Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/12/09/2>

December 22 - 365Gay.com (Paris) The French Senate gave final approval to legislation making it a criminal offense to speak or publish homophobia. The bill adds sexuality to an existing law banning hate speech against other minorities. Under the legislation, anyone who provokes hatred or violence on the basis of sex or sexual orientation could be fined up to \$60,000 and be subject to one year in jail.

The bill was fought by the Roman Catholic Church which claimed it could be used against priests who speak out against homosexuality or to censor the Bible. Despite the concerns of the Church, the legislation had little difficulty in the conservative dominated Senate. The bill which had been pushed by President Jacques Chirac

gives France the toughest hate-crime law in the European Union. The French gay rights group *Inter-LGBT* hailed the vote as as a decisive step to combat growing homophobia.

The government drafted the law after a young gay man was brutally attacked. After he was beaten his assailants poured gasoline on him and set him on fire leaving him severely burned.

The bill was passed in France's lower house earlier this month. But, even with the backing of Chirac the legislation faced a barrage of criticism including some of the worst anti-gay remarks ever heard in the chamber - much of it coming from members of Chirac's own party.

December 30 - PlanetOut.com - As the death toll from the December 26 tsunami rockets past 100,000, one of the dozens of organizations providing help is the *Rainbow World Fund*, the first LGBT world relief agency. Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2004/12/30/1>

Also **Sri Lanka's** best-known gay organization *Companions on a Journey* is marshalling its forces to help its members and others hit hard by the tsunami. *Companions* is providing aid at its drop-in center in the form of dry rations and clothing. The group also is involved in general relief work in Matara and Wadduwa, distributing clothes, clean drinking water, sanitation supplies, cooked food and dry rations.

Members of the Sri Lankan "LGBTIQ" organization *Equal Ground* also are helping with disaster relief.

"The magnitude of the catastrophe that affected Sri Lanka on Boxing Day is something that is hardly describable," said Executive Director Rosanna Flamer-Caldera. "Members of *Equal Ground* have not only given of their time and energy to volunteer for relief efforts, but also have spent their own money buying essentials like medicine and food, and donating it to the larger organizations sending the trucks to the north, east and south."

To Help:

SRI LANKA - *Companions on a Journey* <<http://www.companions-lanka.org>>

SRI LANKA - *Equal Ground* <<http://www.equal-ground.org>>

INDONESIA - *GAYa NUSANTARA* <doetomo@indo.net.id>

THAILAND - *Connect* <<http://www.beachpatong.com/>>

THAILAND - *GayPatong* <<http://www.gaypatong.com>>

January 3, 2005 - 365Gay.com - (Freetown) - Police in Freetown have charged a man with the murder of FannyAnn Eddy, the founder of the *Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association* and a lesbian rights activist known across Africa. Eddy was brutally murdered in the Association's office in the capital city of Freetown last October.

The man charged with Eddy's murder is a former employee - a janitor whom she fired a week earlier. At the time he was fired he is reported to have threatened to "take revenge" on Eddy. It is believed that at least one other person was involved in the crime.

Eddy and her organization documented harassment, beatings and arbitrary arrests of lesbian, gay and transgender people in Sierra Leone. She left behind a 10-year-old son.

January 6 -The Associated Press (Johannesburg, South Africa) - The eldest son of Nelson Mandela has died of AIDS-related complications, the former South African president announced, saying the only way to fight

the stigma of the disease is to speak openly about it. Makgatho Mandela, 54, a lawyer, was admitted to Linksfield Park Clinic in Johannesburg last month.

“Let us give publicity to HIV/AIDS and not hide it because the only way of making it appear to be a normal illness just like TB, like cancer, is always to come out and say somebody has died of HIV,” Mandela said at a news conference.

His position contrasts with that of other prominent South Africans, including President Thabo Mbeki, who has denied knowing anyone who has died of HIV/AIDS. Mandela declined to comment on Mbeki's views.

January 10, 2005 - Human Rights Campaign(HRC) - WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court refused to hear a case challenging Florida's ban on adoption by gays and lesbians. *Lofton v. Secretary of the Florida Department of Children and Families* was seeking to overturn the only state law denying gay and lesbian individuals and couples the right to adopt children.

"This ban hurts thousands of Florida children who deserve loving parents," said HRC Political Director Winnie Stachelberg. "The Supreme Court's refusal to hear this case marks its refusal to heed the advice of all major child welfare organizations and health care professionals who say that gay parents are no different from other loving parents."

January 10 - In a major accomplishment for same-sex couples in **Israel**, the country's supreme court ruled that a lesbian couple is able to legally adopt each other's children.

Story: <http://www.planetout.com/news/article.html?2005/01/10/2>

Miscellaneous and Research

November 11 -In the world's first study to examine the feelings and experiences of adolescents who had been conceived through 'open-identity' sperm donors, US researchers found that all but one of the 29 young people involved in the study had a neutral or positive response to their origins. More than 4 out of 5 said they were likely to ask for the donor's identity and try to contact him, but few saw him as being an important person in their lives. The study was published in Europe's leading reproductive medicine journal, *Human Reproduction*.

The top question the young people wanted answered was 'what's he like?' Of the 83% who wanted to know their donor's identity and to contact him, the motive for the majority was curiosity about him and, for many, the chance to see if it would help them to learn more about themselves.

Lead researcher Dr Joanna Scheib of the University of California, Davis and *The Sperm Bank of California*, said: the research team now plans a study focused on the experiences of young adults and donors who actually meet each other.

The 29 young people taking part were aged 12 to 17 with an average age of 14.7 years, and two-thirds were boys. Just over 40% were the children of lesbian couples, 38% had single mothers and 21% had heterosexual-couple parents. They were conceived through open-identity donors in a programme run by *The Sperm Bank of California* (TSBC).

Other findings included:

- Almost all were comfortable sharing their origins with those close to them – extended family members, some friends and a few teachers;
- In addition to interest in their donor, they expressed interest in contacting other children with the same donor;
- Those from single mother households were most positive about their DI origins;
- The presence of two parents, whether heterosexual or lesbian, seemed to dampen interest in the donors;

- In response to questions about their vision of an ideal donor, the message that came through was that they hoped he was a good, open-minded person who would be open to contact and not necessarily be heavily involved in their life.
- Although almost all planned to obtain their donor's identity, they would not necessarily do so at 18 – the age that they would be entitled to have the information.

November 15 - 365Gay.com - (Charlottesville, Virginia) Teenagers of same-sex female parents are developing as well as the children of opposite-sex parents, and good quality family relationships are more important contributors to successful development than family type, according to a new study published in the November/December issue of the journal *Child Development*. The study also indicates that teenage offspring of same-sex couples have similar dating and romantic relationship behaviors as children of opposite-sex couples.

“The best predictor of teens’ adjustment is the quality of their relationship with parents,” said Charlotte J. Patterson, co-author of the study and professor of psychology at the University of Virginia. “If parents are supportive and maintain close relationships with them, teenagers are more likely to be successful and happy at home and at school.”

Patterson and her colleagues based their research on a sample of 12- to 18-year-old adolescents drawn from a large national survey of American adolescents, the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health*. The sample included participants from different racial and socioeconomic groups, and was more diverse than samples in most previous studies. Also, because the data were originally collected for other reasons, any possibility of bias has been minimized. These strengths add to confidence in the main findings that the quality of relationships within families are more important for adolescent development than whether parents have same-sex or opposite-sex partners.

January 2005 -The first issue of the *Canadian Online Journal of Queer Studies in Education* is now online. The first theme issue entitled "Inventing the Queer Classroom" is now available. You may access the first issue of the journal (Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004)) for free at:

<http://jqstudies.oise.utoronto.ca/journal/viewissue.php?id=1>

News from the Lesbian Mothers Association

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

MARCH:

- ♦ **For Parents and Future Parents: Friday, March 18th, 7 p.m.**

Video and Popcorn Night

“L’Art d’être parent: familles homoparentales” - a made in Quebec video on lesbian parents and their kids featuring members of our association. The best and most up-to-date video on our families available *en français!*

“Let’s Get Real!” - Young people get the chance to speak out about the real issues around bullying in a film that links sexual orientation to racial differences, religious differences, disability, sexual harassment and more...

Place: CCGLM, located at 2075 rue Plessis (metro Papineau)

APRIL:

♦ **Sugaring-off Party** - On **SATURDAY April 16th**, the **Lesbian Mothers Association** will have a **SUGARING-OFF PARTY at La Cabane à Sucre Lalande (St-Eustache)**. This is a good chance for all of us to see each other once again, to catch up on news and to make new friends. For those who don't have kids yet, this activity is for you too. About one third of our members now are future-mamas, so you will not be alone. Also if there are nieces and nephews or children of friends that you would like to bring along, please feel free to do so. Come and celebrate together the coming of spring! If you are interested in participating **please fill out and return it to us before March 15th**. See the attached (enclosed) flier.

May:

♦ **Saturday May 14 at 7 p.m. Discussion group and snacks:** Expectations and reality. Lesbians are not categorically better, nor worse, but plain old average when it comes to parenting. Feminists have had to prove that women are just as good as men by being better than men in what men traditionally do. Now lesbians are running the same circuit (over parenting) and burning ourselves (and our children) out!

Place: 4734, rue Saint-André (métro Mont Royal)

BULLETIN BOARD:

♦ **Single Moms everywhere:** Come out, come out wherever you are. Let's get together and just discuss baby issues, single mom issues, and anything and everything else. Something light and informal. Of course, with our babies... If interested, please email shariann@sympatico.ca or call Shari Ann at (514) 482-6533. Perhaps a few of us can get together at my house or anyone else's home... Hoping to hear from at least one mom.

♦ Mère et fille de 9 ans cherche mère et enfant du même âge (fille de préférence) pour faire des sorties, activités, etc. Écrire à: mjlegault@arobas.net

ADOPTIONS AND BIRTHS

♦ Bonjour, un petit mot pour vous annoncer la naissance de notre premier enfant. Il s'agit de **Thomas Hudon-Tremblay** qui est né le **24 novembre** dernier et les heureuses mères sont **Anne Tremblay** et **Catherine Hudon** de St-Honoré au Saguenay. Il a été conçu par insémination artificielle chez Procréa Québec, mais nous avons bon espoir de concevoir notre prochain bébé au Saguenay.

♦ Il y a du nouveau : les petits sont arrivés! Ils sont nés avec un peu d'avance, le **11 novembre 2004**. Nous annonçons **Mathis** (1kg680) et **Emilie** (1kg740) qui vont bien. Ils prennent tranquillement du poids. Amitiés et à bientôt, **Catherine Soum & Myriam Cimino**.

♦ "Mamas-to-be" no more! Much to Mona's delight **Susie Mintzberg** and **Nathalie Tremblay** have finally become mamas. On **November 18th, 2004** **Laura Eva Tremblay-Mintzberg** entered the world at Anna-Laberge hospital. Our beautiful baby arrived at 1:23 pm weighing 8lbs 11oz. We now spend our days falling in love with the new addition to our happy little family!

♦ **Joie no. 1 - Monique Desjardins et Carole Gosselin** ont le plaisir d'annoncer la naissance de leur fils **Zachary Gosselin-Desjardins**. C'est le **10 novembre 2004** à 22h44, par un soir vert d'aurore boréale, que nous est arrivé ce bonheur intense à la chevelure noire et abondante. Maman Monique relève bien et Zachary est en pleine forme.

♦ **Joie no. 2** – L'inscription de naissance au registre de l'état civil. Grâce à la loi 84 ou devrais-je dire grâce à l'Association des mères lesbiennes du Québec, il est possible pour maman Carole d'être aussi enregistrée comme mère (et non co-mère). Bravo et mille fois merci à l'AML pour cette lutte bien menée. Il n'y a pas de

mot pour exprimer l'importance vitale de cette reconnaissance. Merci à l'AML pour avoir défendu ce droit d'être parent à part entière. Merci à l'avance! **Monique Desjardins et Carole Gosselin.**

- ♦ **Magali Deleuze et Nathalie Bisson** ont eu un fils, **Romain** aussi en **Novembre 2004.**

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**

- ♦ **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.

.....

- ♦ 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, www.jfreed.ca