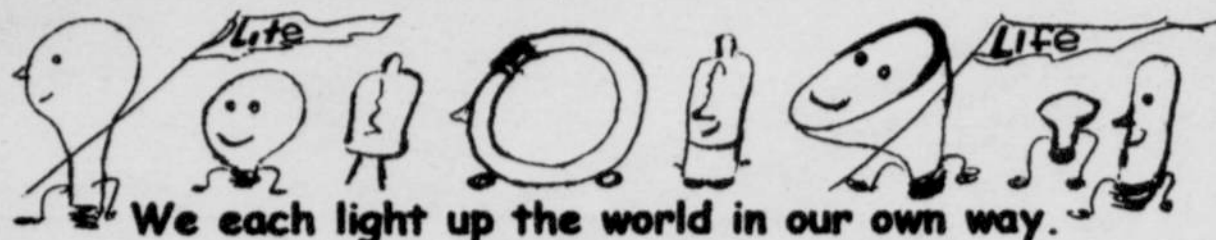


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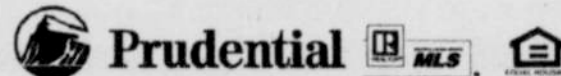


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WORLD news**AMERICAS****RAINBOW FLAG RAISED IN CARACAS**

With the support of Caracas Mayor Juan Barreto, activists raised the rainbow flag May 17 in Venezuela's Plaza Bolívar to mark International Day Against Homophobia.

Barreto declared Caracas to be "a homophobia-free territory" and announced the creation of a queer issues division within his office. Activist groups said they are hopeful he also will support passage of a municipal law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

**CHILEAN SUPREMES
RULE AGAINST
LESBIAN MOM AGAIN**

Chile's Supreme Court refused for the second time May 12 to give lesbian Karen Atala's three children back to her.

After the first ruling, she appealed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The panel accepted the case and instructed Chile's government to justify the decision.

The Supreme Court then reaffirmed its ruling, saying due process had been followed, and sent the affirmation to the government so it can reply to the commission.

In its original decision, the court found that the children's development could be harmed by Atala's lesbian relationship, resulting in their being confused about sex roles. Atala was stripped of custody and sees her kids only one weekend a month.

**MEXICO WANTS
GAY TOURISTS**

The Mexican Secretary of Tourism's Touristic Promotion Council has launched a campaign to attract gay tourists from the United States and Canada. It includes an "informative bulletin" posted in the media area of the council's Web site.

"Our intention as leaders of the international-level [tourism] sector is to satisfy the needs and tastes of the varied markets we are directed at," the bulletin states. "This is one of the qualities that only the world's greatest tourist destinations can aim for."

EUROPE**BRITISH GAYS PROTEST
AT SAUDI EMBASSY**

A total of 25 gay activists protested May 17 outside Saudi Arabia's embassy in London against the recent jailing and flogging of 105 men accused of attending a "gay wedding party."

The men were arrested in March in the city of Jiddah and were variously sentenced to six months to a year in jail, six months to a year in jail plus 200 lashes, or two years in jail and 2,000 lashes. The London protest was one of hundreds of events that took place around the world to mark International Day Against Homophobia.

"Saudi Arabia is one of the world's most homophobic countries," said



Mayor Juan Barreto declares Caracas "homophobia-free."

protester Brett Lock of the gay direct-action group OutRage. "Gay people are routinely arrested, jailed, tortured, flogged and sometimes executed. We want European Union and United Nations sanctions against the Saudi dictatorship. King Fahd should be arrested, taken to the International Criminal Court and tried on charges of torture and murder."

The Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association also took part in the demonstration.

**NORTHERN IRELAND
SEES BIG INCREASE
IN HATE CRIMES**

The incidence of anti-gay hate crimes almost tripled in Northern Ireland this past year, according to the Police Service of Northern Ireland's annual statistical report.

A total of 196 incidents were reported, compared with only 71 in the previous reporting period. About 48 percent of the crimes involved injury or assault, and about 21 percent involved criminal damage to property.

SWISS VOTE ON SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIPS

The population of Switzerland will vote June 5 on whether to create registered same-sex partnerships.

Although numerous European nations have enacted such laws, this will be the first time the matter was left up to voters. The measure passed

Parliament in June 2004, but religious conservatives then collected enough signatures to force a referendum on it. It extends most marriage rights to registered same-sex couples but withholds rights in the areas of adoption, in vitro fertilization and taking each other's last name.

"A registered partnership is not a marriage; it is an institution for those people who by definition cannot marry," Justice Minister Christoph

Blocher told SwissInfo.org on May 25.

Partnership laws already are in force in three of Switzerland's cantons—Geneva, Zurich and Neuchâtel. Nearly 500 same-sex couples have registered in Zurich canton since the law took effect two years ago.

Polling suggests more than 60 percent of voters will OK the federal law.

**AMSTERDAM ISSUES WARNING
TO GAY TOURISTS**

The Amsterdam Tourist Board has issued a warning to gay visitors after the high-profile gay-bashing of *Washington Blade*/Window Media executive editor Chris Crain.

Early on April 30, Crain was called a "faggot" and severely beaten by five Moroccan men as he and his boyfriend walked hand in hand through central Amsterdam.

"It seemed like every direction I turned, I got another punch to the face, and when they kicked me to the ground, time seemed to stop," Crain said.

The tourist board's Herman Terbalk announced May 13: "Gay visitors should be careful and alert. Some people in Amsterdam are not tolerant of other people. It is a social problem."



Demonstrators protest at Saudi embassy.



Lesbian mom Karen Atala lost custody of her three children.