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The Jamaica OutPost

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PROMISCUITY, HOMOPHOBIA & HIV/AIDS IN JAMAICA

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

Jamaica's very first HIV/AIDS case was reported in 1982. Currently, 1.5% of the island's adult population lives with HIV/AIDS. According to statistics provided by the National AIDS Committee (NAC), Jamaica registered 578 AIDS cases last year between January and June. This amid increased public awareness of the HIV virus and AIDS.

In a report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in November 2004, many factors were highlighted as significant contributors to this growing epidemic in the island. The report singles out widespread homophobia as one of the main factors that contribute to Jamaica's high incidence of



Tribute to victims of HIV/AIDS at Jamaica AIDS Support office (The Jamaica OutPost Photo)

HIV/AIDS. In fact, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, with Caribbean offices in Port of Spain, Trinidad, also affirms that homophobia within Caribbean societies contributes significantly to the spread of the virus. Information on their website

further attributes the infection rate to the high level of violence against the gay community. Incidentally, this was one of the specific findings of the HRW researchers. The report put forward the argument that

(See Promiscuity on page 2)

POLICE THWARTS MOB ATTACK ON GAY COUPLE

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

A gay couple living in a rural district just outside of Port Maria, St. Mary missed a fatal end by the skin of their teeth. On Sunday March 6, the two heard a disturbing uproar outside their quaint home and upon peering through a window, they saw what most gay men in Jamaica dread most. There was a contingent of about 10 men heavily armed with cutlasses,

sticks, rock stones and other weapons. The mob had apparently come to beat and run them out of the community because they were homosexuals. D. Waite, a 32-year-old man and one of the victims, told *The Jamaica OutPost* that the group of men were shouting out his name, calling him a 'battybwoy' and saying that

they were going to beat the hell out of his and his 'battyman fren raas' that morning. According to Waite, the sight of the men with their weapons was a frightening ordeal for himself and his partner, 35-year-old N. Fisher.

Waite called the police using his cellular telephone

(See Thwarts on page 3)

(PROMISCUITY...Continued from page 1)

Jamaica's Sodomy laws and the virulent abuse of men who engage in homosexual practices play a major role in the reluctance of infected gay and bisexual men to seek adequate healthcare, which would help to curb the risk of transmitting the HIV virus to unsuspecting partners.

Both the HRW report as well as the information presented by Alliance on its website argue that homophobia and the failure of Caribbean heads of states to address these issues responsively continue to cultivate the prevalence of the HIV virus within the region. Other findings reveal that some sexually active gay and bisexual men tend to partake in more risky sexual practices than any other sexually active group. The high-risk practices that bisexual men are engaged in multiply the chance of passing on the virus to their girlfriends or wife.

A flip of the coin, however, reveals a deeply rooted factor that is seriously nourishing the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Jamaica: promiscuity. As a matter of fact, if we examine some popular Jamaican or Caribbean music, the practice of having several sexual partners is nothing far from traditional. In the Dancehall genre, acclaimed mirror ambassador for Jamaica's 'culture', having girls 'inna bungle' (or by the dozen), is a proud proclamation of the Jamaican culture. Even Calypso or Soca music from the Eastern Caribbean islands glorifies this folklore of wanton sexual conduct. This ostentatiously cultural mentality of being promiscuous is by no means less practised among the men of Jamaica's GLBT community.

In a casual interview with a seropositive gay man who resides in the Ocho Rios area, the reality of the link between promiscuity, homophobia and the spread of the HIV virus in Jamaica was outwardly apparent. Miller (name changed to protect his identity), who is 25 years old, claims to have had sexual intercourse with more than thirty-five (35) different men, including married men, over the past year alone. It is important to point out that Miller is not a male prostitute (aka sex worker). For him, having sexual relations with different partners has been his only option to fulfil his desires for companionship. His acquaintances are sourced mainly through online chat rooms, message boards and Internet dating web sites. He also meets guys at gay parties held periodically in and around the area.

Interestingly, the idea of having a single lover or partner had never been far from his mind. He explained that he started feeling attraction for men during his teenage years and as he grew older he knew he wanted to be with a man, both sexually and emotionally. In a very low husky voice, he confessed that he always entertained the idea of forming a relationship with the man of his

dreams and living together happily until death would separate them. This, however, was never meant to be. At age 16, he witnessed the beating of a gay man who lived in a nearby community. That experience changed his life forever. He stresses how differently he felt from then onward; not wanting to give up his hopes of having a relationship but feeling afraid his would have been the same fate as the aforementioned victim of homophobia. By age 19, Miller had his first homosexual encounter with an older man, whom he met at a local pub near Ocho Rios. He recalls his immediate infatuation with that man and his subsequent disillusionment. The man was married and was only interested in sexual gratification. Since that experience, Miller says he has realized that most gay men in Jamaica are only out for sex and nothing more. He explains that most of his sexual partners are not his day-to-day friends. They do not 'spar' (or hang out together) or do anything that is socially meaningful. They simply call each other when they are horny (which is almost daily) in order to satisfy their physical needs.

In 2003, Miller was among the newly diagnosed cases of the HIV virus in Jamaica. For him, the news was more than heart wrenching. He explained he felt as if it was his destiny being fulfilled because he got used to the misconception that all gay men would eventually die from AIDS. He further admitted that he has not told any of his current sexual partners that he is HIV positive but takes care in using a condom for anal intercourse.

In response to a question of change in his current promiscuous lifestyle, Miller believes that not much will change under the current anti-gay climate in Jamaica. He asserts that the HIV virus and AIDS continue to flourish under the stigma that it is a disease that only gay men are susceptible to. He, for one, states that he is afraid of letting people know that he is HIV+. He fears losing his job, rejection by his family and other members of the gay community and most importantly, being chased or even killed by anti-gay community mobsters.

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WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE - A novel by Shawn Forbes

WEST INDIAN GAY & LESBIAN LITERATURE By Anthony Hron, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor



Shawn A. Forbes

The fictional storyline explores the relationship between three individuals from very different backgrounds who find healing and personal growth through their committed friendship. Stephen, Tanya and Suresh, hailing from The Bahamas, Canada and the U.K. respectively, overcome personal challenges and painful histories through the strength of their friendship, a friendship forged despite their disparate backgrounds. Although set mainly in England, the plot takes us to Nassau, Los Angeles and New York as the characters struggle with their personal issues of sexual orientation, violence, incest, physical and sexual abuse, and AIDS. In the end, each is able to reach a new level of understanding and self-acceptance through their quests for love and happiness. *When Worlds Collide* promises to be a valuable exploration of the role that religious taboos and cultural proscriptions play in the current international debate over same-gender love.

On April 26, a new novel will be unveiled in Nassau. What is special about this novel, though, is the roots and focus of the fictional storyline. *When Worlds Collide*, the first novel by Bahamian lawyer Shawn A. Forbes, offers some compelling reasons for us to revisit the decisions we make in life, especially those made by Black gay men.

The book is available through Trafford Publishing's bookstore:

www.trafford.com

When Worlds Collide
By Shawn Forbes
603 pages
Catalogue #04-0840
ISBN 1-4120-3013-7

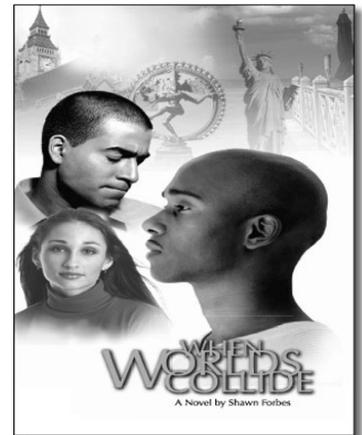
A testament to the power of love in the lives of three lost souls. A real triumph of the human spirit! A must read for anyone who has felt the power of loss and loneliness!

West Indian Gay and Lesbian Literature is a new column dedicated to writers of poems, short stories, novels, plays and other forms of literary arts. Let us know of any literary work that you would recommend to our readers. Please email us: editor@jamaicaoutpost.com



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(THWARTS Cont'd from page 1)

and two jeep-loads of police arrived just in time to prevent any physical harm to both men, who remained inside their home. By this, there was a massive crowd of onlookers in the small community, since a scandal of this magnitude would have alerted anyone in the vicinity. Waite told The JO that several men were saying "*ah bat-tyman dem; dem fi dead*" (they are gay men; they should be killed) even in the presence of the police. The police was able to successfully disperse the crowd and thwart the plot of the mobsters to harm another two gay men in Jamaica.

However, at the end of the ordeal, the police apprehended no one. Checks with the Port Maria police station, the station that dealt with the incident according to the victim, further proved that no arrests were actually carried out by said station. The victims decided not to pursue the issue for fears of retaliation from other men in

and around the area. Waite further expressed concern for his elderly mother who still resides in the area. Both Waite and Fisher have since relocated from the district, leaving most of their possessions in the place they once called their home.

Waite further expressed his disappointment that even after reporting the matter to a local organisation that normally assists gay men, no one has since contacted him to see if he and his partner were safe. He, however, said he was grateful that the police had come in time to save both his life and that of his partner. He said the officers were very helpful in preventing any harm to them but was disappointed that they failed to apprehend any of the perpetrators. Word coming from his former district indicates that the men are still adamant about finding them to physically harm them. Waite finally said that he was very worried for his and his partner's safety especially since they have to leave their current place of safety to earn their living.

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

Following some investigative interviews among members of our GLBT community, it seems that the issue of discrimination in the workplace based on our sexual orientation is a primary concern. I decided to check with the Ministry of Labour, in particular the section that deals with complaints from employees about unfair treatment from employers. They were able to shed more light as far as the complaints from the gay and lesbian community was concerned.

The matter, according to a spokesperson who asked for anonymity, is not serious according to their statistics, at least. During the last two years, there was a single case where a gay man complained that he was dismissed from his job because he was suspected of being a homosexual. The spokesperson said the ministry made attempts to verify the claim of discrimination based on his sexual orientation but as expected, the employers claimed they had terminated the services of the complainant because of decreased employee performance. Does this ring a bell?

In fact, two people I have interviewed during the course of this investigation have revealed that some gay and lesbian employers do experience unfair treatment in their workplace. This is by no means a general statement as there are some workplaces that have an equal opportunity-style approach to employment here.

The question, therefore, is how do you handle a situation where you feel that your job is at risk because of your perceived or openly homosexual lifestyle?

According to the spokesperson for the Ministry of Labour, you should report the matter. While a report to your supervisor may be the first step to take, it can also complicate the matter. So, our recommended steps are as follows:

1 - Take matters in your own hands. Start by analysing your situation with a level head. Speak to someone you can trust and come up with a good plan of action. Also, make every effort not to be in breach of any company policies that may warrant your dismissal under false pretences. These include tardiness, missing deadlines, getting into brawls with other co-workers, discussing your sexuality with other co-workers (no matter how much they

mention it to you), not performing as well as other employees, etc.

2 - If you decide to speak to your supervisor as the first step, do not be aggressive about the situation. Be calm and present your situation in a sympathetic fashion. Listen attentively to the responses made by your supervisor and try to memorize them clearly. After this initial contact, write a 'thank you' note with the date to your supervisor, thanking him or her for listening to your concern and also mention the advice given by him/her in the letter. Sign the letter and make a photocopy for your files.

3 - If you notice any improvements, mention this to your supervisor at an appropriate time with a follow-up thank you note or card.

4 - If things get worse, also mention this to your supervisor again in writing, but this time, state the problem clearly including the names of staff members who are responsible for your ill treatment. Make mention of any other information including any

backlash that has occurred since your first initial conversation.

5 - Make sure you are keeping records of everything that happens to you.

6 - If things continue to deteriorate, start looking for a new job.

7 - In the meantime, approach a senior supervisor, manager or personnel manager with a formal letter of complaint. Ensure to cc the letter to your supervisor or immediate manager. It is important, however, to maintain an approach that is free from hostility. You should state in your letter that you love your job and do not wish to leave it prematurely. Also state a reasonable solution that you are willing to undergo as a form of resolution, if the source of the discrimination is coming from other members of staff in your department or work area. Ideas for a solution could include your willingness to relocate to another department, branch or store within the company's system. Remain calm and be patient while the human resources department carries out its own assessment of the actual situation.

8 - If their reply is one of nonchalance or denial and

(See *WORKPLACE* page 6)



Kingston's business district (The Jamaica OutPost Photo)

Health & Wellness

WHAT IS A HEALTHY DIET?

Regardless of your weight or current health status, we are all on a diet. A diet is what we eat day-in and day-out. Some of us may try to maintain a weight loss diet, or some other kind of purposeful eating regimen. While these specific diets may be desirable in certain situations, most of us should be focusing on a general "good health" diet. Unfortunately, with all the fad weight-loss diets that come and go, it's hard to know what a "good health" diet really is. Remember when fat was the diet demon? Every food processor scrambled to invent fat-free foods. Unfortunately, these often replaced the fat with sugar or salt or synthetic "fat substitutes", none of which were particularly healthy for us. Then carbohydrates became the enemy to healthy body weight. After all, the logic went, don't farmers fatten up livestock by feeding them high carbohydrate diets? Yes, but... the livestock is also fed LARGE quantities and kept in feedlots where they get no exercise to burn it off. Now it seems, the low-carb diet craze is waning and before long, no doubt, marketers will be touting the next big diet plan.

We could all save ourselves much confusion (and money) if we just remembered the diet that most naturopathic doctors advocate. They look at the kinds of food that human beings evolved eating. You can bet this didn't include the sugar-water box drinks, the fibre deficient bun, and the processed cheese that so many eat for lunch today. According to Dr. Randall Bradley, N.D., the best prescription for a healthy diet lies in "leaving the processed foods behind and go-

ing to whole unprocessed foods that are found in their natural form, just the way our ancestors would have. This means eating fresh fruits, whole grains, legumes [beans and peas], seeds, nuts, meat and poultry, fish and seafood, and eggs." Dairy products (from cows) are okay as well, "if used in moderation and, most importantly, you are not allergic or intolerant to it." This is known as lactose intolerance and it is more common in peoples of African descent possibly because cow's milk was not a part of their historical diet. So, instead of the box drink and bun and cheese, have water, a piece of fruit, some nuts and whole grain bread. This will give you greater nutrition, more fibre, and complex carbohydrates for sustained energy.

In the next few issues, we will look at some components of a healthy diet, beginning with the most critical, water.



Vegetables are a healthy choice when planning your diet

This column offers information for personal health and is not intended to replace the services of a licensed physician. If you are sick, please see a healthcare provider.

Article by:

Anthony Hron, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

OUTREACH CARIBBEAN

reaching out for equality

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

Contact: outreachcaribbean@gmail.com

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

BIBLE STUDY By Shane Hicks-Lee, Guest Columnist

Let me start this discussion with the same statement I begin all my discussions with: You should not take for "gospel" what I offer here. These are my opinions based upon research that I have done. Each person's soul is their own responsibility. I am neither a preacher nor a teacher. This is written mainly to glbt Christians but can be used by all. I encourage you to pray and clothe yourselves with the full armor of God. (Eph 6:10-18) Pull out a Bible or go on-line and search for yourselves. I have included where I found the information where appropriate. What I have written here can be found elsewhere in books, journals and online in various places including www.ecinc.org.

"The Full Armor of God" Eph 6:10-18

Paul starts by explaining what we are battling and why. In verse 12 he indicates that our battle is not against a flesh and blood enemy. In other words, we are not battling people even if sometimes it feels as if we are. Paul instead says that we are battling against "principalities," "powers", "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and "the spiritual wickedness in high places." Under "wickedness," Adam Clark's "Commentary on the Bible" refers to lies that are disguised as truth. Verse 14 says to combat these lies, we must put on the "belt of truth." The way that armor worked, the belt held everything together. So, if the belt isn't strong, everything falls off. John 8:32, "You will know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." So, truth is vital to our fight. Once we know the truth, then make sure to have the "breastplate

(WORKPLACE cont'd from page 4)

you continue to experience discrimination, then you need to make a report to the Ministry of Labour about your situation. You may also report your situation to other interested organisations but your case is better documented when you report it to the labour ministry. Call before and ask for the department that deals with discrimination in the workplace. Get whatever advice they can offer and file a formal complaint with them about your company.

9 - At this stage, if you feel very uncomfortable in your job, it is best that you seriously consider changing employment. However, do not resign if you are able to withstand the pressure until you secure new employment. While some prospective employers may not contact your current employers, once you are between jobs, it is a common practice. Your reputation is more at risk this way.

10 - The final recommendation is to always do your homework about your prospective employers. Look at the warning signs that may indicate hostility toward homosexuals and try to either look for a job somewhere else or try to 'blend' in. Always be professional on the job and do not entertain non-standard practices that will

of righteousness." Protect our feet with the "gospel of Peace." Protect ourselves from attacks against our spirit with the "shield of faith." Cover our heads with the "helmet of salvation." And, use "the sword of the Spirit" to slice through the attacks of the enemy. So, let's learn the truth of the word of God so that our battle will not be fruitless. The most important truth: God Loves You!

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

When: March 3, 2005.

From Where: Jamaicaoutpost.com

I wish I was able to have read this when I lived in Jamaica. I can tell u one suicide attempt would not have been made. I now attend a Church in Los Angeles, Unity Fellowship of Christ Church, and this sound like a typical sermon. Can't tell you how much I appreciate this. [Nevin Powell]

make you a target for dismissal.

It is worth mentioning too, that the Labour Laws do not identify workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation as a legitimate case for litigation against employers but the agency is willing to work with any member of the workforce to improve working conditions for all. They conduct visits to several workplaces to educate employees and employers about the issues impacting the Jamaican labour market. Remember that a lot depends on you and your professional approach as well. So, be professional and achieve the most you can as an employee for your company and for yourself as a member of Jamaica's GLBT community.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: THE RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT

Courtesy of The 1st World Outgames Rendez-Vous Montreal 2006 (Edited by Jason Simmonds)

A Conference entitled *The Right to Be Different* will begin on Wednesday 26 July 2006 with an opening address by an internationally recognised personality during a gala dinner given to officially inaugurate the Conference.

The following morning at the Palais des congrès, Montréal's convention centre, the first plenary session will be held, bringing together some 2,000 participants. The Co-Presidents of the Conference, Ms. Joke Swiebel, former Member of the European Parliament, and Professor Robert Wintemute from the School of Law at King's College London will lead the opening discussions.

Over the next three days, Conference participants will be offered four more plenary sessions, featuring a number of internationally-renowned keynote speakers, and will be able to choose from up to 250 workshops (up to 50 simultaneous workshops during each of five workshop sessions), which will deal with the many aspects of the Conference themes. There will be five themes:

Essential Rights

This theme will explore the essential rights of the LGBT community on a global scale as set out by the Universal Declarations of Human Rights and other international civil right agreements.

Global Issues

This section of the conference will focus on the role the economy plays in the overall advancement of the GLBT

communities in different regions and how our rights are affected by larger global struggles such as for the globalisation of social and economic rights, the development of disadvantaged countries, among others.

The Diverse LGBT Community

This theme will look at the impact of our own behaviour as LGBT individuals as it affects others in our community, whether they are women, transgender, people of colour, faith, disabilities and age.

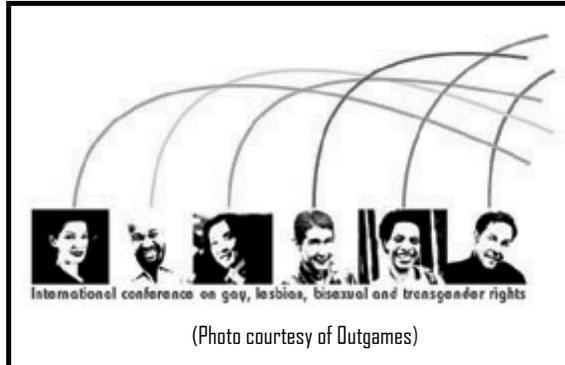
Participation in Society

This theme will explore the changes needed to allow LGBT individuals to participate equally in today's societies in all areas of life: sport, education, media, the workplace, family, religion, culture, politics and lawmaking, law enforcement and

judging, and so on.

Creating Social Change

This theme will examine the ability of citizens to freely exercise their rights and its immediate impact on the society as a whole and the need to develop strategies and alliances with communities outside of the LGBT community, including supportive individuals and groups within the heterosexual majority. In this context, the education of younger generations becomes of critical importance, and the battle against homophobia is one of many key concerns.



Any comments?

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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
How important is gay rights advocacy for you?

VERY IMPORTANT 82%

**Question:**

Do you think conditions for gays have improved, stayed the same, or deteriorated during the past year?

CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE:

www.jamaicaoutpost.com
Click on: OutPoll

Global Headlines

■ Trinidad & Tobago couple to spearhead campaign to lobby the government to repeal the twin republic's Buggery laws.

■ St. Kitts & Nevis denies gay cruise port entry citing a threat to their society and culture.

■ Chile reports 30% fewer incidences of discrimination and homophobic crimes during 2004, with a total of 46 documented cases.

■ Barbados' House of Bishops and Provincial Standing Committee of the Church in the Province of the West Indies calls for regional governments to secure protection for all gay and lesbian persons from all forms of violence as this is the entitlement of all citizens.

International News**ILGA SPEARHEADS UN GAY RIGHTS PETITION**

The historical move in March 2003 by Brazil to introduce a resolution to the United Nations' Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR) to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation globally is again under threat. The resolution, which was presented during the UNCHR's annual human rights conference in Geneva, Switzerland, received strong opposition during 2003 and 2004. As a result, Brazil postponed its discussion until this year's sitting of the UNCHR. News coming from Brasilia, however, has indicated no great optimism for this discussion, which may further sidetrack the guarantee of the basic human rights of GLBT people.

The seriousness of this issue is mainly felt by GLBT's who live in countries where local legislators are adamant about not changing their constitutions to protect gays and lesbians. Countries like Jamaica and some other Caribbean countries, some countries in South and Central America, Africa and others are the ones who would benefit greatly from a move by the UNCHR to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

In fact, gays and lesbians of most developed countries like the U.S., Canada, the European Union, Australia and South Africa already enjoy a tremendous amount of rights and freedoms which are non-existent in developing countries.

This year, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), will again bring a large coalition of gay rights organisations to lobby the UNCHR to protect the rights and freedoms of gays and lesbian the world over. The organisation and its coalition team will seek to voice their request from April 2 – 17 in Geneva. The usual threats from religious groups, Islamic countries, the Vatican and fundamentalists are already plotting against the resolution, should it be discussed.

To petition for your rights as a GLBT person, please visit the following website and take a moment to sign the ILGA sponsored petition:

www.brazilianresolution.com

Visit ILGA's website:
www.ilga.org



(Photo courtesy of ILGA)

NEW YORK RALLY FOR GAY RIGHTS IN JAMAICA

On Friday, April 15, join over 1,000 Amnesty activists for a rally in front of the Jamaican Consulate in New York City to call on the Jamaican government to abolish the Sodomy laws. The rally is part of the annual GET ON THE BUS, a day of action organized by Amnesty Local Group 133, from Sommerville, MA. For more information, contact: a_lipman@hotmail.com; To register: www.GOTB.org.

Date: April 15

Time: 3:00 Pm

Location: Jamaican Consulate, NYC (47th St. and 3rd Ave.)