

the rest of our world

Married Irish Lesbians Win

Dublin, Ireland – According to an item in *Gay City News* reported by Arthur Leonard, a judge in Ireland has ruled that an Irish lesbian couple who married last year in British Columbia, Canada, may sue their government for legal recognition of their marriage in Ireland. This may be the first case of in which courts ruling under European law will consider the status of Canadian same-sex marriages.

Canadian Seven

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – Canada is looking at lucky seven on the marriage equality front. On November 5, Justice Donna Wilson ruled that the province must immediately begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Her ruling depended on the new common-law definition of marriage adopted by appellate courts in three other provinces.

This makes the seventh consecutive ruling in favor of same-sex marriage in Canada since the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled on June 10, 2003.

In addition to Saskatchewan and Ontario, same-sex marriage licenses are now being issued in Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and the Yukon Territory.

UK Defeats Amendment

London – A last-ditch effort by some Conservatives to derail the Civil Partnership bill in the British Parliament was beaten back last month. The House of Commons voted 381 to 74 against an amendment that would have extended the definition of partnership beyond gay and lesbian couples to siblings and others who lived together.

Gay Tory MP Alan Duncan told *Gay.comUK* that the amendment would “wreck the bill by creating partnerships within an existing family which, in their confused and contradictory interrelationship, are utterly unworkable.”

Gay Flight

Toronto – It will take some time to ascertain whether substantial numbers of Americans who fear and loathe the right turn in U.S. government will act on their desire to emigrate. But the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported that one immigration lawyer there is working on processing more than 100 applications for gay Americans.

“These are highly skilled people with no dependents and substantial savings,” attorney Michael Battista said. “Canada is benefiting enormously.”

Among the fleeing and fled are an out gay playwright – who compared today’s U.S. climate for gays to that of Nazi Germany for Jews – and an agricultural geneticist who moved shortly before the election, citing hostility toward same-sex relationships.

Common Law in Nazareth

Tel Aviv – Same-sex partners are eligible to be considered common-law spouses according to the inheritance law, Nazareth District Court ruled yesterday in a precedent-setting decision reported by Ha’aretz.

According to the two-to-one decision, an individual who maintained a joint household for some 40 years with his partner, who died four years ago, is eligible to inherit that partner’s apartment even though a will had never been written.

The two had been living together in one partner’s apartment since 1972. As he has no close family members to inherit, his property must be transferred to the state, according to law. The surviving partner asked the family court to recognize him as the common-law spouse. When his request was not granted, he appealed to the district court.

Dyke Does Dallas

Dallas – On November 2, out lesbian Lupe Valdez was elected as the new sheriff of Dallas County, reports the Metropolitan Community Church, of which Valdez is a member.

The *Dallas Morning News* describes Valdez’s election as a “breakthrough victory”: she is the first woman and the first Hispanic to be elected sheriff in this heavily Republican county.

Valdez has more than 30 years in professional law enforcement. Toward the end of the campaign, her opponent raised Valdez’s sexual orientation as an issue, citing her funding and support from the Victory Fund, an organization that supports openly gay or lesbian candidates. Valdez asserted that sexual orientation should have no bearing on the race, and would play no role in how she ran the department.

Bright Lights in MA

Boston – Mass. Equality reports that every pro-marriage equality state legislator won reelection, “more often than not by very large margins. In addition, pro-equality candidates won six of eight open seats where the opponent was in favor of a constitutional amendment” that would ban same-sex marriage and potentially allow civil unions.

In one of the few races

where equal marriage rights became a significant issue, openly gay Carl Sciortino beat by a two-to-one margin incumbent Rep. Vinny Ciampa, who waged a homophobic write-in campaign after losing the primary.

Sissy Bashing

Virginia – GenderPAC criticized comments made by a Loudoun County School Supervisor who announced last month that he believes anti-bullying efforts should exclude mention of sexual orientation. Eugene Delgaudio added that any anti-bullying program is a “politically correct” tool of “special-interest lobbies” that wastes school time and money.

“These remarks show a complete ignorance about the severity of school bullying. An estimated 8,100 Loudoun County students will be bullied this year, many taunted with anti-gay epithets,” said GenderPAC Executive Director Riki Wilchins. “Anti-gay epithets aren’t just about sexual orientation, but about enforcing school yard codes of masculinity through public humiliation and intimidation.”

Colombia Is For Lovers?

Sunnyvale, CA – Love Sees No Borders, an educational organization focused on raising awareness of the plight of same-sex binational couples seeking to remain together, hailed the decision of the Colombian Constitutional Court granting residency to the same-sex foreign partner of a citizen.

“This court decision is historic in Colombia, even though it just applies to this particular couple for now,” said Andres Duque, a Colombian activist in New York City, and director of the Latino LGBT group *Mano a Mano*.

When the couple was denied special residency permission for the foreign partner by their local government, they appealed. The Constitutional Court reaffirmed the couple’s right to due process and free development of their personality.

Leslie Bulbuk, co-founder of *Love Sees no Borders*, said, “Now three countries in the Americas have recognized the need to grant recognition to same-sex couples for immigration purposes. Sadly the United States is not one of them.”

Currently 16 countries allow citizens to sponsor a same-sex foreign partner for immigration: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa,

Sweden and the United Kingdom.

ACLU Fights for Cohabitation

Los Angeles – The American Civil Liberties Union told the Housing Authority of Santa Monica today to stop stalling and allow a gay man to live with his partner of 10 years.

“California and Santa Monica law make it very clear that you can’t discriminate against gay people in housing,” said Christine P. Sun, a staff attorney for the ACLU’s Lesbian & Gay Rights Project.

Gene Boccia and Brett Crowley are both disabled and rely on public assistance. Boccia, has been disabled since a 1974 hate crime in which he was shot in the face and lives in public housing. Crowley, a disabled veteran, rents a room from a friend with funds he receives from SSI.

When Boccia recently learned from an unmarried, cohabitating heterosexual couple that he could apply to the Housing Authority to have Crowley share his apartment with him, the couple submitted the paperwork. The Housing Authority refused to act on the request, claiming instead that Boccia is in violation of his lease.

“The Housing Authority keeps making us jump through all these hoops and provide all this paperwork, but our straight friends’ request to live together was approved almost immediately,” said Boccia.

Hawaiian Doc Honored

Palm Springs, CA – Tyrone Dang, MD, a Honolulu physician, was named the 2nd Annual *Gayhealth.com/GLMA Provider of the Year*. The award puts a spotlight on healthcare providers who – regardless of their own sexual orientation – offer sensitive and excellent services to the LGBT communities.

Homophobia is a health hazard for LGBT people, and it unfortunately is very much alive within the healthcare system, said Stephen Goldstone, MD, FACS, the medical director of *GayHealth.com*. “That’s why we must recognize providers who strive to provide quality care to the LGBT communities.”

Dang was presented with the award at the 22nd Annual Gay and Lesbian Medical Association conference in Palm Springs, California. A native of Saigon, Dang has been practicing medicine in Honolulu since 1989. “I feel very proud,” said Dang, who escaped war-torn Vietnam by boat. “Being gay shouldn’t be the criteria that people judge me on. I should be judged on my work,” he says.

High School Censorship

Webb City, MO – The American Civil Liberties Union has come to the defense of a high school junior who was sent home twice from school for wearing t-shirts bearing gay pride messages. The principal cited concerns that other students might be offended by the shirts worn by Brad Mathewson.

“This school allows its students to freely express their views on gay and lesbian rights - but only if they’re on the anti-gay side of the issue,” said Jolie Justus, a member of the legal panel for the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri. Bumperstickers supporting Missouri’s recently-passed anti-gay marriage constitutional amendment are ubiquitous in the school’s hallways.

Mathewson was sent to the principal’s office by his homeroom teacher for his t-shirt, bearing the name of the GSA at his old high school in Fayetteville, Arkansas, a pink triangle, and the words, “Make a Difference!” An assistant principal told Mathewson to go home and change shirts. The student was again disciplined when he came to school a few days later wearing a t-shirt featuring a rainbow and the phrase, “I’m gay and I’m proud.”

“Even though nobody complained about my t-shirts, my school told me I couldn’t wear them just because someone might get offended,” said Mathewson. “But every day I see students at my school with anti-gay stickers on their notebooks and sometimes on their shirts, and I find that offensive. I understand that they have a right to express what they think, but I have a right to do the same thing.”

“You can’t trample someone’s First Amendment rights just because someone might take offense at what that person has to say,” said Dick Kurtenbach, Executive Director of the ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri. “Schools that unlawfully censor students’ views should be given an F in civics.” ▼

Compiled this month by Euan Bear.