

The Jamaica OutPost

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TRIBUTE TO JAMAICA'S FIRST GAY HERO

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

The final interview that the late Brian Williamson did was for this newsletter; a newsletter for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender citizens of Jamaica. This month, The Jamaica OutPost joins forces with members and friends of Jamaica's GLBT community who have made themselves available to pay tribute to Brian Williamson, in recollection of his contributions to our ongoing struggle for equality in Jamaica.

There was never a doubt that this man, with his genuinely big smile and his naturally friendly ways, loved his land and his people. He defended his people. He was vocal



The late Brian Williamson (Photo Source: Unknown)

about the injustice being suffered by his people. Even while most of his people kept silent, he pressed on. He was strong and fearless. (See WILLIAMSON on page 2)

THE DEATH AND LIGHT OF BRIAN WILLIAMSON

By Thomas Glave, Commentary

This much is true: the brave, loving man who was murdered in Kingston on the morning of June 9, 2004, will not be forgotten. His name was Brian Ribton Bernard Williamson. None of us who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual will forget him, and neither will many others.

I remember Brian as a laughing man: a man with

"a head of silver coins," as I sometimes joked with him about his head of curly silver-gray hair. He loved laughing and laughter; though it is often said of the dead even when untrue, he truly *did* love life, and exemplified that love in his formidable bravery where sexuality matters were concerned. He was not afraid to open and op-

erate, from the late 1990s until only a few years ago, the gay and lesbian dance club Entourage, right in his home at 3A Haughton Avenue, New Kingston. Entourage, a place where so many of us gays, lesbians, and bisexuals could go to dance, laugh, flirt, party, and share time with friends and loved ones – a place

(See Life and Death on page 4)

(WILLIAMSON...Continued from page 1)

less. He chose not to hide. He chose not to speak from an anonymous podium. His face and his voice were known and will forever be known by Jamaicans for many generations to come.

The following is a compilation of excerpts from Williamson's interview with The Jamaica OutPost (then HOT-NESS! Newsletter), which took place on May 12, 2004 under the coconut tree in his backyard at 3A Haughton Avenue, Kingston 5.

Williamson on his involvement in gay rights advocacy

“The reason why I am speaking today and the reason why I speak at all is because I want people to question what they have accepted as truth about homosexuals.”

Williamson on the forward movement of Jamaica's GLBT community

“I think it has to. Even sub-consciously it must. [...] It is taking a long time but there are a lot working in our favour now. The international community is very close; the media, you know...and I think people are beginning to break down this idea...the idea that they are worthless is breaking down.”

Williamson commenting on the involvement of the younger generation of gay and lesbian Jamaicans

“People are more comfortable with their sexuality and they are quite prepared to say: “I am O.K”...I remember when JFLAG opened first and they would pass around a piece of paper...nobody used to sign it, you know. Or, they used to put down foolishness on it! Nowadays people are putting out their entire name and their phone number. We would never do it before because we were ashamed of who we were. We thought that we had something to be ashamed of.”

Williamson speaking on homophobia in Jamaica

“I think that there's a large group of heterosexuals who are saying “you are ok” also. Jamaicans. There is a large

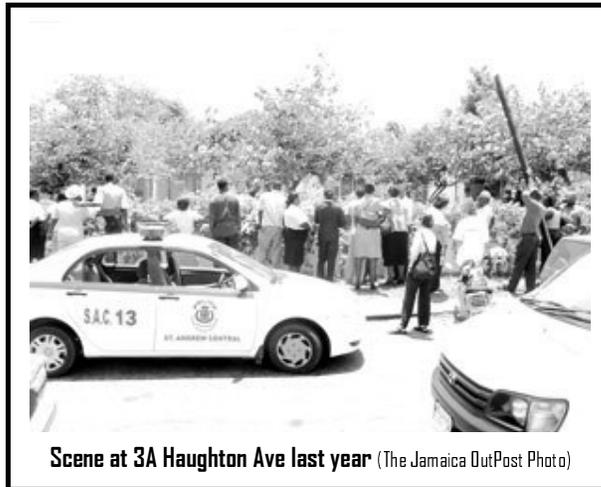
Jamaican group of heterosexuals who are saying you guys are O.K. We are not scared of you; we don't know what people are scared of and you are perfectly o.k. in our books. One of them is Muttie Perkins; [...] another one is Dr. Cecil Cooper of the University of the West Indies.[...] A number of people...are saying: 'nothing wrong with you'.

Williamson on the needs of the Jamaican society

“Education for everyone so that we can reason properly. Education for the masses. Education for everybody that lives in Jamaica. It should be accessible so that we can learn to reason. So that we can learn to read things for ourselves. So that we learn to understand that everybody is not like us neither in colour nor in thought pattern nor in sexual orientation and without the education, I don't think that it is going to be easy.”

Williamson's vision for gay Jamaica

“I'd have all the churches in Jamaica apologize to the homosexual community for the violence they have caused towards them. That's what I would like to see. I would like to see, I'd like to wake up one morning and hear a general assembly where all the churches in Jamaica are meeting to apologize to the homosexual community in Jamaica for the violence that they have caused towards us throughout the years.”



Scene at 3A Haughton Ave last year (The Jamaica OutPost Photo)



THE CRIES OF MEN - Novel by O'Brien Dennis

WEST INDIAN GAY & LESBIAN LITERATURE - By Jason Simmonds, Staff Contributor



O'Brien Dennis (Photo Source: Enrico Thibou)

versy. We caught up with the author of this interestingly titled novel, O'Brien Dennis, to get into his mind a bit and explore the roots of this novel.

JO: My first question relates to the matter of sexual abuse against gay men in Jamaica. Do you think our culture is one that acknowledges this type of abuse?

Dennis: I must first note that male sexual abuse far exceeds that of Jamaican gay men. Male rape is a violent crime that affects straight men as much as gay men. It is imperative to note also that male sexual abuse does not make a man gay or bi-sexual. The Jamaican culture while it does not acknowledge male sexual abuse it condones and promotes male sexual violence. Dancehall music itself promotes and perpetuates sexual violence not only against women but against gay men. The notion of homophobia and false masculinity which is rampant within the Jamaican culture fuels an atmosphere which will put men at risk of both physical and sexual abuse. The laws of the country which are culturally embedded and does not provide an environment for openness, transparency and accountability, thus male sexual abuse continues unrecognized and underreported.

JO: Since the book and your experience stem from Jamaica, how would you address an audience of males (gay or not) who might be at risk?

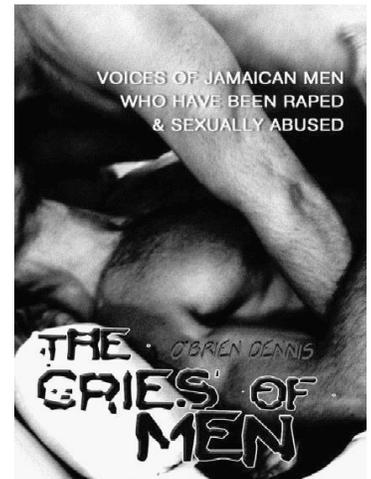
Dennis: It is common knowledge that men in Jamaica have been raped at gun point. It is not so much about the risk, (though most times we know when we are at

An interestingly new novel has been creating quite a bit of stir in the literary circles. This novel, which is written by a Jamaican gay man, is about a topic that is pretty unusual: male rape. Needless to say, a topic of this nature is bound to breed much contro-

risk) but more importantly it's about sensitizing society that younger males are more vulnerable to sexual abuse. In my opinion those greatest at risk, are the young boys who are fatherless (no male figure in the home) those who are sexually confused and those who are curious about homosexual sex. The notion of false masculinity professes itself once more as a male who poses any elements of weakness or effeminate traits are also at great risk. I do not have a solution as to how to prevent male rape, however boys and grown men need to foster an attitude whereby they can openly express their true feelings. It is at this point men should be able to look beyond machismo and speak up even before the abuses occur. It is the fear of death, which is matched with the fear of being stigmatized as gay, which has forced most men to remain silent.

JO: How do you feel at this point in relation to homophobia in Jamaica and its role in sexual abuse against gay men?

Dennis: Homophobia in Jamaica not only affects gay men it threatens those men who do not live up to the social code of masculinity. I left Jamaican in 2001 and it is my belief that the notion of homophobia in Jamaica is a farce. 90% of men who promote homophobic slurs are in fact gay men in denial or closeted. I am very much disgusted at the levels of violence meted out to gay men. I am more concerned about the younger generation and what values we are promoting to them. In order for any society to evolve there must be deviant behaviour and some degree of tolerance. Homophobia plays an integral role in male sexual abuse and it



(See CRIES... page 7)

West Indian Gay and Lesbian Literature is a 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

(Life and Death...Continued from page 1)

where we could breathe freely and openly, delivered for a few hours from Jamaica's otherwise repressive, hateful anti-gay environment. At Entourage and in other places, Brian was not afraid to challenge the police, fiercely, when they attempted to harass him. He was not afraid to represent J-FLAG on the radio, using his own name, and to appear on television representing the organisation, showing his face. He did it all with great humour and generosity, and lived, until last week, to tell about it. In that regard, he was truly an example to all of us who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual – an example of just what bravery and risk can accomplish.

We all have faced discrimination and bigotry from friends, family members, church members, and others; yet many of us somehow manage to survive that bigotry, and even triumph. In that regard, we -- male and female homosexuals, bisexuals, "queers" -- are truly testaments to survival and the human spirit. Jamaica would be much poorer without our talent, hard work, skills, and intelligence, and Jamaica knows it. Jamaica will be much poorer without the light of Brian Williamson, but the gay/lesbian community, and J-FLAG, will continue, and prevail, as Brian himself would have wanted us to.

Make no mistake: years from now, the world will regard Jamaica in this context the way much of the world regards Nazis today. The future world will rightly view Jamaica's hatred of homosexuals as the equivalent of Nazis' hatred of Jews, as the equal of racist whites' hatred of blacks, as the equal of all hatred everywhere – just as ugly, just as destructive and self-destructive, just as ignorant and narrow. Just as evil. Jamaica's hatred of lesbians and gay men is its own especial Nazism (and most nations have or have always had at least one); Hitler's fury, however, did not obliterate all the Jews, and Jamaica's rage won't kill all of us. It will not even kill those of us who are most vulnerable – those of us who hate ourselves so much precisely because Jamaica has taught us to hate ourselves and other gay people.

But it should teach us something else, even more important: it should teach us that we, and no one else, will have to make the kind of world we want our children to live in. If one of our children turns out to be gay – and I

mean the children of any Jamaican, any person, heterosexual or homosexual, since we, too, produce and care for children – are we prepared to send them out into a world that might chop them up, burn them, dash acid on them, or burn down their house? Or stone them? Or cause them to flee Jamaica, terrorised and demoralised, into exile? Or cause them to grow up lying about themselves? Lying to their parents, to spouses, children, friends, family – to everyone? What are we all really doing right now, roughly one year after a brave man's death, to protect our children from that world?

Brian featured on the bottom of his outgoing emails a quote often attributed to Gandhi: "We must become the change we wish to see in the world." The idea is useful, but the achievement of its sublime essence re-

quires a tremendous amount of human bravery: brave heart, brave mind and soul, and the courage to expand the mind beyond the prejudices that make us feel happy, comfortable, superior. Are we prepared to try and live this way, if only to keep other people from being killed as Brian was killed, and to save ourselves from such a (literal and spiritual) death as well?

Light a candle, then, for this man who was loved. Light many candles, and remember his name. Remember how

much power, love, and life he brought us in Jamaica. Remember how much braver he made so many of us, and how he expanded our entire country. You, dear Brian, whom we will continue to hold right here, deeply in our hearts – closest to our very selves where the earliest breath begins, where memory never ends. Where, amid recurring dreams and sorrow and light, you will always be very, very loved.

*This is an edited version of the original essay, which was first published in slightly different form in **The Sunday Gleaner**, June 20,*



Williamson with his dog, Tesha (Photo source: unknown)

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SODOMITE

BIBLE STUDY By Shane Hicks-Lee, Guest Columnist

Each person's soul is his or her own responsibility. I encourage you to pray and clothe yourself with the full armor of God. (Ephesians 6:13) When you arm yourself with the truth, you can fight against common lies. Why were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed?

Many honest preachers teach and believe that God hates sodomites. They believe the Bible is crystal clear that homosexuality is the reason for the destruction of the cities. It is my hope that through a careful study of Scripture I will be able to show you that the Bible does not support this common misconception.

If I chose not to try hard, I could claim that since Strong's Concordance defines "sodomite" as "male temple prostitute," Sodom must have been destroyed for male temple prostitution. However, this seems to be flawed logic. Just because learned folks more intelligent than I am chose to translate "male temple prostitute" as "sodomite" indicating that Sodom was destroyed for that particular sin, doesn't make it so. Although there may be some support historically for such a conclusion, I have not done a great deal of study regarding the religious practices of the Dead Sea area prior to the time of Moses. Therefore, I choose to look more closely at what the Bible has to say about this topic.

Since it is God's explanation of why He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, I started with Ezekiel 16:49-50, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and careless ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me; therefore I removed them when I saw it." The Geneva Bible Translation Notes says, "He alleges these four vices, pride, excess, idleness and contempt of the poor as four principal causes of such abomination, wherefore they were so horribly punished."

Next time, I will go through the cross references listed in my study Bible to get a clearer understanding of what God is saying here.

Notice of Disclaimer

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GAY RIGHTS, FOREIGNERS AND THE JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT

Dear editor,

What you wrote here is absolutely superb! I love the way you politely told Jamaican gay people to 'get off their arses because foreigners can never influence the Jamaican Government'. They could, in fact if enough pressure were put on them to create sanctions but how many years did it take Gadaffi to listen to reason? Only when his people were virtually dying of starvation. The only reason there were any sanctions in place, is because everyone wanted their oil. It really must be done from within. One of the best aspects of West Indians is their passivity and peaceful nature but in the case of demanding their human rights, it makes them complacent and that isn't good. It's a fault of most gay people everywhere. It's wonderful that we have equal rights in England now but I feel so guilty when I think about places like the Caribbean. Maybe there's some selfishness there because my partner and I would be living in Trinidad if we could. What is so sad, is that if gay people don't know how it feels to be free and equal, they often don't see any need to put pressure on the Government for it because they get set in their ways and accept their conditions. Is anywhere Jamaicans can take grievances for human rights abuses? It is now a published, scientific fact that homosexuality is an innate, biological condition. Therefore, anyone or any government who treats gays as less than equal is contravening their human rights. Once you have that facility, there'd be thousands suing the Government, individuals and companies (like they did here) and they would have to do something about it.

I am etc.,
Edward Hales.
United Kingdom.



JAMAICA'S GAY COMMUNITY - ONE YEAR LATER

By Anthony Hran, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor

As this anniversary issue approached, I began to reflect upon the past year. It is surprising how much can change in a year and also how things can stay the same. Of course, the murder of Brian Williamson has been a major change for many. We may never know the full motives of his murderer(s). Robbery was clearly involved, but beyond that, it is merely conjecture. This has not stopped GLBT activists on both sides of the Atlantic from capitalizing on his murder and making him a martyr of sorts, using his name and image to agitate for change in Jamaica. I'm not sure he would have approved of this at all. Brian always wanted Jamaican gays to overcome their fear and demand equality themselves. That is why he was always eager to speak out himself and act as a role model. It is sad that his murder seems to have had the opposite effect. Jamaican GLBT activists seem less visible locally (though there was an extensive publicity campaign conducted in the US) as foreign advocacy efforts have stirred up increased anti-gay sentiment and quite possibly violence that no one wants to talk about. Nine gay men were found dead between last June and January of this year, including the gay son of a Member of Parliament. The average GLBT Jamaican would have no visible sign that any advocacy on their behalf was being conducted at any level despite the increased funding that has poured in from abroad, due in part to Brian's untimely demise. This is the last thing he would have wanted. We can only hope that behind the scene, local activists are diligently at work and making strides that will one day bear visible fruit.

In the meantime, the inequality experienced by LGBT individuals in Jamaica continues unabated. Discriminatory laws still remain on the books and constitutional protections are no longer even mentioned as a viable goal. The gay community continues to remain rigidly divided along class lines; with those at the top able to live relatively comfortable lives and those at the bottom just the opposite. Fear still seems the hallmark of gay existence leading to lifestyles of duplicity and apathy regarding change.

One year later, it doesn't seem that any progress has been made, at least on the surface. But who knows? Maybe this year of hyper publicity followed by backlash, followed by silence will provide a necessary gestation period for the next phase of locally visible advocacy efforts. Let us hope this vision, one that Brian would surely embrace, will unfold as another year comes to pass.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Effective immediately, The Jamaica OutPost will reduce its publication from monthly to quarterly. Additionally, the format of our website will also change. Articles will no longer be published on the website. Instead, a PDF version of the newsletter will be made available. Our website users will therefore, be required to have a copy of Adobe PDF installed on their computers in order to read the newsletter online.

We also continue to invite our readers to send in comments and editorials for the benefit of the greater community. We thank you for your support over the past year.

OutPoll

Results of Last OutPoll

Do you think that filing a civil suit in Jamaica's Supreme Court could pave the way for gay rights in Jamaica?

Definitely: 40% **MAYBE: 50%** Not Sure: 0%

No: 10% Absolutely Not: 10%

This month's question:

When was the last time you did an HIV test?

CAST YOUR VOTE ONLINE:

www.jamaicaoutpost.com

Click on: OutPoll

SASOD - Guyana

www.geocities.com/sasod_guyana

1ST WORLD OUTGAMES MONTREAL DRAWS MAJOR SPONSORS

By Jason Simmonds, The Jamaica OutPost Contributor



Bell Canada – Outgames sponsor

The 1st World Outgames Montréal 2006 will be the largest event ever organised by the LGBT (lesbian, gay, transgender and transgender) com-

munity. The Outgames will be held in Montréal from 29 July to 5 August 2006, preceded by the “The Right to Be Different” International Conference, from 26 to 29 July 2006. The International Conference will be a worldwide first for the advancement of LGBT rights around the world. Montréal 2006 is working in direct collaboration with GLISA (the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association), holder of the World Outgames trademark. The event is expected to draw some 16,000 participants, 250,000 visitors and an estimated 2.3 million spectators.

Surely, an event of this magnitude could not have been made possible without the financial backing of many partners. To date, Outgames has successfully attracted the financial support of many sponsors including the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec, the City of Montréal, Tourisme Montréal and the Greater Montréal Hotel Association. Additionally, many public and private sponsors have joined their original group of partners including many LGBT media organisations have pledged their support to this extraordinary and ground-breaking project. Among the list of major sponsors are Air Canada, Radio Canada, Gay Crawler, Mi Brasil, Canada Gay Guide and FunMaps.

The most recent top player to pump corporate funding into the Outgames is Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE), Canada’s largest communications company. For over a hundred years now, BCE, which is simply called “Bell” by its millions of customers, has been providing local and long-distance telephone, wireless communications, Internet access, data, satellite television and other services to residential and business customers through some 27 million customer connections.

In a statement from the company, Mr. Mark Bruneau, Executive Vice-President and Chief Strategy Officer said that the company chose to become a sponsor of the 1st World Outgames Montreal 2006 in order to “promote the values that inform our involvement in Canada’s communities by recognizing the economic and cultural contribution an event of this scale will make.” Mr. Bruneau will also preside as the Honorary President of la Nuit d’Or Gala, a fundraising gala for the Montréal 2006 bursary programme to benefit athletes with limited financial resources to be held on the evening of September 1, 2005.

**Visit the official Outgames website:
www.montreal2006.org**

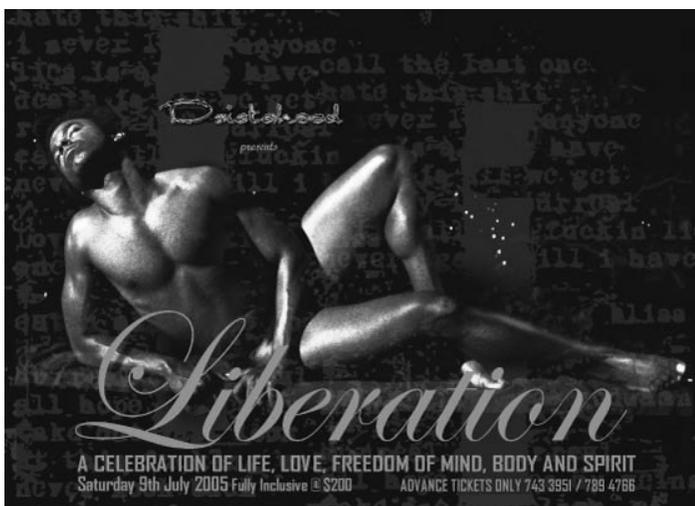
(CRIES...Continued from page 3)

also forces these men in denial, guilt or confusion about sexuality, which brings about greater dysfunction within the society.

JO: What would you want readers to come away with from reading your book?

Dennis: The book is a love story, a story about denial, trust, guilt and most of all forgiveness. I want readers to understand that male rape is a crime and like, racism, genocide, hate crimes and global warming it affects us all, may be not directly but the ripples will. Though the book speaks directly about Jamaican male victims of sexual abuse, other victims across ethnic, cultural, race and religious lines will recognize that they are not alone. It is also important for readers to understand that male rape does not make a man gay or bi-sexual and though it may steal a man of his dignity he is still a man. The resources and recommendations can be both helpful to both victims and their family members and friends. In the end I want readers to understand that love is a healing element in life. To be happy one must love themselves and ultimate and true happiness comes only from within.

www.obriendennis.com



Global Headlines

■ Indian society is showing signs of growing tolerance for homosexuals in big cities according to finding by the BBC.

■ Britain inducts Chris Smith into the House of Lords, the second openly gay man to do so. He is also the first openly gay man to serve in the British Parliament.

■ British gay clergy to be allowed to register as domestic partners by the Church of England when the new laws takes effect in December. Both partners must remain chaste, however, in order to adhere to church principles regarding sexual practices out of wedlock.

■ Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rejects attempt by Roman Catholic group to have to suspend the law legalizing gay marriages in the U.S.

■ Pope Benedict XVI attacks gay marriages and adoption of children by gay couples at a conference on family in Rome. In his address, the Pope said allowing gay couples to adopt is "doing violence to these children."

■ Swiss voters approved marriage-like rights for same-gender couples in matters relating to taxes, social security, pension and inheritance. The referendum follows an objection by a religious party of an earlier parliamentary vote that approved the law.

International News

UK GOV'T LAUNCHES WEB PAGES FOR GAY CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

LONDON, June 7 – There is no doubt that December 5 and 21 will be two dates that will go down in "gay history" in the United Kingdom.

On December 5, the Civil Partnership Act 2004 will come into force and from this date same sex couples will be able to give "notice of intent" that they will be registering a civil partnership. Then from December 21, same sex couples will be able to actually register their partnerships, which will be legally recognised. While the wording of the Act itself has been known for more than six months, there are still many questions that those couples considering a civil partnership want answered as to whether or not they wish to register.

So the Government has set-up a special section of its Women and Equality Unit's website.

Meg Munn, the Deputy Minister for Women and Equality announced the web pages today. She said she was "delighted" to be the Minister with responsibility for bringing the Civil Partnership Act into force.

"It is a much needed social reform which will, for the first time, enable same-sex couples to obtain recognition for their relationships," she said.

"In the run up to the Act coming into force, the Women and Equality Unit will be publishing regular e-bulletins on its website to highlight the arrangements being made for civil partnership. This will provide vital information including the procedures for registering.

"I am pleased to tell you that the first of these bulletins has now been published on the website," she said.

This first page contains such items as:

- Registering your civil partnership;
- Changes to tax law;
- Occupational pensions;
- Changes to Employment regulations;
- Secondary legislation

In addition, anyone can sign-up for email alerts of new pages about the Civil Partnership Act as and when they become available.

The Civil Partnership Act will recognize same-sex couples who have entered into a marriage or civil partnership in another country, as long as long as their overseas relationship meets the requirements set out in the Civil Partnership Act (Schedule 20). To date, the following will apply from December 5 (in Canada, territories and in USA, states):

- Belgium – (marriage);
- Canada – Nova Scotia (domestic partnership); Quebec (civil union);
- Denmark – (partnerskab – registered partnership);
- Finland – (rekisteröity parisuhde – registered partnership);
- France – (pacte civile de solidarité – civil solidarity pact);
- Germany – (Lebenspartnerschaft – life partnership);
- Iceland – (staðfesta samvist – confirmed cohabitation);
- Netherlands – (geregistreeerde partnerschap – registered partnership);
- Netherlands – (marriage);
- Norway – (partnerskap – registered partnership);
- Sweden – (registrerat partnerskap – registered partnership);
- United States of America – Vermont (civil union).

New relationships will be added to Schedule 20 as more countries or territories bring in gay marriage or civil partnership schemes. Recent developments include civil union legislation in New Zealand and Connecticut (USA).

In Spain, a government backed gay marriage bill passed through the lower house of Parliament on 21 April 2005, and now goes before the Senate. These and any other new overseas schemes will now be considered for inclusion in Schedule 20.

Courtesy of UK Gay News
www.ukgaynews.org.uk