

The Jamaica OutPost

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MARCH 2005

Global Headlines

- Guyana's SASOD discusses ways to eradicate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- Zimbabwe's top female athlete turns out to be a man.
- British health authorities warn of a rise in the rare Lymphogranuloma venereum infection.
- Peruvian court order the National Police of Peru to rehire cop fired for marrying a transsexual without prior consent.
- Philippine gay rebel soldiers tie the knot at a jungle base.

The Jamaica OutPost

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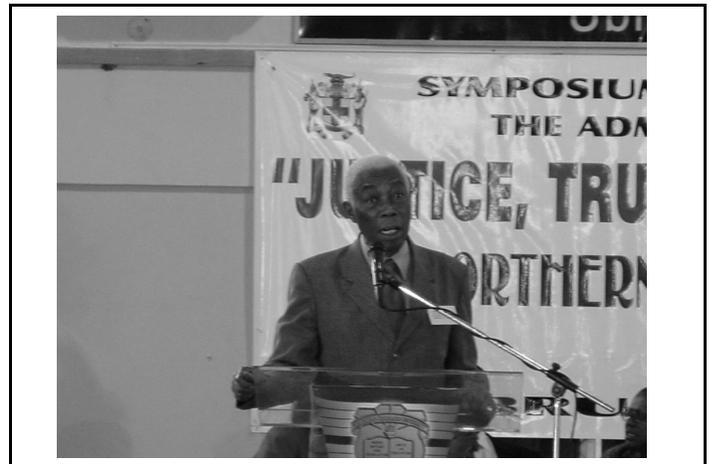
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GAY IN KINGSTON'S INNER CITIES

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

The now-notorious lifestyle of the inner cities of Kingston came to fame in the early '60s when reggae music found a new niche market. By the end of the 1980s, the sounds of reggae soon gave way to a more vibrant genre called dancehall, which was to transform the perceptions and lifestyle of many who inhabit some of Kingston's seemingly borderless ghetto areas. The gay youth in the ghetto became a prime target for dancehall lyrics and social ostracism. This is the story of one "ghetto yute" who also happens to be gay.

At first glance, the look of despair and chronic fear on John's (not his real name) face seems to tell the whole story. Dressed



The Attorney General and Minister of Justice at NCU Seminar (The Jamaica OutPost Photo)

in slacks, he settles down to take me on a journey into his world: his life in the ghetto. At his current age, John has lived all his life in a south-side ghetto community of Kingston. The vivid images of dilapidated houses made of zinc with-

out proper roofing are nothing if not consistent in his mind. After completing his secondary-school education, John was able to hold only temporary odd jobs to make ends meet. His choices were limited to the

(See Inner City on page 2)

GAY RIGHTS ONLY THROUGH REFERENDUM

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

The attorney general and Minister of Justice, the Honourable A.J. Nicholson, says that Jamaica's gay community will get state protection only through a referendum. The statement was made during the staging of a two-day seminar on human

rights, held at the Northern Caribbean University in Mandeville in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice.

Even though the organisers of the seminar did not set aside any specific time allot-

ment for discussing gay rights, the minister was asked to account for the injustice being inflicted on this local minority group during a question-and-answer session. A brief comparison with the current South African

(See NCU on page 3)

(Inner City...Continued from page 1)

welding skills he had gained while in secondary school. This, however, was not enough to provide him with the opportunity to leave the ghetto. It was not enough to afford him the standard of living that would take him from the hardship he endures within the heart of the dance-hall culture. According to John, after his brothers found out about his sexual orientation, they did everything they could to make him feel isolated. His mother disowned him, saying she didn't want a *battyman* son (a son who is gay).

John confided that he always knew he was gay. He felt strong attraction to people of the same gender. For him, the experience was frightening. He was petrified that he was "*one a dem too*" (a homosexual as well). He related his experiences of seeing guys in his community beat up other men who are perceived to be gay. The violent treatment and persistent attacks against other gay men that he witnessed led him to suppress his own sexuality and inherently took on the *heavy-hat* persona (behave as though he was attracted to women and not men). Not wishing to have a baby-mother or even a girlfriend, he was soon labeled within his community as a *funny man*. Though he said he was never harmed physically by anyone in his community, he suffered internally as a result of the perceptions attributed to gay men within the ghetto communities. A sense of inferiority took charge of his own outlook on life, making him feel that he was a misrepresentation of what masculinity should be as dictated by the donmanship presence in the ghettos. For most of his early 20s, John said that he felt devastated as a human being and that thoughts of committing suicide often crept into his head.

Salvation for John came in the form of interaction with other members of Jamaica's GLBT community. After meeting other gay people, he realized he was not alone. He found comfort among other gay people and felt he was able to live his life in acceptance of he is. A happy ending, right? Not exactly.

Since his coming around to full self-acceptance, John has experienced several setbacks in his personal life. One major factor has been the inability to hold a stable job. He sadly states that he has lost several jobs because co-workers suspected he was gay. His most recent experience of discrimination in the workplace involved a job that he described as a very good job. This translated into the ability for him to rent a place to live that was located in a more uptown community, where he would not have been subjected to a potentially harmful environment. He was employed by a company, which is located in Kingston, as a sideman on a truck. His sexual orientation became an issue for some co-workers, and inevitably, the bashing began. This, of course, is usually possible since it is almost a "cultural" tendency for co-workers to be overtly curious about the sexual orientation of co-workers. And with this came many verbal assaults from fellow male workers. He was

also violently attacked by a male co-worker who hit him with a bottle without provocation. Co-workers even tried to set up accidents to hurt him. The cranes that were used for the job became a hazard for him. Following many complaints to the manager, John felt he was getting nowhere. Unable to resist the overwhelming pressures in that workplace, he decided it was best for him to walk away from the job for his own safety.

Since then, John has managed to secure a janitorial job that does not pay as much but offers the opportunity to make ends meet. At his current workplace, John said he has to maintain a hyper-heterosexual male image. He does this by making a habit of complimenting the female staff members, trying to touch their breasts or even going as far as asking them for sexual intercourse. For him, life has been a winding road from one level of destitution to another.

He further spoke of an incident in which his nose was broken during a brutal attack in New Kingston by three men. Even though the police came to his aid and transported him to Kingston Public Hospital, on the way, the uniformed lawmen addressed him as "*faggot*" and "*battybwoy*", seemingly supporting the attacks. To further add insult to injury, the perpetrators were never caught.

When asked for his views on the current gay debate in Jamaica, he pointed out that hypocrisy is the biggest problem in Jamaica: from men who bash gay people while they themselves are having sexual relations with men. He also articulated that Jamaica's GLBT community is very divided and that this lack of unity is to the detriment of the community as a collective body. For the next generation of gay ghetto youths, he hopes there will be more support available to prevent them from falling into the paths that feed the current cycle of self-destruction and hopelessness. For now, though, John continues to live from day to day, still clinging to his dreams of leaving the ghetto, where his constant fear of being attacked has become a permanent condition. His message to the Jamaican gay community: Stop tearing up one another. Unite and help one another.

DO YOU EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION AT YOUR WORKPLACE BECAUSE OF YOUR PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

Be sure to read the April issue of The Jamaica OutPost
Get acquainted with some measures you can take to
safeguard your job and your dignity.

Only in The Jamaica OutPost
News for Jamaica's GLBT community

RED SUNDAY IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

In its commitment to the development of the GLBT community of Trinidad and Tobago, entertainment group D'Sistahood has initiated a celebration to promote HIV/AIDS awareness during the month of March. In a release from the group, the activities throughout the month include a drive to promote HIV testing and

support counselling. At the end of it all, then the typical Trini party spirit will take over on Sunday April 3, when the organisation will host its Red Sunday. The event will feature information booths to promote other health and wellness awareness, including breast cancer and prostate cancer. Additionally,

there will be displays covering gay rights in the twin island republic. Red Sunday is free of cost and is open to all members of the community.

For additional information, please call 868-748-6238 or visit their website:

<http://www.geocities.com/dsistahood/>



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(NCU Cont'd from page 1)

constitution was also made during the questioning, specifically highlighting that country's transformation from the days of apartheid to a now human-rights-conscious society that protects the rights of every citizen, including the GLBT community. Interestingly, Jamaica and Jamaicans were among the many who supported the economic sanctions against that country, showing unmitigated disapproval of the human rights violations under the apartheid regime. While an entire race was being subjugated in that case as a result of ethnicity and economic power, the underpinning injustice of discrimination mirrors the ongoing experience of Jamaica's gay people, a minority group based on sexual orientation. In fact, the former Archbishop of Cape Town and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Desmond Tutu, affirms that homophobia is a crime against humanity and is equally as destructive as apartheid.

In a later comment, the minister declared, "Let the people of Jamaica tell the government what to do as far as gay rights are concerned," which

was followed by a half-hearted round of applause from some members of the audience. In this regard, the overtly expressed mindset by the Minister of Justice as far as the rights of Jamaica's gay community are concerned reflects the general unjust approach and principles of the current administration in relation to the protection of the rights of minorities in Jamaica, which upholds popular and/or cultural biases over universal human rights.

We urge you, our readers, to voice your disapproval to the minister and to the prime minister of Jamaica. Please log onto our website at www.jamaicaoutpost.com and participate in our Mail Call Campaign.

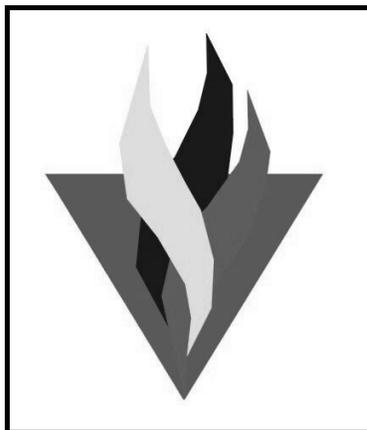
Homophobia as unjust as apartheid
- Desmond Tutu

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF DERYCK LESLIE 

J-FLAG SPEAKS OUT IN THE U.S.

By Anthony Hron, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

The new "Team Leaders" for the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays recently returned from an 8-city speaking tour in the US sponsored by Amnesty International's Outfront program. The speaking engagements highlighted J-FLAG's work, solicited donations and exposed the plight of sexual minorities in Jamaica. During a phone interview conducted during the Chicago leg of their tour, the Leaders and an Outfront representative spoke about the benefits of the tour and the outcomes they hope to achieve through greater publicity. In addition to increasing J-FLAG's profile and allowing greater funding opportunities, the tour allowed the Team Leaders to meet U.S. government officials and collaborate with other LGBT groups – learning about their work and strategising new approaches for addressing the challenges in Jamaica. During their public presentations, the Team Leaders encouraged everyone in the audience, to contact the Jamaica government and demand the repeal of the Buggery Laws and public denouncements of homophobic violence. Although these are just the "early days" of the struggle, one Leader commented that progress is being made, citing the agreement between the Stop Murder Music group in the UK and Dancehall producers to end homophobic lyrics. The other leader encouraged the gay community to "take back the rights that the wider society has taken from us." In conclusion, the Amnesty representative added: "the courage and bravery [of the Team Leaders] is just amazing and we are grateful for it."



CARIBBEAN LGBTQ WRITERS CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

The Center for Gender Studies at the University of Chicago announced that the Lesbian and Gay Studies Project is planning a day-long conference exploring the art and activism of queer Caribbean writers and artists. This conference - the first academic gathering devoted entirely to same sex-loving writing from the region - is motivated by the unprecedented blossoming of queer Caribbean literature in the last decade, as LGBT literature from Jamaica, Trinidad, Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Suriname has debuted to international audiences and acclaim. We aim to bring these literary voices together to consider in their own words how art and activism bridge Caribbean, queer, and community identities. The conference will open Friday night with a literary reading and book signing followed by a symposium on Saturday to be held on the University of Chicago campus. The symposium will be organized around three panels on: "The Words for It: Queer Identity, History, and Language" "Art and Activism: Writing Gay/Human Rights" and "Acting Gay: Performance and Popular Culture." The event is scheduled for April 15 and 16.

Apathy = Oppression

- Sergio Sarmiento

Join in the discussion every other THURSDAY
from 9PM to 10PM
www.jamaicaoutpost.com

OUTFORUM

HOMOSEXUALITY IN HAITI'S VODOU CULTURE

By Mambo Racine Sans Bout, Contributed article

In Vodou, homosexuals are not barred from any religious activity. They may participate in religious services, and even become initiates and clergy people. It is true that there is some stigma associated with homosexuality in Haiti, but it does not take the form of the virulent hatred evident in Jamaica, for example, where homosexual individuals may be the victims of mob killings. Especially among the poorer classes, where lack of living space and privacy makes sexual orientation obvious, the feeling is rather that Mother Nature has somehow played a sort of "practical joke" on the person.

Homosexual men are considered almost by definition to be under the patronage of Erzulie Freda, the lwa of love and luxury. She is most feminine and coquettish, providing an opportunity for stereotypical homosexual behaviour to be exhibited in a sacred context. Homosexual women are considered very often to be under the patronage of Erzulie Dantor, who, while heterosexual in the sense that she has a child, is a fierce and strong female image. Many people think of Dantor herself as a lesbian woman, but she is also the wife of both Ti-Jean Petro and Simbi Makaya, two very important lwa.

Because open homosexuals are rigorously excluded from Protestant congregations, and frowned upon in Catholic services, almost the only avenue for spiritual expression for homosexuals in Haiti is Vodou. There is, therefore, a higher percentage of homosexuals at Vodou ceremonies, and in the priesthood, than in the general population.

At a few peristyles in Port-au-Prince, composed entirely of gay men, or of gay women, homosexuality is virtually an entrance requirement. I know one Mambo, a lesbian, who has several lovers among her female hounsins. They band together economically, doing small marketing and other activities to assure their mutual survival.

I had another experience, of a young man, a folkloric dancer who was a friend of mine, who asked me to be his *marinn kanzo*, or godmother. (This is different from an initiating Mambo, who is called *maman asson*, mother of the asson, the ceremonial rattle emblematic of priesthood.) I visited the young

man in seclusion in the *djevo*, the secret inner chamber of the peristyle where initiates are secluded - and was promptly forced to abandon him as a godchild, as he was wearing the prescribed clothes of the opposite sex! Incorrect procedure, rather than homosexuality per se, forced me to take this action.



Homosexual man during Vodou service
(Photo courtesy of Sans Bout)

It is worth remembering that at a Vodou ceremony, any person may be possessed by any lwa, regardless of the sex of the lwa or the person. Homosexual men, especially initiates, are frequently possessed by female lwa including Erzulie Freda. I remember one six-foot-two Houngan who was the mount for a lwa named Sainte Therese! The Mambo I mentioned above had a very martial Ogoun in her head, and his presence at ceremonies was absolutely thrilling. The dancing of homosexual men in particular is often much admired, as they

combine the muscular strength of men with the voluptuousness of women. Some overenthusiastic homosexual Houngans have actually been known to carry dresses with them when they visit at other Houngans' ceremonies, so that their lwa will be properly clothed if they should appear.

Houngans and Mambos have particular passwords, and specific gestures performed with the asson. Homosexual Houngans and Mambos have additional gestures, which permit them to recognize one another.

The presence of homosexuals in a congregation is considered morally neutral - the important criterion is that the correct ceremonial procedures are followed in any aspect of the Vodou service.

Please visit the Vodou in Haiti's website:

<http://members.aol.com/racine125/index.html>

SPECIAL NOTICE

We are compiling a directory of Caribbean GLBT organizations. Please contact us with information about the GLBT organizations in your community.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT OF US?

BIBLE STUDY By Shane Hicks-Lee, Guest Columnist

Each person's soul is their own responsibility. I encourage you to pray and clothe yourselves with the full armour of God. (Ephesians 6:13) I pray this may prove to edify.

What does God want from us?

I am convinced in my heart of hearts it is what Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (Mat 22:37-40) This is what God wants from us: LOVE. Nothing more; and, nothing less. I have been lead repeatedly to Romans 14 lately. To understand it fully, I chose to start in chapter 13. Verse 8, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law." To understand love, I refer to 1 Cor 13:4 – 14:1, Love is patient, kind; not jealous, boastful, arrogant, rude, irritable, or resentful. Love does not insist on its own way or rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. So faith, hope, love remain; but the

greatest of these is love. We must remember to respond with love to all people. Even to those who wrongly believe that heaven is only for heterosexuals. Know that God loves you! That bears repeating to our community: God Loves You! Rom 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Rom 8:35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Verse 38, "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." We need to rejoice and give thanks to Him. He loves us!

Next Bible Study:

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

Only in The Jamaica OutPost...news for Jamaica's GLBT community

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

When: Feb 15, 2004.

From Where: Via Jamaicaoutpost.com

I am glad more gays, lesbians and bisexuals are coming out this year in Jamaica. I keep saying I only wish there were more support groups available for us. Me personally, I'm 28 years. I've been a lesbian since i was 12. I first found out at age 9. I have been strong for myself but not all are well. Anyway, keep doing what you are doing and to all gays in Jamaica: Keep your heads up high and be safe. Hopefully this year more support groups and events will be established. [L. Hastings]

When: Feb 9, 2005.

From Where: Bangkok, Thailand.

I live in Bangkok with my husband and we were in Phuket when the Tsunami hit. We have a pretty good idea of the size of the devastation. What I want to say is that after reading Emily and Rosanna's efforts in Sri

Lanka in the Tsunami relief, only some of us can give their all. Thank you Emily and Rosanna. [Manjula Muthu Krishna]

When: Feb 9, 2005.

From Where: Jamaicaoutpost.com

I have always been inspired by EM's bright spirit & proud of the work that she did. Keep up the good humanitarian efforts Em & Rosanna & thanks for keeping me updated on the Tsunami crisis. [Nina]

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THE 1ST WORLD OUTGAMES MONTREAL 2006

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

The Jamaica OutPost is pleased to inform our readers that the newsletter is now an official media partner of the 1st World Outgames Montreal 2006.

The 1st World Outgames Montreal 2006, which is dubbed Rendez-Vous Montreal 2006, is scheduled for July 29 to August 5, 2006. The event is based on the principles of **P**articipation and Celebration, **R**espect and Fairness, **I**nnovation, **D**iversity and **E**mpowerment (PRIDE) and welcomes everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, age, gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, physical challenge, political beliefs, physical ability, athletic/artistic skills or HIV health status. There are no minimum athletic standards to qualify for the Outgames. The only requirement is the desire to support the ideals of the Outgames. People with specific needs or disabilities are integrated as full-fledged participants, volunteers, officials and spectators. By accepting the Outgames' challenge, all

Outgames participants automatically become winners.

The Outgames are a safe and accepting environment where participants may express themselves openly and enjoy the camaraderie and rewards of sport, culture and art. And through these athletic and cultural activities of the Outgames, stereotypes are challenged and barriers broken down. In fact, the experience can be the highlight of a lifetime!

The Jamaica OutPost, in collaboration with a leading member of Jamaica's GLBT community is seeking to put a team together to participate in the 1st World Outgames Montreal 2006. The sports available are football, basketball, track and field, cycling, golf, karate, marathon, physique, triathlon, tennis, beach volleyball and swimming. Please contact us as soon as possible if you are a Jamaican resident who wishes to become a member of this team.



Montreal's Olympic Park (Photo courtesy of Outgames)

Any comments?
Please send to
jamaicaoutpost@hotmail.com

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News for the Jamaican lesbian, all-sexual and gay community



OFFICIAL MEDIA-PARTNER OF THE 1ST WORLD OUTGAMES RENDEZ-VOUS MONTREAL 2006

OUTPOLL

Last Month's OutPoll Results

Are you personally acquainted with anyone living with the HIV virus or AIDS?

YES 52% NO 36% UNSURE 12%



Question:

How important is gay rights advocacy for you?

CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE:

www.jamaicaoutpost.com
Click on: OutPoll

Health & Wellness

HEALTHY RESPONSES TO CONFLICTS

We all experience unwanted conflict in life from time to time. Whether it is physical or psychological, the body's initial reaction is usually the same – the biochemical "fight or flight" hormone, cortisol, is released into the bloodstream and readies the body for action. Unfortunately, excess cortisol can have many negative effects on the body such as weakening the immune system, raising blood pressure or contributing to weight gain. To make matters worse, this hormone also affects brain function, shutting down the more rational thinking processes as the "survival instinct" takes over. As a result, once a conflict situa-

tion begins, some people can find it very difficult to find to respond in a non-aggressive way. Since it can take up to 24 hours for cortisol levels to return to normal after a conflict and since something as small as being cut off in traffic can trigger the "fight or flight" response, most of us exist in a state of heightened anxiety and reduced mental function.

So what can we do about this? Focused prayer or meditation has been shown to release cortisol-neutralizing hormones in the body, so this is a good approach to return to healthy function after a conflict situation. A more ideal approach would be to prevent the "fight or flight" response in the first

place. This means avoiding settings in which conflict is likely to occur, remaining calm if conflict erupts by assuming a detached perspective, and responding to those instigating conflict with compassion and forgiveness. These aren't easy tasks, especially if our cortisol levels are high to begin with, but with patience and practice, you will find conflict lessening for yourself and those around you. As it turns out, the sage advice of Jesus to "turn the other cheek" is not only medicine for the soul but also a prescription for a healthy body.

International News

CANADIAN MARCH TOWARD MARRIAGE EQUALITY

"I rise in support of a Canada in which liberties are safeguarded, rights are protected and the people of this land are treated as equals under the law." These were among the opening words of the Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin in his February 16 address to the House of Commons on Parliamentary Hill in the Canadian capital city of Ottawa.

Currently, same-sex marriages are legal in seven Canadian provinces and one territory. The Supreme Court of Canada, in a landmark ruling on December 9 of last year, further declared that it is up to the head court in Ot-

tawa to decide who has the right to marry in Canada but indicated that religious organisations have no obligation to perform marriages against their doctrinal principles. Prime Minister Martin also affirmed that the government will forge full steam ahead to implement constitutional amendments that will ensure marriage equality for same-gender couples during 2005.

The challenge for all Canadian same-gender couples is still not over, as the justice minister of Alberta, one of the provinces that does not provide marriage equality, has indicated that the province's definition of marriage as exclusively between a man and a

woman will not be changed, irrespective of the outcome of future rulings by the Supreme Court or the Constitutional Court of Canada.

The march toward equality for same-gender couples in Canada was first rewarded on April 11, 2000, when Bill C-23, introduced by then-Prime Minister Jean Chretien, was passed in Parliament by a vote of 174-72. The bill provided social and tax benefits equal to those of common-law heterosexual couples following a cohabitation period of one year. An attempt to amend the Constitution to define marriage as "the lawful union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others" failed to pass.

On January 14, 2001, two same-gender couples were pronounced married by the Rev. Brent Hawkes of the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto, despite stern affirmations from a government official that Ontario would not recognize same-gender marriages. Since then, the provinces of Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador have all legalized same-gender marriages. The United Church of Canada voted on August 14, 2003, to endorse marriage equality for same-gender couples throughout Canada.