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world briefs

ARGENTINA

More than 100 lesbians gathered here in April for the Fourth Meeting of Lesbian-Feminists from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Delegates came from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru. They discussed such issues as sexuality, motherhood, domestic partnership, sexually transmitted diseases, ethics, activism, communication, visibility and lesbophobia. Music, shows and art and photography exhibits were also a part of the gathering.

"Everything developed in a climate of harmony, liberty and solidarity, reaffirming these meetings as a forum for pluralist participation, democracy and debate that lesbian-feminists can count on to continue building a movement against the patriarchy," organizers wrote.

For more information, write to Casilla de Correo 115, Sucursal 1, 1401-Buenos Aires, Argentina; or e-mail marroyo@wamani.apc.org or marroy@meyosp.mecon.ar.

AUSTRALIA

Five thousand people walked through the streets of Melbourne on May 20 in the city's 11th AIDS Candlelight Vigil, reported the gay and lesbian newspaper *Brother Sister*.



At City Square, Melbourne's chief executive officer, Elizabeth Proust, addressed the crowd and issued a proclamation urging everyone to be aware of AIDS and prevent the spread of HIV.

The vigil ended at the Exhibition Building with the unfurling of the full Australian Quilt.

BRAZIL

Leading Brazilian gay activist Luiz Mott's house was spray-painted and his car windows were broken early in May, after newspapers published an opinion piece in which he suggested that a hero to black Brazilians—the late Zumbi—was gay.

Mott is head of the Grupo Gay da Bahia in the city of Salvador.

In an e-mail message, Mott said he is concerned for his safety and urged gay activists to lobby the Secretary of Public Safety, Francisco Andrade, at fax number 011-55-71-320-4175.

BRITAIN

People in the midst of a sex-change operation will now be issued two picture IDs by London Transport to reduce confusion among ticket-takers, authorities announced May 19.

One ID will show the passenger as a man and the other, as a woman.

An agency spokeswoman said some transsexuals go to work as men but go out in the evening as women, and ticket agents were not coping well.

Applications for the dual cards must be endorsed by a doctor. The cards are not available to transvestites.

CANADA

Canadian gay men and lesbians both lost and won on May 25.

The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the lifelong male partner of a British Columbia man was not entitled to the pension paid to spouses of retired government employees.

However, in issuing its ruling, the court declared that in general Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation—even though sexual minority protections are not specifically written into the document.

Elated gay and lesbian activists quickly announced plans to use the landmark ruling to challenge dozens of discriminatory laws nationwide.

On the main issue of the case, the court said plaintiffs Jim Egan, 73, and Jack Nesbit, 67, did not meet "the fundamental social objectives" of the Old Age Security Act because it was designed to aid poor elderly women who had chosen to raise children rather than work outside the home.

Spouses of retired heterosexuals get up to \$504 monthly if the couple has an income below about \$15,170.

Egan and Nesbit have been together since 1948.

FRANCE

ACTUP-Paris urged French President Jacques Chirac on May 21 to fire new Health Minister Elisabeth Hubert, charging that she is a homophobe and supports mandatory HIV-testing, reported Reuters.

In an ad in the newspaper *Libération*, ACTUP also called for the removal of Education Minister François Bayrou and Secretary of State for Emergency Humanitarian Action Xavier Emmanuelli.

The group said that Bayrou has obstructed teaching on AIDS prevention in schools and Emmanuelli has lowered the quality of health care for poor people.

NETHERLANDS

Drag queens in The Netherlands now have their own national TV program: *De Travestie Show*.

"Transvestites are all the rage in The Netherlands," explained the newspaper *De Gay Krant*. "On a typical Saturday evening Amsterdam is positively bursting with drag queens."

Program hosts Robert ten Brink and Dutch American drag queen Nicky Nicole will introduce four debutantes each week, *De Gay Krant* said.

NORWAY

A group of gay men and lesbians in Oslo was removed from a May 7 peace march commemorating victims of the Nazis, reported the gay and lesbian newspaper *Blikk*.

A well-known soccer referee, Rolf Nyhus, from one of the march organizing groups, the Oslo Sports Federation, led the call to ban lesbians and gay men, calling their participation "improper."

Other marchers then accused the group of turning the event into a "homo celebration" and "ruining the day."

The contingent was carrying a rainbow flag and a banner reading "The Nazis marked us with a pink triangle—thousands died for their love."

March co-organizer the Oslo Red Cross, which had approved the gay contingent, apologized for the matter and asked the Sports Federation to make "an unreserved apology."

ROMANIA

Five years after the overthrow of President Nicolae Ceausescu—and despite assurances to the international community—serious human rights violations persist in Romania, says Amnesty International.

On the eve of the International Seminar on Tolerance held the first week of May, Amnesty issued a report condemning Romania for restrictions on free expression, imprisonment solely for homosexuality, torture and ill-treatment of detainees, and a pattern of police failure to protect Gypsies from racist violence.

Compiled by Rex Wockner