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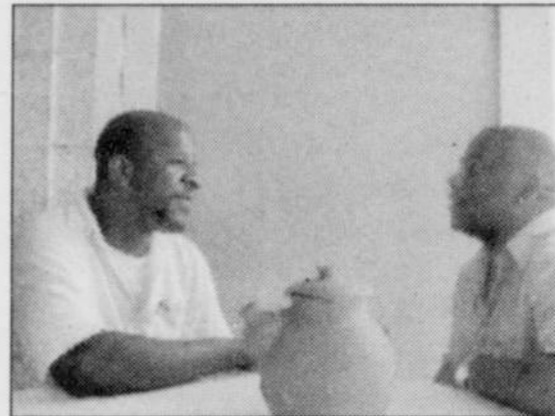
## AMERICAS Jamaican AIDS Activist Murdered

Leading Jamaican AIDS activist Steve Harvey, 30, was murdered Nov. 30 in Kingston.

According to police, at least four assailants forced their way into his home when he returned from work around 1 a.m. They tied up Harvey and two people staying with him, stole some of their possessions, then abducted Harvey in his Jamaica AIDS Support company car. His body was found in a rural area miles from his home with gunshot wounds to the back and head.

As coordinator of targeted interventions for Jamaica AIDS Support, Harvey was responsible for ensuring that sexual minorities, sex workers and prisoners had access to HIV information and services. He also served as Jamaica's representative to the Latin American and the Caribbean Council of AIDS Services Organizations.

"Steve Harvey was a person of extraordinary bravery and integrity who worked tirelessly to ensure that some of Jamaica's most marginalized people had the tools and information to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS," said Rebecca Schleifer of Human Rights Watch's HIV/AIDS program.



Steve Harvey (left), targeted interventions coordinator for Jamaica AIDS Support in Kingston, conducts a one-on-one counseling session.

## U.K. Gays Tie the Knot

Same-sex couples started tying the knot Dec. 19 under the United Kingdom's new Civil Partnership Act, which grants registered couples all the rights and obligations of marriage.

"This landmark measure ends the situation where same-sex relationships were invisible in the eyes of the

law, denied any recognition of their commitment," said Prime Minister Tony Blair. "It gives gay and lesbian couples who register their relationship the same safeguards over inheritance, insurance and employment and pension benefits as married couples. No longer will same-sex couples who have decided to share their lives fear they will be denied a say over the partner's medical treatment or find

themselves denied a home if their partner dies."

Grainne Close and Shannon Sickels were the first to do the deed as regular registrations kicked off. (One couple with a gravely ill partner were allowed to "wed" before the act's start date.)

Close and Sickels, who is American, got "married" at City Hall in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as fundamentalist Christians and gay rights supporters yelled at each other outside.

"This is about making a choice to have our civil rights acknowledged and respected and protected, and we could not be here without the hard work of many queer activists and many individuals from the queer community," Sickels told reporters.

## EUROPE Gov't: The U.K. Is 6 Percent Gay

The government has determined that 6 percent of United Kingdom residents are gay or lesbian, *The Telegraph* newspaper reported Dec. 11. That's about 3.6 million people.

Government actuaries calculated the figure to help in estimating the financial impact of the Civil Partnership Act, which took effect last month. The act grants registered same-sex couples all the rights and obligations of marriage.

"It is, to my knowledge, the first time the government has released a figure of this sort, but it does come with caveats," a Department of Trade and Industry spokesman told the newspaper. "It is based on a number of studies by different interest groups, but fundamentally there is very little reliable information about the size of the lesbian, gay and bisexual group."



Singer Elton John and partner David Furnish tied the knot, along with about 700 other Britons, under the United Kingdom's Civil Partnership Act, which went into effect Dec. 19.

## Four Guilty in London Killing

Four youths were convicted of manslaughter Dec. 14 in the 2004 killing of a gay man near the London gay nightclub Heaven.

David Morley, 37, died in a hospital after the attack by Reece Sargeant, 21; Darren Case, 18; and a 17-year-old boy and 15-year-old girl who were not identified because of their age.

Prosecutors said the four also beat and kicked several other people the same evening. They will be sentenced Jan. 23.

Morley was a survivor of the 1999 nail-bomb attack on the gay Admiral Duncan pub, where he worked. Three people died and 73 were injured in that explosion.

## Czech Lower House Passes Partnership Bill

The Czech Republic's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, voted 86-54 in favor of a same-sex

registered partnership law Dec. 16. Seven deputies abstained, and 53 were not present for the vote.

The measure now moves to the possibly less-friendly Senate. If it passes there, it would advance to President Vaclav Klaus for his signature.

If the Senate rejects the bill, the deputies could override the Senate with an absolute majority of 101 votes in the 200-member chamber. The legislation was favored by Prime Minister Jiri Paroubek's Social Democrats and many Communists but opposed by the Christian Democrats, who are part of the three-party governing coalition.

## Latvia Bans Same-Sex Marriage

Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga signed legislation amending the nation's constitution to ban same-sex marriage Dec. 21. The measure passed Parliament 65-6 with nine abstentions Dec. 15.

Latvia already had a law prohibiting gays from marrying, but conservative politicians feared it might not stand up to challenges from the European Union. The European branch of the International Lesbian and Gay Association denounced the amendment.