

WORLD news

Rights Nigeria. "Recently, some of us have been arrested by the police, thrown into jail and raped in the cells."

Matters are worse in the Muslim-dominated northern region, Odumuye said. "Because of the application of the Shariah code, they kill men and even young secondary school boys. We know that it's still happening today."

Nigeria punishes gay sex with up to 14 years in jail. The 12 northern states that have adopted Islamic Shariah law punish homosexuality with death by stoning, the report said.

SPAIN

The Vatican's ambassador to Spain, Archbishop Manuel Monteiro de Castro, said May 3 that same-sex unions should be recognized but that same-sex marriage should remain banned.

"There are other forms of cohabitation, and it is good that they be recognized," he said. "They are not the same as marriage. We will leave the term marriage for that which it has always referred to, and other arrangements should be given other names."

Monteiro also said he supports extending spousal rights, such as social security payments, to gay couples. The statements contradict official Catholic positions.

CANADA

Canada's Senate voted 59-11 to add sexual orientation coverage to the nation's hate crimes laws April 28. The changes will protect gays and lesbians from incitement of hatred and genocide under the Criminal Code.

The measure had passed the House of Commons last year. It will take effect after the formality of royal assent.

The legislation had been introduced by gay Member of Parliament Svend Robinson, who is on a medical leave after recently confessing that he stole a \$50,000 ring from a jewelry show. "It's sort of bittersweet that he's put so much into it and he's not able to be there at the Senate to see it go through," said fellow New Democrat MP Libby Davies.

A study by Canada's Justice Department has determined that gays may make better parents than straight people, the CanWest News Service reported April 25.

The study declared that many gay parents have relationships that are more supportive and egalitarian than those of straight people, which has "a positive impact on children." It also suggested that gay dads may have superior fathering skills.

"Gay fathers may be more likely than heterosexual fathers to exhibit authoritative parenting practices," the report says. "In North America an authoritative parenting style that provides children with clear limitations in addition to warmth, affection and support has been found to be associated with positive child adjustment."

AUSTRALIA

Prime Minister John Howard announced plans April 25 to rewrite federal marriage law to block courts from legalizing same-sex marriage, *The Australian* reported.

The changes would prevent states and territories from going their own way on marriage and would bar recognition of gay marriages that take place overseas. Rodney Croome, spokesman for the national gay lobby group Equal Rights Network, predicted Howard's efforts would face an uphill battle in Parliament.

"Such radical changes to our marriage laws are likely to be held up for months if not years by committee inquiries, making John Howard's move nothing but tawdry electioneering to placate the social right before the national poll," he said. "The move is also wrong because it will deprive those Australian same-sex couples who have already been married in Canada of their right to a day in court."

Three Australian gay couples are suing to force recognition of their Canadian marriages under provisions of the Commonwealth Marriage Act. Same-sex marriage is legal in Massachusetts, Belgium, the Netherlands and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. Canada has no residency requirements for marriage.



Archbishop Manuel Monteiro de Castro contradicted the Vatican by expressing his support for same-sex unions

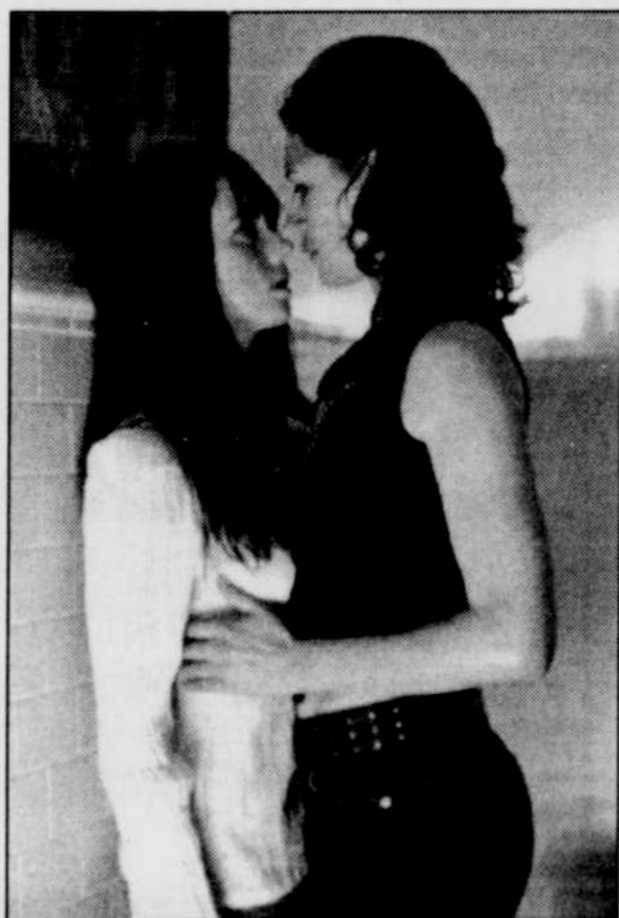
Christian activists pressured five Australian companies to stop advertising on *The L Word* television series, *The Sydney Sun-Herald* reported April 25.

The Saltshakers organization convinced Just Jeans, DaimlerChrysler, Roche, Allianz and Centrum to pull their ads from the U.S. program, which is broadcast over-the-air on Australia's Channel Seven. In the United States, *The L Word* airs on the Showtime pay cable network.

The *Sun-Herald* said the Christians are more upset about the show's depiction of self-insemination with donor sperm than nudity and lesbian sex scenes. "There are a lot of people out there concerned, and companies concerned that their ads may be supporting women self-inseminating and women bringing children into the world who haven't got fathers," Saltshakers head Peter Stokes said.

Gay activists denounced the development. "It's disappointing that such big companies would respond to a pathetically small group that nobody has ever heard of and be cowed into reacting that way," Merryn Johns, editor of *Lesbians on the Loose* magazine, told the paper.

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.



Five Australian companies have pulled their ads from *The L Word*

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