

Emily Simon is pleased to announce that Tracey Cordes, formerly of the Metropolitan Public Defender and the Criminal Justice Commission and a proud member of our community, has joined her as an associate.

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# world briefs

## AUSTRALIA

Gay activists in Tasmania celebrated on Feb. 26 after the Australian High Court gave the go-ahead for their case against Tasmania's state sodomy ban, the nation's last such law.

The court rejected a state demand that the case be dismissed because plaintiffs Rodney Croome and Nick Toonen had not been threatened with prosecution.

Instead, the court said homosexuals need to know once and for all whether the state ban—which punishes private gay sex among adults with up to 25 years in prison—or federal privacy protections take legal precedence in Tasmania.

In 1994, the U.N. Human Rights Committee found the Tasmanian ban in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a signatory. The ruling led federal legislators to create privacy protections that many observers believe override Tasmania's law.

## BRITAIN

Three British gay men who were imprisoned for engaging in consensual sadomasochistic sex in their own homes lost their appeal to the European Court of Human Rights on Feb. 19.

Ruling in the infamous "Operation Spanner" case, the court said: "The state was unquestionably entitled to regulate the infliction of physical harm through the criminal law. The determination of the tolerable level of harm where the victim consented was primarily a matter for the state's authorities."

The history of the case is as follows: In 1987, Manchester police found videotapes of private consensual S/M scenes. To avoid prosecution, the owner of the tapes gave the police names of some men into S/M. By seizing address books and through alleged intimidation, the police enlarged their investigation, questioning more than 200 men over a period of two years at a cost of \$6 million. Every witness reportedly said that nothing occurred

against anyone's wishes, that everyone was an adult over the age of consent, and that no one was hurt. Nonetheless, 42 men were arrested.

Eventually 16 men were charged with assault (tops), aiding and abetting an assault (bottoms), keeping a disorderly house (hosting the activities) and publishing obscene articles (making tapes)—and British courts declared it illegal to harm another person's body even when the person requests the harm for purposes of sexual gratification.

Eight of the men were sentenced to up to four and one-half years in prison. Some of the sentences were reduced on appeal.



A man kicked out of the British Royal Navy for being gay has launched a fresh challenge to the military's gay ban, BBC Radio 5 Live's *Out This Week* reported on Feb. 18.

Terry Perkins hopes his High Court lawsuit will be referred to the European Court of Justice, where recent rulings in other matters suggest he might win against the defense forces when European Union law is applied.

## INDIA

For reasons unknown, India's government has stopped distributing condoms in New Delhi's red-light district—home to an estimated 10,000 sex workers.

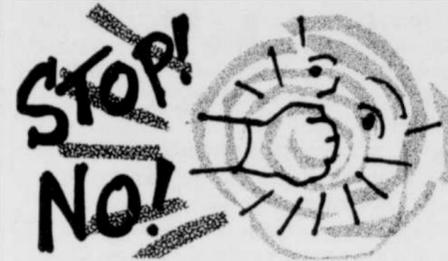
Prostitutes Welfare Association president Kharaiti Lal Bhola told United Press International, "These hapless women have no protection whatsoever."

Condom manufacturers told the news service the government simply has not placed any recent orders.

## INTERNATIONAL

Gay men and lesbians are routinely harassed, tortured, abducted, imprisoned and murdered in at least 60 countries around the globe, Amnesty International said Feb. 25.

In a report titled "Breaking the Silence," the organization zeroed in on Columbia's "social cleansing" death squads, Iran's death penalty for



gay sex, and Brazil's high anti-gay murder rate, among other problems.

The report praised South Africa for banning anti-gay discrimination in its new constitution, lauded 10 U.S. states for their sexual-minority protection laws, and called on nations worldwide to legalize homosexuality.

## NEW ZEALAND

Eighty-five percent of New Zealand men who have sex with men have safer sex every time, a New Zealand AIDS Foundation study has found, reports correspondent Mark Proffit.

NZAF researcher Heather Worth was very pleased with the statistics, saying the nation's prevention programs and strategies clearly are working.

## SINGAPORE

Oral sex is a crime unless it is followed by penile-vaginal sex, Singapore's Court of Appeal ruled on Feb. 21.

Only "the coitus of the male and female sexual organs" is natural and "unnatural acts" are permitted only as foreplay, the court said.

The ruling came in the bizarre case of a man who tricked a 19-year-old woman into felling him by convincing her it would cleanse her of a toxin she acquired when another man performed cunnilingus on her.

## SPAIN

About 10,000 gay men and lesbians marched from Madrid's Puerta de Alcalá to the Puerta del Sol on Feb. 22, demanding legal recognition of same-gender partnerships.

It was Spain's largest sexual minority demonstration since the 1970s. More than 40 organizations joined in.

Two partnership proposals are under discussion in the Spanish Congress of Deputies, one authored by socialists and the other by communists.

The drafts have received support from all parties in the lower house except the ruling Partido Popular (People's Party), which has yet to state its position.

## THAILAND

Education minister Sukhavit Rangsitpol wants to send gay men to a "special education center" for "treatment" because they are "sick—both physically and mentally," the *Bangkok Post* reported.

Not to send gay men off for re-education risks "adding male prostitutes to society," he added.

Rangsitpol was speaking in support of Thailand's new ban on gay students at the nation's 36 teacher colleges.

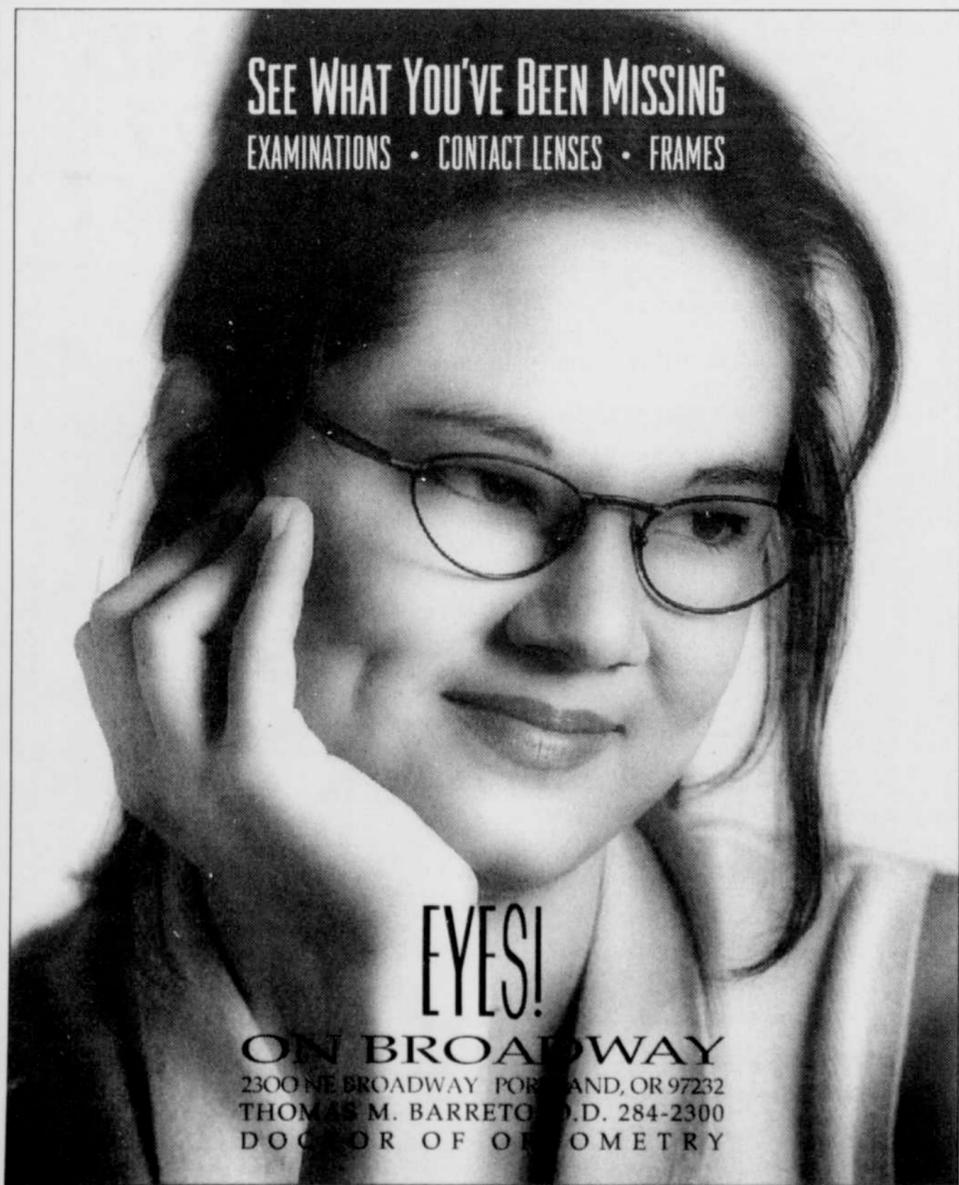
## ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe has banned discrimination against people with HIV, the nation's PANA Wire Service reported on Feb. 12.

At least 9 percent of Zimbabweans are believed to be HIV positive.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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