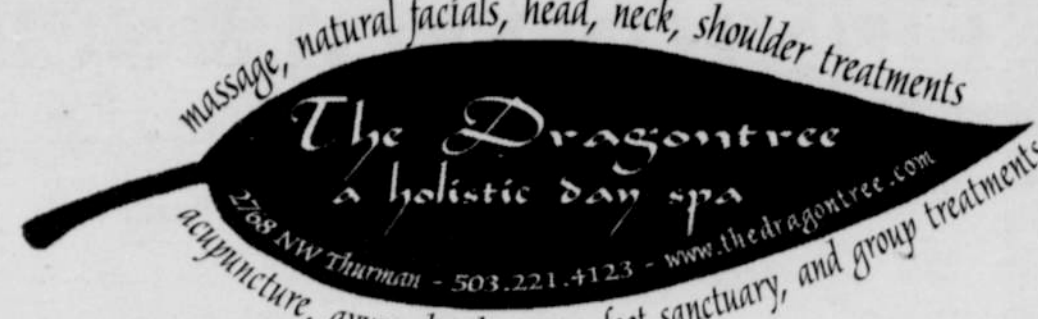




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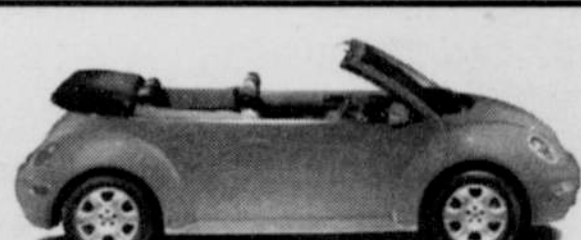
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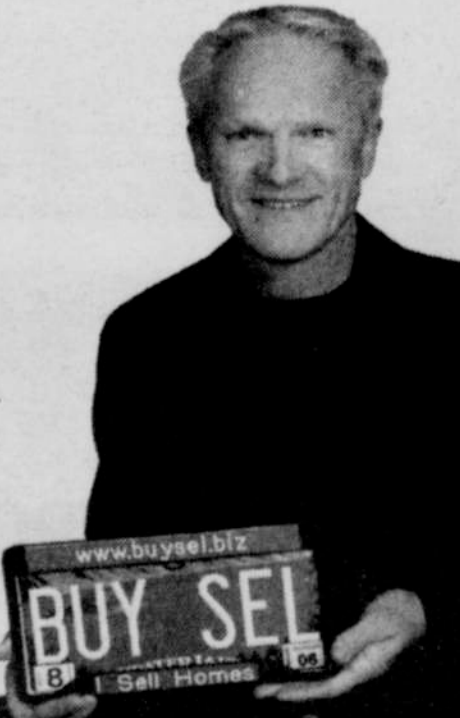
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world

MIDEAST/AFRICA Same-Sex Marriage Legalized in South Africa

South Africa's top court legalized same-sex marriage Dec. 1, saying that banning it violates the nation's post-apartheid constitution, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The Constitutional Court gave Parliament one year to make the necessary changes in law. If Parliament fails to act, the court will rewrite the Marriage Act itself.

Ten judges supported the ruling and one dissented—but only so she could argue that the ruling should take effect immediately rather than after a year.

In a "media summary" of the case, the judges said: "The exclusion of same-sex couples from the benefits and responsibilities of marriage was not a small and tangential inconvenience resulting from a few surviving relics of societal prejudice destined to evaporate like the morning dew. It represented a harsh if oblique statement by the law that same-sex couples are outsiders, and that their need for affirmation and protection of their intimate relations as human beings is somehow less than that of heterosexual couples. It signifies that their capacity for love, commitment and accepting responsibility is by definition less worthy of regard than that of heterosexual couples. The intangible damage to same-sex couples is as severe as the material deprivation. They are not entitled to celebrate their commitment to each other in a joyous public event recognized by the law. They are obliged to live in a state of legal blankness in which their unions remain unmarked by the showering of presents and the commemoration of anniversaries so celebrated in our culture."

The decision came in a case brought by Pretoria couple Marie Fourie and Cecelia Bonhuy, after the government refused to recognize their 2002 marriage. The ruling also covered a case brought by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Project that challenged the Marriage Act's references to "husband" and "wife."

United Arab Emirates May Give Arrested Gays Hormones

Twenty-six men were arrested in the United Arab Emirates in late November at a hotel in the city of Ghantout during what police called a mass homosexual wedding. They face lashings, five years in jail and possible forced treatment with male hormones.

"There will be no room for homosexual... acts in the UAE," Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammed bin Nukhaira Al Dhahiri told *The Khaleej Times*.

Interior Ministry spokesman Issam Azouri added: "Because they've put society at risk, they will be given the necessary treatment, from male hormone injections to psychological therapies. It wasn't just a homosexual act. Now we're dealing with a kind of marriage. There was a ritual involved."

The U.S. State Department denounced the arrests Nov. 28.

"The United States condemns the arrest of a dozen same-sex couples in the United Arab Emirates and a statement by the Interior Ministry spokesman that they will be subjected to government-ordered hormone and psychological treatment," the department said. "The arrest of these individuals is part of a string of recent group arrests of homosexuals in the UAE. We call on the government of the United Arab Emirates to immediately stop any ordered hormone and psy-

chological treatment and to comply with the standards of international law."

After the U.S. statement was released, the head of the Abu Dhabi Ministry of the Interior Public Relations Department, Col. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Hajiri, claimed that Azouri is not the ministry's official spokesman and that his remarks about "hormone injections" were "nothing but a personal analysis of the issue [that] does not represent the viewpoint of any of the authorities concerned."

EUROPE 'Hate Speech' Pastor Cleared

A Pentecostal pastor who had been convicted of a hate crime for delivering an anti-gay sermon was cleared Nov. 29 by Sweden's Supreme Court.

Preaching in 2003, Åke Green, 64, called homosexuality "a deep cancerous tumor on the body of society" that leads to bestiality and pedophilia. A district court convicted him of "agitation against a group" and sentenced him to a month in prison.

The Supreme Court upheld the Göta Court of Appeal's reversal of the original decision, agreeing that Green's homily was protected by provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights guaranteeing freedom of speech and religion.

Swedish Lutheran Ministers Rebel

More than 800 of the 5,000 active and retired ministers in Sweden's state-funded Lutheran church have signed a declaration promising to resist the Church Assembly's decision to offer blessings to same-sex couples who have registered their partnership.

The Church of Sweden Assembly voted 160-81 in favor of the policy Oct. 26.

"We are bound by the promises of faithfulness to Holy Scripture and to the confession of the church which we made at our ordination," the 863 preachers declared. "We therefore totally reject this order."

Sweden has offered registered partnerships—which bestow nearly every right and obligation of marriage—since 1995.

Belgium's Lower House OKs Gay Adoption

The lower house of Parliament in Belgium, one of five countries where gay couples can get married, voted 77-62 on Dec. 2 to allow same-sex couples to adopt children. The bill now moves to the Senate, where it should see action in March.

"There are already a lot of children who live with homosexual couples," Justice Committee Chairman Fons Borginon told the Reuters news agency. "We want them to have two parents with whom they have full, legal rights."

In general, gay adoption in the European Union is more controversial and less available than in the United States.



Marchers at a Gay Pride parade in Poznan, Poland, were harassed and arrested by city police.

UKASZ CYNALSKI