

News from Around the World

South Africa Makes Human Rights History

As recently as several years ago, South Africa was reviled around the world for its horrible abuses of human rights. Last month, however, South Africa became the first country in the world to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation as President Nelson Mandela signed that nation's new Constitution into law. The historic moment took place in Sharpeville, where one of the worst massacres of the apartheid era had occurred.

"Out of the many Sharpevilles which haunt our history was born the unshakable determination that respect for human life, liberty and well-being must be enshrined as rights beyond the power of any force to diminish," Mandela said. "As we close a chapter of exclusion and a chapter of heroic struggle, we reaffirm our determination to build a society of which each of us can be proud, as South Africans, as Africans, and as citizens of the world."

Same-Sex Marriage Debates Continue

Hawaii's recent court decision in favor of same-sex marriage has turned up the heat for a number of legislators in the mainland. While many states have been scrambling to draft and pass bills prohibiting the recognition of such marriages should they become legal, other states have made moves toward recognizing gay and lesbian unions performed in the Aloha state.

William Weld, the Republican governor of Massachusetts, has said that he favors recognition of the marriages in his state. Weld further states that failure to recognize such unions would go against the spirit of the United States Constitution by failing to guarantee "full faith and credit" to the legislation of Hawaii. Despite such progressive statements, Weld warned that Massachusetts itself was not ready to adopt legislation permitting same-sex couples to get married in that state.

Meanwhile, departing Washington Governor Michael Lowry has asked his state's legislature to consider offering same-sex couples the same rights offered to married couples. While not calling the union an official "marriage," Lowry hopes that such a civil contract will appease members of the religious right who attach their own strong spiritual and predominantly Christian values to the word "marriage."

Political observers in the state say the proposal has little chance of passing, but do feel that discussion on the issue may have more positive results for employment anti-discrimination legislation which is already under consideration. Incoming Governor Gary Locke (D) has said that he would endorse Lowry's pro-gay measure if it ever showed up for his signature.

Magazine Makeovers

The lesbian publication *On Our Backs* should be returning to magazine racks around the country soon, thanks to HAF Enterprises, which also publishes *Girlfriends*. HAF purchased the rights to the renowned erotica journal, which had declared bankruptcy.

Once listed as one of the "Ten Most Important Magazines of the 1980's" by the alternative magazine *The Utne Reader*, *On Our Backs* featured the irreverent writing of the self-proclaimed "sexpert" Susie Bright. Bright has agreed to support the new venture along with Nan Kinney, who founded the original magazine.

Meanwhile, the often controversial *New York Native* has ceased publication. The *Native*, published since 1980, was New York's oldest gay periodical and received national attention for its skeptical reporting on HIV and AIDS research. Publishers cited lack of financial support as the reason for the paper's demise.

Though the erotic picture magazine *Euroboy* won't be disappearing, don't look for it under that title in U.S. bookstores any more. A new law enacted late in 1996 forbids even the suggestion of sexual activities between minors (sorry, young people — our government continues to believe that only adults can have sexual lives). Accordingly, *Euroboy* will now have to become *Euroguy* in order to be sold in this country.

Music to Our Ears

Ellen DeGeneres, whose quasi-lesbian character on the "Ellen" show has sparked debates across the country, has reportedly videotaped an episode in which she finally says the words "I'm gay" on camera. Despite the resulting cheers from the studio audience, the impromptu confession may yet be edited out for the final version.

One studio audience member wrote on the Internet, "My boyfriend and I attended the taping of Ellen tonight. The show, in which Ellen attends a rock'n'roll fantasy camp, featured guest musicians David Crosby, Bonnie Raitt, Sheryl Crow, and Aaron Neville. At the end of the show, Ellen performs a song with them, which she wrote, called 'I'm Scared of Being Afraid.' They filmed two versions of the song. The first was an ordinary, straight version; in the second, Ellen sang, 'So here's what I have to say... And by the way, I'm gay! It's okay!' She sang 'I'm gay! I'm gay!' over and over as the audience cheered and screamed...It was an amazing moment."

DeGeneres may have the opportunity to re-enact her fantasy quite soon. She will be the emcee for the annual Grammy awards of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, set to air on February 26.

A number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual musicians will be sharing the stage with DeGeneres, most notably Tracy Chapman, whose latest album "New Beginning" garnered five nominations, including "Record of the Year" and "Song of the Year." Bisexual singer Me'Shell Ndegeocello has had her latest effort, "Peace Beyond Passion," nominated for Rhythm and Blues Album of the Year. Meanwhile, the Broadway hits "Rent" and "Victor/Victoria" will compete for an award in the "Musical Show Album" category.

The works of three gay classical composers also appeared on the list of nominated recordings: Pyotr Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, Samuel Barber, and Benjamin Britten, whose opera "Peter Grimes" deals with homosexual themes.

International Pride Day Theme Announced

More than 165 Pride organizers from over forty Pride Day locations around the globe came together at the International Association of Lesbian/Gay Pride Coordinators annual meeting in Kansas City.

The group adopted the theme "Equality Through Visibility" for the 1997 Pride Day season and hoped that organizing committees from all nations will incorporate the theme into their planning.

IALGPC also voted to end their boycott of the Coors Brewing Co., which had once been targeted for its anti-gay policies. Since that time, the company has made a number of pro-gay advances, including the addition of domestic partner benefits.

Organizers of Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Pride Day celebration will meet in Montpelier on February 9 to begin discussions of the event. They encourage any and all interested parties to attend (see story on page 3).

What's It All About, Alfie?

After the debate caused by the inclusion of *Daddy's Roommate* on the Rutland Free Library's shelves, the new book *Alfie's Home* by Richard Cohen may find people switching sides.

Alfie's Home was developed by Cohen to help prevent kids from becoming gay or lesbian. He hopes the book will counteract the pro-gay messages found in works like *Daddy's Roommate*, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, and the newly released *Amy Asks a Question* (see review on page 11), even though none of those books (and few like it) deal with the sexual orientation of the children depicted.

In Cohen's book, Alfie finds himself confused by the mistreatment he suffers at the hands of his classmates, and also by his attraction to members of the same sex. Luckily, the school and family counselors are able to "cure" him of his delusions, and in the end Alfie finds himself happily married. As part of his "cure," Alfie's therapists help him to deal with a traumatic experience he had in the hands of his nasty Uncle Pete.

Cohen, an educator and therapist, also identifies as an "ex-gay," a man who has renounced his homosexuality and sought to "cure" himself. Despite growing scientific research to the contrary, Cohen continues to insist that "No one is born homosexual." Studies have also shown that most "ex-gays," including the founders of the movement itself (who, incidentally, fell in love with one another), eventually give up on trying to "cure" themselves and instead become "ex-ex-gays."

Cohen is Executive Director of the International Healing Foundation, which hopes to donate more than 1,000 copies of *Alfie's Home* to libraries. ▼

Health Resources

All phone numbers are 802 area code unless noted.

HIV/AIDS HOTLINES

Vermont: (800) 882-2437
New Hampshire: (800) 752-2437
New York State: (800) 541-2437
Massachusetts: (617) 522-4090
Maine: (800) 851-2437
National: (800) 342-2437
National TTY: (800) 243-7889
Teen Hotline: (800) 234-TEEN

Addison County AIDS Network (ACAN)
352-6679 or 388-4193

AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP)
PO Box 608 • St. Johnsbury VT 05819 • 748-1149

AIDS Community Resource Network (ACoRN)
PO Box 2057 • Lebanon NH 03766 • (603) 448-2220 or (800) 816-2220 • E-mail: acorn@valley.net

ALANA Health Care Organization
PO Box 357 • 179 S. Winooski Street • Burlington VT 05402 • 864-2631 or 864-2632

Bennington Area AIDS Project
PO Box 1066 • Bennington VT 05201 • 442-4481 or (800) 845-2437

Brattleboro Area AIDS Project
PO Box 1486 • Brattleboro VT 05302 • 254-8263 or 254-4444 (Helpline) • E-mail: sbell@sover.net

Comprehensive Care Clinics (for HIV/AIDS)
Hotline: (800) 763-2460
Brattleboro: 257-8860
Burlington: 656-4594
Rutland: 747-1831
St. Johnsbury: 748-7361

Dawnland Center (Native American)
PO Box 1358 • 121 Barre St. • Montpelier VT 05601 • 229-0601 • E-mail: Nadrumin@aol.com

Gay/Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous
PO Box 5653 • Burlington VT 05402 • 658-4221

Lesbian Cancer Support Group
660-8386

Men's Health Project (see Vermont CARES listing)

National Association for People With AIDS
(202) 898-0414

NH/VT HIV Information Network on the Web
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hivnet/>

North Star Holistic Health Care
RR2 Box 3255 • Morrisville VT 05661 • 888-2858

Tribal Remedies (ALANA Community Organization)
8 Williston St. • Brattleboro VT 05301 • 254-2972

Twin State Women's Network
PO Box 3 • Cavendish VT 05142-0003 • 226-7807
E-mail: margoc@mail.tds.net
Web Site: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hivnet/orgs/TWSN1.html>

Vermont AIDS Council
PO Box 275 • Montpelier VT 05601 • 229-2557
E-mail: vtaids@plainfield.bypass.com

Vermont CARES
PO Box 5248 • Burlington VT 05401 • 863-2437 or (800) 649-2437
PO Box 6033 • Rutland VT 05702 • 775-5884

Vermont Deaf AIDS Project
PO Box 172 • Brattleboro VT 05302 • (800) 257-1123 (TTY); (800) 253-0195 (Voice Relay); (802) 257-2013 (Fax)

Vermont Department of Health
108 Cherry St. • PO Box 70 • Burlington VT 05402
AIDS Program Office: 863-7245
AIDS Hotline: (800) 882-2437

Vermont HIV/AIDS Care Consortium
PO Box 9 • Hinesburg VT 05461 • 482-5100

Vermont HIV/AIDS Education Network
PO Box 1784 • Burlington VT 05402-1784 • 862-1668

Vermont Office of Minority Health
c/o VT Dept. of Health (see above) • 863-7273

Vermont People With AIDS Coalition
PO Box 1055 • Brattleboro VT 05302 • 229-5754 or (800) 69-VT-PWA • E-mail: vtpwac@sover.net
Web Site: <http://www.sover.net/~vtpwac/>

Vermont Women's Health Center
336 North Ave. • Burlington VT 05401 • 863-1386