

WORLDnews

AMERICAS

MORE LESBIANS THAN GAY MEN MARRY IN CANADA

Initial statistics on same-sex marriage in two Canadian provinces show that more female than male couples have gotten married—even though gay men outnumber lesbians.

Same-sex marriage became legal nationwide July 20 but has been legal in some provinces and one territory for up to two years.

Lesbian couples account for 63 percent of same-sex marriages in Saskatchewan and 57 percent in British Columbia—despite the fact that Statistics Canada says only 46 percent of Canadian homosexuals are women.

According to Saskatoon's *StarPhoenix* newspaper, nobody can explain the numbers. Theories cited include the fact that Canadian lesbians are five times more likely than gay men to have children living with them who need legal protections and the stereotype that women are acculturated to dream of their wedding day.

Meanwhile, in Alberta, one of Canada's most conservative provinces, marriage commissioners have been told they don't have to marry same-sex couples if they don't want to.

The provincial government likely will add additional commissioners to guarantee that everyone who wants to marry will be able to. Calgary, the province's largest city, has 26 marriage commissioners, but many smaller communities have only one.

The opt-out clause does not apply to registries, the government offices that issue marriage licenses.

MEXICAN ACTIVIST MURDERED

A prominent Mexican gay activist was murdered in what appears to be an anti-gay hate crime, Amnesty International said July 14.

Octavio Acuña worked for the Quereteran Association for Sexual Education in Querétaro and ran a condom shop. He was found bleeding to death from multiple stab wounds inside the shop June 21. Nothing had been stolen.

In 2004, Acuña and his partner filed a complaint with the State Human Rights Commission alleging that municipal police officers had stopped them in a public park and told them "their sort" should not be there. A few weeks ago, he publicly criticized the commission's failure to act on his complaint.

Local human rights organizations say another gay activist was drugged and beaten the weekend after Acuña's murder, in another suspected homophobic attack.

ARGENTINE SENATE RECOGNIZES GAY RELATIONSHIP

Argentina's Senate granted spousal rights to one of its employees who registered his relationship under Buenos Aires' Civil Union Law, local media reported July 13.

Eduardo Gabriel Crimi will receive 10 days off for his honeymoon. The Senate also formally asked the Ministry of Work's Social Security Secretariat if Crimi should be granted the special bonus employers give people who get married.

"The Senate's decision sets a key legal precedent because through an administrative act, dated and numbered, the Senate of the nation has affirmed the [city's] Civil Union Law on the national stage," said César Cigliutti, head of Comunidad Homosexual Argentina.

BRAZIL ALLOWS GAY ADOPTION

Brazil allowed a same-sex couple to adopt a child together for the first time July 7.

Vasco Pereira da Gama, 33, and Dorival de Carvalho Jr., 41, a couple for 13 years, operate a beauty shop and a modeling agency in the city of Cantanduva in São Paulo state. They also write social columns for local newspapers.

In granting the adoption, Judge Júlio César Spoladore Dominguez said the Federal Psychology Council has determined that "homosexuality is not a sickness, a disturbance or a perversion."

MIDEAST/AFRICA

NIGERIAN GAY MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH BY STONING

A 50-year-old man in northern Nigeria has been sentenced to death by stoning for having gay sex, the United Nations said July 8.

Philip Alston, U.N. special rapporteur on arbitrary executions, called for an immediate review of the Shariah law sentence. The man had been acquitted of having sex with a younger man but admitted to the judge, when asked, that he had had gay sex in the past, which led to the sentence.

There is a reasonable possibility the U.N. intervention will prevent the execution. Several Nigerian women sentenced to death for adultery have been spared after international outcries.

IRAN EXECUTES GAY TEENS

Two male teen-agers were hanged July 19 in Mashhad, Iran, for having sex with each other, the Iranian Students News Agency reported. The report was translated from Farsi by the British gay rights group OutRage.

The teens, one 18 and one younger than 18, reportedly were convicted by Court No. 19 under Islamic Shariah law, which punishes homosexual acts with death. They were identified only as "M.A." and "A.M."



César Cigliutti, shown with partner Marcelo Suntheim, is pleased with the Argentine Senate.

The reports said the couple acknowledged having sex but said they didn't realize it was a capital offense. They also testified that most Iranian boys have sex with each other.

Another report, by *Iran Focus*, claimed the two were hanged not for engaging in gay sex but for sexually

assaulting a 13-year-old boy. Neither the Iranian Students News Agency report nor a report from the National Council of Resistance of Iran reported this information, OutRage said.

However, *The Times of London* reported it July 22. The paper said: "Iran's religiously conservative judiciary determined that the pair had raped the 13-year-old boy at knifepoint while he was out for a bicycle ride in the northeastern province of Khorassan."

OutRage expressed skepticism concerning the rape claims.

"The allegation of sexual assault may either be a trumped-up charge to undermine public sympathy for the youths—a frequent tactic by the Islamist regime in Iran—or it may be that the 13-year-old was a willing participant but that Iranian law...deems that no person of that age is capable of sexual consent and that therefore any sexual contact is automatically deemed in law to be a sex assault," said OutRage's Peter Tatchell, who broke the story in the English-language media.

"This is just the latest barbarity by the Islamofascists in Iran," Tatchell said. "The entire country is a gigantic prison, with Islamic rule sustained by detention without trial, torture and state-sanctioned murder."

"According to Iranian human rights campaigners, over 4,000 lesbians and gay men have been executed since the ayatollahs seized power in 1979," he said. "Altogether, an estimated 100,000 Iranians have been put to death over the last 26 years of clerical rule."

OutRage urged the international community to begin treating Iran "as a pariah state" and to "break off diplomatic relations, impose trade sanctions and give practical support to the democratic and left opposition inside Iran."

The group also suggested people protest to their nearest Iranian embassy or consulate.

Iran's capital offenses include murder, rape, armed robbery, apostasy, blasphemy, serious drug trafficking, repeated sodomy, adultery, prostitution, treason and espionage, according to the French Press Agency.

POLICE SHOOT RUBBER BULLETS, TEAR GAS AT AIDS PROTESTERS

Police in Queenstown, Eastern Cape, South Africa, broke up a demonstration by AIDS activists with rubber bullets and tear gas July 12, Human Rights Watch said. Forty protesters were injured.

The demonstrators, organized by the Treatment Action Campaign, were protesting the government's poor record in providing anti-retroviral drugs to people with HIV.

In December, the Eastern Cape Health Department stopped accepting new HIV patients and referred those already on treatment to Frontier Hospital in Queenstown, which is caring for fewer than 200 of the approximately 2,000 people in need. More than 50 AIDS patients have died while on the hospital's treatment waiting list.

South Africa has some 5.3 million HIV-positive residents. In November 2003, the federal government promised to provide 53,000 patients with free anti-retroviral treatment by March 2004. But a year later, only about half that number were receiving the drugs.

Eastern Cape province's largest city is Port Elizabeth.

ASIA/PACIFIC

TAIWAN POLICE RAID BAR

Taiwanese police raided the gay DX Club and arrested 13 people on drug charges July 24, *The China Post* reported.

More than 300 people were searched. "Besides finding ecstasy pills all over the dance floor, police were also amazed to discover many tiny blue Viagra pills," the *Post* said.

PHILIPPINE SUPREMES RULE FOR LESBIAN MOTHERS

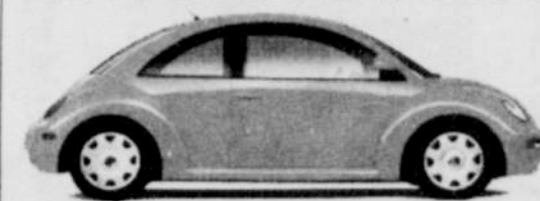
The Philippines Supreme Court ruled last month that an allegedly lesbian mother can keep her child—possibly the first such ruling in the nation.

The decision overturned a Court of Appeals ruling granting custody of the 4-year-old boy to his father, Crisanto Gualberto, who claimed his wife, Joycelyn, is gay.

"To deprive a wife of custody, the husband must clearly establish that her moral lapses have had an adverse effect on the welfare of the child or have distracted the offending spouse from exercising proper parental care," the court said. **J**

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.

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