



# ILGA Bulletin

Issue 1 / 04

## FROM MANILA TO **WWW.BRAZILIANRESOLUTION.COM**

ILGA had its first ever conference on the continent of Asia. Manila, Philippines was the venue for the very successful 22nd ILGA World Conference. The ILGA Asia Region is stronger than ever before, and many new delegates from countries which were never represented in ILGA were present at the conference.

Kursad Kahramanoglu and Rosanna Flamer-Caldera were elected co-secretaries general, and Anna Leah Sarabia's Women's Media Circle will hold the women's secretariat until next the ILGA world conference, which will take place in Geneva, Switzerland at the end of 2005. Kahramanoglu is undertaking his third term as Secretary General. Flamer-Caldera has been the Asian Region female representative on the Board since 2001. Sarabia has just completed a two-year term as Secretary General. Claudia Roth, the Human Rights Commissioner at the German Foreign Office who will be leading the German Government's delegation to United Nations Commission Human Rights (UNCHR) this year, was the keynote speaker of the conference. For her contribution to the conference please see:

[www.brazilianresolution.com](http://www.brazilianresolution.com)

At last year's regular session of the UNCHR in Geneva in April 2004, the Brazilian delegation - in a groundbreaking move - proposed a Resolution entitled "Human Rights and Sexual Orientation"

(E/CN.4/2003/L.92). The Resolution mentions human rights violations and attacks on fundamental liberties on the grounds of sexual orientation, and calls on Member States to promote and uphold the human rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation. It also asks the UNCHR and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the subject. As a result, 53 nations will sit in Geneva next March to discuss, argue, vote and then publicly declare if they believe

The 2003 Conference of ILGA, of course, debated the Brazilian Resolution and recognised the historic nature of the Resolution, while regretting that the final draft did not include gender identity, thus overlooking the rights of transgender people. The delegates, representing NGOs and associations from more than 40 countries worldwide, thus voted to petition the UNCHR to include gender identity in the text of the Brazilian Resolution to be debated at the 60th annual session of the

UNCHR to be held in Geneva from 15 March to 23 April 2004. The ILGA petition may be completed online at [www.brazilianresolution.com](http://www.brazilianresolution.com)

The resolution will be voted on by the 53 countries with voting rights, but non-voting countries can participate in the debate. It is our common responsibility to get each government to

address the issue and make a public statement on sexual orientation and human rights.

Join the campaign, see the [www.brazilianresolution.com](http://www.brazilianresolution.com), and talk about it to your friends, families and supporters.

*Kursad Kahramanoglu  
Editor, January 7, 2004*



*Marcelo Suntheim, Secretary of CHA; Cesar Bartelome, President of CHA; Kursad Kahramanoglu, Co-Secretary General of ILGA; Dr. Rafael A. Bielsa, Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the national government; Pedro Paradiso Sottile, Legal Coordinator for CHA and Horacio Sivori, translator.*

sexual orientation is a human right or not.

If the resolution is approved, it will probably not cause direct changes in many countries, but it will send a clear signal to the global community that they are NOT right when they discriminate against people on the grounds of their sexual orientation.

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## **ILGA**



“Being elected to the Co-Secretary General’s position is a huge honour for me, my organisation, my country and the entire Asian Region. Having been the ILGA Asia (F) Representative, I suppose it was a natural transition. However, it was the support shown me by members from all of the regions of ILGA at the World Conference in Manila which helped in making the final decision.

We have a long road ahead of us, but together we can travel this road and look forward to a great future for ILGA worldwide.”

*Rosanna Flamer-Caldera*

**National and international organizations  
are invited to sign the Brazilian Resolution  
petition collectively  
on-line at:  
[WWW.BRAZILIANRESOLUTION.COM](http://WWW.BRAZILIANRESOLUTION.COM)**

## **ILGA BULLETIN**

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# CRY FOR MY SISTERS, ARGENTINA

All I knew about Argentina was its recent turbulent relations with the International Monetary fund, its dark and sad period of military junta, “Tango” and that Argentineans eat lots of beef. So I was not surprised when I saw a restaurant called “Siga la Vaca” in Buenos Aires, which means follow the cow.

Buenos Aires is a fantastic city. I am told it is older than Helsinki. It sure feels like a sophisticated European City on the one hand, and certainly a Latin City on the other. Buenos Aires does not feel to a foreign visitor as if it’s a city with big economic and unemployment problems. It is cheaper than most large metropolitan areas of Europe, and it has some beggars and homeless on its streets. But no more than London, Brussels or anywhere else that I know in Europe.

“Comunidad Homosexual Argentina” (CHA), “Sociedad de Integracion Gay-Lésbica Argentina” (SIGLA), “Grupo de mujeres de la Argentina”, and “Other Sheep” are some of the ILGA member organisations in Argentina; and there are also some individual members there. I spent six days talking with them and also meeting with many leading Argentinean politicians and activists, presenting ILGA’s positions on lgbt rights generally and ILGA’s position on the “Brazilian Resolution” specifically.

CHA at the moment seems to be the most active ILGA member organisation in Argentina. Cesar Bartolome Cigliutti, President of CHA recently married Marcelo Suntheim, the Secretary of CHA and caused a storm in Argentina as well as making legal history. And those of you who have attended the Manila Conference will remember delightful Pedro Paradiso Sottile, CHA’s Legal Co-ordinator. Accompanied by this very competent team of activists, I was able to make my most important two meetings in Argentina, first at the Argentinean Human Rights Commission with Dr. Rodolfo Mattarollo, “Jefe de Gabinete, Secretaria de Derechos Humanos, Minsiterio de Justicia Seguridad y Dereches Humanos de la Nacion”, and then with Dr. Rafael A. Bielsa, “Ministro

de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto”; the secretary of foreign affairs in the national government. Then SIGLA, another longstanding ILGA member organisation, organised a series of meetings for me with many “Deputados de la Nacion”, members of the parliament (MPs) both of the government and opposition. ILGA longtimers will remember Rafael Freda, SIGLA’s front man and



*Laura C. Musa, Diputada Nacional Argentina; Secretary General Kursad Kahramanoglu; Rafael Freda, SIGLA*

activist for many years in the movement. Accompanied by Rafael, I was able to speak with Laura C. Musa, José Alberto Roselli, Juliana Marino, and Dra. Margarita Jarque, all MPs at the national parliament of Argentina. Some of these MPs have important strategic positions in their consecutive parties, and they all support lgbt rights.

In order to begin to understand Argentina, one needs to take into consideration two important factors to start with: the Military and the Church. A long and ugly hold on power by the military scarred this nation’s politics deeply. Until the six-months old present government, even many years after passing of the power to civilians, successive Argentinean governments couldn’t dare to bring the laws that will prosecute the criminals, which committed heinous crimes under the junta. The Catholic Church ruled this country with an iron rod

for as long as one can remember. It is only now that a democratically elected executive and parliament can exercise a degree of democracy, thanks to the diminishing powers of the Church and the military. The military is by and large discredited, and the role which the Catholic Church played during these dark junta days discredited the Church, too. However, it has by no means disappeared. Discredited or not, the military in the minds of many Argentineans and the Catholic Church still meddle very much in the day-to-day running of the country. So much so that even the most daring politicians and activists can only criticize the hierarchy of the Church and not even the “right of the Church” to interfere in the decision-making of the elected politicians! The government officially incorporates the Church by having a ministry called “Culto”. In this kind of political climate one of the worst things in Argentina is the position of the police. The Argentinean police has been and still is a law unto themselves. Like many other countries, which suffered lack of democracy, Argentinean police from time to time see themselves above the law and cannot be made accountable. During my visit to Buenos Aires, I was taken to a house which is known as the “Hotel” by the Community, in which many trans people live. It was a very interesting place which



*Transvestite shot in the legs with plastic bullets by police. Name withheld for security reasons.*

was built by the efforts of many trans people of Buenos Aires, especially those trans people who came from outside of the City. The building was decorated and maintained by the inhabitants, and people

are living a semi-communal life in it. It is a trans version of a modern scouting movement. However, I was told that the police regularly raid it on the flimsiest

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# BRAZILIAN RESOLUTION

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**Yes**, I am signing this petition in order to express my support of resolution E/CN.4/2003/L.92 concerning **“Human rights and sexual orientation”** presented in 2003 by the Brazilian delegation at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

The resolution, to be considered again at the 60th session of the Commission in 2004, expressed **“deep concern at the occurrence of violations of human rights in the world against persons on the grounds of their sexual orientation”** and stressed that the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms should **“not be hindered in any way on the grounds of sexual orientation”**.

I hereby support this resolution, which specifically :

- Calls upon all States to promote and protect the **human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation**;

- Notes the attention given to **human rights violations on the grounds of sexual orientation** by the special procedures in their reports to the Commission on Human Rights, as well as by the treaty monitoring bodies, and encourages all special procedures of the Commission, within their mandates, to give due attention to the subject;

- Requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to pay due attention to the **violation of human rights on the grounds of sexual orientation**;

I further express my support in favour of the **inclusion of the term “gender identity” in addition to the term “sexual orientation” in the resolution**, in order to take into account the numerous human rights violations committed on the grounds of gender identity.

My name \_\_\_\_\_

My country \_\_\_\_\_

**My e-mail** (if I fill this box in , I'll be informed about **LGBT and human rights related news** by e-mail)

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*Continued from page 3*

excuse. My visit coincided a day after such a raid, and I heard the stories of maltreatment by the police; and there was even an accusation of money being stolen from the bedrooms. These were the accusations. I have, however, seen with my own eyes beaten up bodies and faces, and worst of all plastic bullet marks on the legs of one of the inhabitants of the Hotel. The good people of the Hotel were upset and angry, but the worst feeling they had was of despair. They were hopeless because they thought that they have no possibility of getting any justice. One sister said, “Our word against the word of the police. In Argentina no court or official will take us serious enough and have courage enough to tackle police. We get beaten, robbed and even raped by the police; and there is nothing we can do about it.”

There is, however, a faint light at the end of the tunnel. The present Government, even though they have been in power a short time, seems to be deter-



*The “Hotel”*

mined to bring Argentina to the third millennium as a democratic state, respecting

human rights for all. They managed to pass a law under which the criminals in the junta may now be brought in front of the courts. They are prepared to listen to the lgbt community. Provided that they can do what their conscious dictates and can vote freely without undue pressure from the Vatican and fear of the army, they can do great things for Argentina and all those discriminated against groups. The upcoming debate at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) on the “Brazilian Resolution” will be an important test for the resolve of the Argentinean government, not only for human rights but also for democracy.

*Kursad Kahramanoglu  
January 2004*

## IS UN FOR US?

As you may know by now, at the last session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), Brazil proposed a resolution on “human rights and sexual orientation” (E/CN.4/2003/L.92) which claims that sexual diversity is an integral part of universal human rights as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This will be discussed at the 60th session of UNCHR which will take place between the 15th of March and the end of April 2004. Indeed, this was on the agenda of last year’s UNCHR, but an unholy alliance of the Organisation of the Islamic Conferences (OIC) and a Catholic front, encouraged and organised behind the scenes by the Vatican, along with communist friends like China tried to defeat it. Some bastions of human rights and democracy like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya and Malaysia each proposed amendments to the Brazilian Resolution! They, amongst other things, would like to remove the term “sexual orientation” from the resolution wherever it appears. Opponents of the resolution failed to defeat the Brazilian Resolution, but they were able to keep it from being voted on at the UNCHR last year. As a result, 53 nations will sit in Geneva this March and April to discuss, argue, vote and then publicly declare if they believe sexual orientation is an inalienable human right or not.

I went to Brazil to discuss the strategy for the forthcoming “Brazilian Resolution”. After Brazil, I then proceeded to Argentina to have meetings with Argentinean ILGA members and to have talks with politicians about Argentina’s support for the Brazilian Resolution.

We met in Brazil because the originator of the motion is Brazil, and a visit to Argentina was important because of the important role Argentina will play amongst the 53 nations who will be voting. The fact that this motion has been proposed by Brazil itself is interesting. One would expect that the US and UK governments, both willing to go to war in Iraq in the name of democracy and human rights, would champion such fundamental freedoms. Instead, energised and invigorated by the fresh breeze of President Lula, it is the Brazilian delegation at the UN which car-

ries the torch for LGBT people’s human rights. It was widely believed that the Vatican exercised considerable pressure on all the Catholic countries at the UN, particularly on some Latin American countries like Argentina. The last Argentinean government changed its mind last year during the crucial vote from support to abstention. Even elected presidents want to go to heaven; and after all the Pope is infallible, isn’t he? It’s easy to guess how the papal propaganda might have worked.

The UN is a complicated and funny insti-



*Secretary Kursad Kahramanoglu and Dr. Rafael A. Bielsa, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores*

tution; and contrary to the belief many of us cling to, it is not a principled place. It is rather like an old-fashioned horse market. Nations come and barter their votes on one issue in order to secure support for their position on another issue, which is dearer to their heart. The fifty-three countries that sit on the UNCHR have no specific qualifications for this position, indeed the human rights records of the member states is seen as a matter of irrelevance. It’s just whose turn comes up according to Buggins Turn. As a result, you have some bizarre situations like when the UNHCR itself was chaired by the sister-in-law of that great democrat Colonel Gaddafi! Added to this, the Vatican is awarded almost the same status as any independent country and exercises far more influence than most. Ambassador Umer of Pakistan presents himself as the spokesperson of 1.2 billion Muslims in the world and declares that the

Brazilian Resolution is “a direct insult to the 1.2 billion Muslims”. Presumably he is not including the tens of millions of those 1.2 billion Muslims who are LGBT.

The strategy meeting in Brazil was very useful by allowing us to meet and hear first hand from the Brazilian diplomats who conceived the idea, drafted the original resolution and saw it through last year’s UNCHR session. It also was very encouraging to see Brazilian LGBT organisations, many of whom are ILGA members, getting involved and wanting to play a more active international role. ILGA member organisation Arco-Iris played an important role in the success of the meeting. We thank them very warmly.

My meetings in Argentina were even more rewarding. To start with, the ILGA member organisations in Argentina, especially ILGA’s anchor member Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA), are doing great work. Indeed, recent achievements on LGBT issues should be examples to many other countries. As well as participating in many meetings with other LGBT groups, politicians and human rights organisations, CHA organised a meeting for me with Dr. Rafael A. Bielsa, “Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto”; the secretary of foreign affairs in the national government. He is a civilised man. After listening carefully to what I had to say about the Brazilian Resolution and noting my point about Argentina’s important role, he said that, although the final decision lies with the President, he expects Argentina to support this human rights initiative at the UN. He also added that the Argentinean government would vote like this because ordinary Argentineans deserve this kind of support on a human rights issue from their government. At an earlier meeting in Brazil, I had made a bet with the head of last year’s Brazilian mission to the UN that, if Argentina supports Brazil’s resolution this year, he will buy me dinner. I expect to win that bet!

The real issue is to gain rights and equality for LGBT people throughout the world - and not just in certain enclaves and pockets of our planet. We need to have these rights

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agreed and enshrined in the full light of global scrutiny. Any further gains have to be fully known and fully acknowledged. In any case, the delegations at the UN ultimately vote as directed by their governments. Hence, for millions of LGBT people all over the world we have to win this battle country-by-country, until the last nation on the face of the Earth accepts that LGBT rights are fundamental human rights. It will be then, and only then, that ILGA's mission will be completed. See our logo!

ILGA asks to all its members:

- 1) Raise the Brazilian Resolution in your country; ask your government what their approach is. It does not matter whether or not your government sits on UNCHR. They can, if they choose to, still get involved.
- 2) If you are a member organisation from an EU country, lobby your government to adopt a single agreed EU approach. Please tell them that we will be watching the performance of their UN delegations. No horse-trading, no allowing the Catholic Church to dictate the line, no missing the vote this time!
- 3) Make the Brazilian Resolution a domestic issue. You know better than anyone else which angle to use to get the issue raised in your country.
- 4) Keep ILGA informed and get information from ILGA's own dedicated [www.brazilianresolution.com](http://www.brazilianresolution.com) for your campaigning needs.

You will remember from the last issue of the ILGA Bulletin that this UN resolution was an ILGA initiative launched almost three years ago. At the time we gave ourselves fifteen years to realise the dream. Brazil jumped the gun a little and presented us an unexpected early gift. Thank you, Brazil. I have no doubt that one day the whole world will accept that LGBT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS. If not in 2004, soon. We are not going anywhere, and we want our rightful place on this planet. I would, however like UNCHR publicly to recognise us this year. Let's have a go!

*Kursad Kahramanoglu  
Secretary General ILGA  
January 13, 2004*

**T**he Asia Region of ILGA convened a successful caucus in Manila as part of the 22nd ILGA World Conference on 11-18 November.

The caucus convened human rights activist networks and HIV/AIDS support groups from Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand who committed themselves to renewed campaigns for equality for sexual minorities.

"This Asian caucus is another milestone in our just struggle to put to task governments and private institutions in 80 countries, pressuring them to assure protection and welfare for the millions of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBTs), in the region," said Lanny Winata, the newly elected Asian female representative, who hails from Indonesia.

Mr. Vivek Anand, the new Asian male representative, revealed that hand-in-hand with defending the rights of sexual minorities is tackling related issues of health, availability of health care services and poverty.

"The looming HIV/AIDS crises in India, China and many Asian countries are complicated by the antiquated policies and cultural biases against LGBTs. Our task as ILGA members, therefore, is to correct those laws and educate the people about the need to be more open to gender and sexual issues," Anand said.

Anand cited India's complicated attitudes towards homosexuality as a damper on efforts to control the spread of HIV, from his experiences as a health worker of the Humsafar Trust, a service organization based in Bombay.

The historic first conference on LGBT rights in an Asian country is seen to increase the opportunities in more cooperative endeavors among the scattered groups in Asia which, are mostly hidden, suffer police repression and poorly funded.

But the conference owes its inception to women who dared make the bid to host it

in the region. Anna Leah Sarabia of the Philippines, ILGA's first Asian Co-Secretary General, made the bid in 1997 to host the Conference and headed the Conference Organizing Committee that convened the support network Pinoy Pride. Sarabia now heads ILGA's Women's Secretariat. Rosanna Flamer-Caldera of Sri Lanka, supported the Conference Organizing Committee during her term as Female Asian Representative to the ILGA Board. She was elected ILGA's new Female Secretary General during the Manila conference.

Sarabia noted that the conference owes part of its success to the timely contributions of mainstream human rights, women's rights and AIDS groups in Manila who provided venues, funds, personnel and assistance to the secretariat.

The conference ended with the heartily applauded speech of the Honorable Claudia Roth, Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany, who authored most of the gay-friendly legislations in the European Union.

Roth's urgent appeal for governments to implement global human rights standards for the LGBTs in Asia inspired the member organizations towards more activism and cooperation.

ILGA Asia is expected to make modest gains for equality, as previously hostile regimes such as Taiwan, China and Singapore have started to relax their colonial-era sodomy laws and have even extended limited dialogues with LGBT citizens.



# ILGA ARCHIVE PROJECT

The first-ever Archives Exhibit of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) was the result of two visions coming together from two different groups. The first group concerned itself on actively pursuing and protecting the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and intersex people (lgbti) all over the world, while the other group was dedicated to establishing a foundation and a movement that caters to a dialogue and an experiment on consciousness between artists, audience and the arts.

Panaginip believes that it is in the arts, where one has the strongest feelings for one's vision and where the real activism to change the world for the better takes place. In this manner, when a group such as ILGA has existed for quite some time, 25 years to be exact, it is an art to be able to

still actively advocate the missions and aims it has believed in throughout the years. Artists have a way of looking at things, of making sense to the chaos, which will be understood only in the distant future. The Panaginip Project envisions the artists as the sails that catch the first wind, the wind that will take us to places we have only dreamt about and the wind that will serve as the documentation of a historical event in our unfolding journey as a human race.

ILGA not only marks a cornerstone but also is on the verge of becoming a landmark in itself. It has lived and changed the perception of a society that has treated lgbti's in some form of inequality for the past quarter of a century. It is in this inspiration that Panaginip draws a canvas that depicts ILGA's time line as an ever evol-

ving and dynamic artistry that not only empowers but also allows society the necessary room for change.

The Archives Exhibit triangulates the dialogue between the artist - ILGA, the art - lgbti activism and the society as the audience. The dialogue takes us through the 25 years of ILGA's existence as the international body that sponsors the dream that is becoming a reality where "Gay and Lesbian Rights are Human Rights." Panaginip is proud to be a partner, an exhibitor and an archivist for ILGA and hopes that the dreams of both organizations continue in the coming years as a new brand of activism. An activism that pursues a change in society for the better and most importantly an equal opportunity to dream and become who we really want to be.



*Scenes from the Archive Exhibition at the ILGA Manila Conference*

## SWEDISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS YOUTH ACTIVITY IN BALTICS

With the support of the Swedish government's Youth Foundation, a conference was held in January in Riga, Latvia, for lgbt youth groups from Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Society is still very homophobic in the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), although homosexuality was decriminalised there ten years ago; and lgbt youth groups exist, however, without any money or other support from society.

Therefore, the Swedish youth federation for lgbt rights, RFSL Ungdom, decided to start a cooperative effort to support and strengthen youth groups in these countries.

During an eight-day conference, 30 young lgbt's took part in different workshops on management of youth organisations, project planning and international youth cooperation and had lectures on lgbt/human rights.

Many participants remarked at the end

of the seminar, "This gave us a feeling we are not alone in our fight. This feeling is a great motivation to keep on with our work."

This is the first international project of RFSL Ungdom, and they are planning to cooperate with lgbt youth in other countries.

For more information on the project "LGBT youth in Baltic Sea Region" (also pictures) and RFSL's international work visit: [www.rfslungdom.se/international](http://www.rfslungdom.se/international)

# REPORT ON CUBA

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*Carlos Sanchez, ILGA's male representative for the Latin America and Caribbean Region, reports on his recent trip to Cuba to participate in the Third Hemispheric Meeting Against the ALCA (Area of Free Commerce of America).*

The ALCA is an initiative of the United States and of multinational companies that can seriously harm the weak economies of the region, worsening the reality that people live in the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

It was an excellent meeting: many ideas arose to resist that American strategy and to show that lesbians and gays also are affected by these agreements in various ways. It became obvious we need to have a much clearer and better-defined position regarding the economy in our region.

My intention to go to La Havana had an antecedent though: the vote of the Latin countries in the UN Commission on Human rights in the United Nations and the possibility of creating a lesbian and gay organization in Cuba.

Some time ago I already had a contact with lesbians in Cuba through a Spanish friend. In our mails, we could see their strong desire to get information and contact with other groups in South America.

I thought something needed to be done.

I also had taken contact with the Cuban embassy in Chile in June 2003. I wanted to understand why Cuba abstained when the UN Commission on Human Rights voted to delay the debate on the Brazilian resolution.

Those antecedents allowed me to elaborate a workplan in Cuba. All this allowed me to get support from the Political and Gender Commissions of the Communist Party of Chile, as much to make contacts as to suggest the best way to have the Cuban government consider our observations.

This is the result of my queries:

a) Regarding the vote in the United Nations.

- The Coordinator of the negotiations in the Commission of Human rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Cuban government said homosexuality is not sanctioned, nor punished in any way since 1994. Nothing is done to prevent lesbians and homosexuals to participate in the social and political life of the country. Therefore, the recognition of the rights of lesbians and gays is a question of principles; and, if no major impediment arises, Cuba will vote in favour of the Brazilian resolution. Otherwise, they would abstain; but in any case, they would not vote against the proposal of Brazil.

The difficulty they see in the proposal submitted by Brazil is a question of international conjuncture and opportunity. That is to say, in front of the North American aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq, they believe it is not very advisable to present a proposal that would open a new flank for attacking forces, leading to a greater isolation of the Arab countries. Arab countries see the Brazilian proposal as a initiative consistent with the US attempt to isolate them, and for that reason will shut themselves and not even want to debate it.

This seems to be the main preoccupation of the Cuban government regarding this debate. They think Brazil should choose another moment to present their proposal and believe it would be better postponing the debate until a better conjuncture.

I urged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to explicitly express those explanations to the international lgbt community. Cuban officials said they are aware of that necessity and for that reason will possibly write up a declaration of principles and an explanation if they are themselves forced to abstain again. At the moment, they do know that it is necessary for them to do it, but have not yet decided how that shall be done.

b) The second subject is the possibility of creating an organization in Cuba. With respect to this, it is very difficult that Cuba changes its policy of not allowing the creation of new organizations in the short term.

- Those that already exist are connected with the local organizations "de base" (on the ground - Committees for the Defense of the Revolution). Cuba is constantly being threatened by the United States government. There have been several attempts at terrorist acts within its borders, promoted by the U.S. intelligence organisms. At the present time an open provocation on the part of the Bush government exists that maintains the country on permanent alert. That is why, I was told, the creation of new groups would distract their attention from this alert. Cuba's priority since the 60ies has been the defense of the country.

- Nevertheless, there are a few civil organizations and state institutions that are working on sexuality and sexual minorities; and it is possible to establish a very direct relationship with them.

- Among those organisations: the National Center for Sexual Education, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Martin Luther King Center, the Center for Hiv/Aids Prevention and the Felix Varela Center. The two first ones are state institutions. The latter are a Protestant Church and two NGOs.

- We agreed to begin to work with a group of lesbians and gays in the National Center for Sexual Education. We talked about consolidating this work and its relationship with ILGALAC in the medium term.

This aims at persuading and convincing the administration and the politicians that lesbians and gays need a space of their own to generate cultural change regarding "machismo" and homophobia that are so deeply rooted on our continent.

Talking with the lesbian and gays there, we were able to see:

a) Neither institutional nor penal repression exists against lesbians and homosexuals.

b) There are no legal sanctions against lgbt people.

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c) People are afraid of meeting and organizing themselves. It is mainly based on their experience in previous years, but one can assume that this feeling will disappear in the future if lesbians and gays start to work and keep working and eventually get support from the government. (The National Center for Sexual Education is offering this support).

d) "Transformismo" is well accepted by the majority of the Cuban population

e) There is indeed a change in the way people view homosexuality, but this does not mean the end of discrimination and homophobia. The population is just more tolerant with lesbians and homosexuals.

f) Lesbians and gays do not consider fighting for the right to marriage, because that institution in Cuba does not have the same value that it has in other countries. Unmarried and married people enjoy equal rights.

We were able to learn much and on very important matters as well. For instance,

Maternity and paternity are issues the National Center for Sexual Education is ready to work on. If lesbians or gays want to, they can access a program of assisted fertility...

The Federation of Women of Cuba, also offered a space to support the initiatives and concerns of lesbian women.

The Martin Luther King Center, which depends on the Baptist Church, develops a program for liberating sexual minorities and for the acceptance of sexual diversity.

Felix Varela Center gave us a very interesting video that tells of the process that sexual minorities have made in Cuba.

Sexual minorities seem to be living better times now in Cuba. In the medium term, even better than the rest of Latin America. There is much I could say on this, but time does not permit now.

## **AIDS PRESSURE GROUP TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN AND CHAIRMAN ZACKIE ACHMAT NOMINATED FOR 2004 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE**

The nomination from US-based Quaker organisation the American Friends Service Committee [AFSC] says Achmat and the TAC have made "a significant contribution to the global struggle against Aids". The AFSC, along with its British equivalent, won the prize in 1947 on behalf of all Quakers, which qualifies it to make nominations.

TAC said it and Achmat were deeply honoured by the nomination. "The gains made by the TAC have been due to the efforts of thousands of people," said Achmat, who is HIV-positive. "It is the organisation as a whole that must be commended for the achievements thus far."

The AFSC said it was making the nomination in the belief that the global Aids epidemic constituted a grave threat to peace and security.

"Through mass mobilisation, civil disobedience, legal action, extraordinary personal sacrifice, and visionary leadership, Zackie Achmat and the TAC have helped to galvanise a global movement to provide hope and gain access to treatment for those with HIV/Aids," it said.

The efforts of Achmat and TAC have led to dramatic reductions in the price of anti-retrovirals and other essential drugs through voluntary price cuts by pharmaceutical manufacturers and the acceptance of generics.

TAC has also contributed to an overhaul of global trading rules to give precedence to the protection of public health over the protection of intellectual property rights.

The 40-year-old Achmat, a founder of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, has been a key figure in TAC's successful campaigns for the rollout of antiretroviral drugs for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and more recently, for treatment of people with HIV/Aids.

– Sapa

## **Now You Know What It Is Like!**

"One guy said the avenue seemed to close in on him. He felt a heightened awareness of security - very aware of the people around him. He felt intimidated. A group of construction workers was working on a wall, and they shut down their work to see this, when these guys walked by. I think that's when the intimidation hit. Another guy said he felt angry because one man gave him a dirty look and then said something to his wife."

- Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Police Constable Steve Camp, of the department's hate-and-bias-crimes initiative, on the new training exercise in which recruits of the same gender walk down a busy city street holding hands to better understand the experiences of gay people, to the Edmonton Journal,

*From Rex Wockner*

## India's AIDS Tragedy Highlighted at World Social Forum

By Richard Stern\*

*(Richard Stern is an AIDS activist based in Latin America who attended the World Social Forum in India. He does not pretend to be an expert on the AIDS crisis in India after spending just 10 days in Mumbai, but feels compelled to at least place certain issues into a public forum with the hopes of stimulating further discussion and debate)*

As a country overwhelmed by poverty as well as a myriad of other social problems, India's AIDS tragedy is hard to focus on; and the magnitude of the situation is only just becoming visible. The World Social Forum and the International Health Forum for Defense of People's Health, held in Mumbai from January 14th-21st, helped to place AIDS in the national spotlight, albeit briefly.

Among India's many other overwhelming problems there are an estimated 4 million People Living with HIV/AIDS. In a country that has over 1 billion people, the "incidence" of AIDS is still relatively low, less than one half of one percent; but the numbers are still staggering. Care and treatment are virtually non-existent. According to Sanjay, a Person Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA), "more than five years ago the government promised to begin providing medications for opportunistic infections, but they still haven't done so. There is no Bactrim, no Fluconazole."

Ironically, India is home to CIPLA, Ranbaxy, and Aurobindo, all of whom export generic anti-retroviral medications to other countries; but even at the price of less than \$1 per day, these medications are unavailable to Indians who need treatment now, an estimated 300,000. An average salary for a working class Indian in Mumbai is \$30-40/month and most people with AIDS are unemployed, and have to rely on charity just for food.

### Government Promises Scale-Up

The government has recently announced that it will begin providing treatment for 50,000 people beginning in April of 2004,

but activists I spoke to were skeptical of the government's commitment to follow through. According to Vivek "they have not allocated any budget for the purchase of these medications, so how are they going to buy them? We have not heard of any concrete plan to implement this promise."

The NGO "Communication for Health India Network" (CHIN) raised similar questions in their Newsletter distributed at the World Social Forum. CHIN voiced several concerns including "What are the plans for making available low cost second line drugs?" and "Would health personnel be trained adequately enough to handle problems related to drug distribution, such as laboratory and the delivery system itself and handling side effects?" They also referred to issues related to ARV availability for women and children, gender issues, confidentiality, and criteria for selection of clients to receive free drugs.

The biggest concern that this writer has, after witnessing innumerable announcements by governments about scaling up plans that were never followed through on, is "will this really happen in India, or is it a placating strategy, designed to silence activists and create a false impression that something meaningful will occur?"

The NGO Coalition SAATHI (Solidarity and Action Against HIV infection in India) presents a rather pessimistic overview of the AIDS panorama in India. According to the SAATHI website:

- Care to PLHA is refused even in governmental hospitals, giving excuses such as lack of "adequate infrastructure" and lack of 'expertise' in treating PLWA.
- Private hospitals almost always deny treating PLWAs.
- Confidentiality of the patient's HIV status is not maintained in government and private hospitals.
- Drugs for opportunistic infections are not always available in government hospitals.
- Surgical treatment is not provided to PLWAs even if there is an absolute necessity for surgery

- Even in centers which are treating PLWAs, the basic facilities are inadequate.
- Emergency/critical care for people living with HIV/AIDS is non-existent.

In a widely publicized speech delivered at the Indian National AIDS Conference in Chennai in late last year, activist Dr. Subha Raghavan demanded that the Indian government respond to the crisis in care and treatment. "Treatment is a basic human right... in the past 3-4 years I have lost seven of those young men who went to school with me. How can they not be my family; they work and serve my village and take care of my family." She added that "we are the manufacturer of cheap drugs for the whole world... it is unacceptable that the very same drugs we export to the whole world are not available at affordable prices in India."

Raghavan finished by demanding that treatment access be made available by July of 2004 in India and asked for support from UNAIDS and the WHO "3 x 5" team in implementing a plan: "We demand that... WHO, UN agencies, bi-lateral partners, and foundations work together in equal partnership with civil society and People Living with HIV in developing a comprehensive plan for immediate scale-up of ARV treatment in India."

Perhaps as many as a thousand people in India do receive anti-retroviral medications that are provided by NGO's, including the Freedom Foundation in Bangalore, and the Naz Foundation in New Delhi.

### Streets of Mumbai

As an outsider who came to find out about AIDS in India, it was impossible for me to ignore other problems that are much more visible. During my daily 75 minute taxi ride from my Hotel to the site of the World Social Forum in Mumbai, it was absolutely overwhelming to see the number of homeless families who simply camp out by the side of the Western Express highway and on the sidewalks of the major thoroughfares that wind their way through Mumbai. Returning along the same route

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at night, it is as if the homeless turn to corpses as they lie fully wrapped in blankets along the sidewalks and roadsides. And aside from those who are homeless are thousands of others who seem to have put together several pieces of tin and some wood and plastic to create a makeshift shelter. Peering into some of these shelters at traffic lights I could see five or six children and their mother, cooking something in a pot over an open fire fueled by sticks gathered from nearby bushes.

At the World Social Forum, and the International People's Health Forum which preceded it, AIDS was a topic of concern in many presentations. The Indian "Lawyer's Collective" of Mumbai sponsored programs focusing on intellectual property issues which threaten the future ability of companies such as CIPLA to continue to export their medications on the world market. According to Anand Grover of the Lawyer's Collective, India must enact TRIPS compliant patent legislation by the end of 2004; and this may mean that CIPLA will have to respect local patents that have been filed on anti-retroviral medications, meaning that they could not export their products. Up until now, Indian law did not recognize any patents on medications, only on "processes" for producing the medications. Thus, any company that could develop a new process for producing a medication could do so. But the World Trade organization is requiring India to enact a law that will fulfill the requirements of the TRIPS agreement.

Even as the World Social Forum was concluding, local English newspapers carried a story about an apparently precedent setting case won by Anand Grover in the High Courts of India, in which a woman who had been fired from her job in an insurance company for being HIV+ was ordered to be reinstated within one month. But discrimination even among medical personnel is described as being rampant. Indira from Chennai in South India described how an AIDS support program in that city fired all of its HIV+ employees. Many PLWA stated that most physicians will refuse to treat a person if they know the person is HIV+.

## **WHO "3 x 5" actions unclear for India**

The World Health Organization sent several members of its Core "3 x 5" (3 million people on treatment in developing countries by the year 2005) to Mumbai for the two conferences, but it was clear that the 3 x 5 plan, does not address India's country-specific realities, and that at the moment it is a "theoretical prescription" for India. Craig McClure and Ian Grubb from the WHO Geneva Core Team gave presentations at a Plenary Session attended by 800 people held January 14th, at the International Health Forum in Defense of People's Health. However, there was no participation in this event from India-based staff of the UN agencies who are focused on scaling up ARV access. So the local situation remained very unclear, and there is no evidence that any of Subha Raghavan demands listed above have been addressed in India.

In other developing countries during the history of the AIDS epidemic, WHO/UNAIDS staff have, with notable exceptions, clearly failed to take a pro-active role in supporting governments in implementing treatment, and have tended to identify more with elite government decision makers than to push these leaders to help poor people. Given the fact that India has by far the lowest priced ARV's in the world, it is indeed shocking that, seven years after ARV access became virtually universal in Europe and the United States, the government of India still does not provide treatment.

## **Delays in Global Fund Implementation**

However, perhaps the biggest tragedy in India is the failure to even begin to make use of extensive resources that have already been allocated by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for India.

The Global Fund contract for the proposal relating to HIV/AIDS, approved in Round Two (January of 2003) still has yet to be signed. Although the proposal itself is for about two hundred million dollars, including all components, it only provides treatment access for about 19,000 people over the five year period (roughly 7 million dollars based on current costs of ARV

access in India) According to current estimates as many as 300,000 people in India need treatment access now, and over a million will be in need with five years. As such, the proposal does not reflect the Global Fund policy of funding proposals that will significantly scale up treatment availability for people living with HIV/AIDS. Most Indians with AIDS will not benefit from the proposal.

Other elements of the AIDS infrastructure that would be funded by the proposal, such as voluntary testing and counseling, cannot be put into place until the proposal is signed and funds are disbursed, further delaying any treatment access scaling up that would come as a result of the proposal. A representative from PNUD in India who attended the session sponsored by the Lawyer's Collective told me that there is virtually no infrastructure related to scaling up ARV access in India, and that the infrastructure would need to be in place for treatment access to begin. He defended that fact that only about five percent of the Global Fund proposal will actually go for purchase of anti-retrovirals, claiming that the government is simply incapable of providing treatment to a large number of people. When I reminded him about Paul Farmer's work in rural Haiti and its success, he insisted that Haiti has a more developed health care infrastructure than India.

Other activists present in the Forum were angry about the lack of emphasis on ARV access in the GF proposal, and claimed that they were never consulted about possible input into the proposals presented by the CCM to the Global Fund.

The Global Fund CCM seems to be very much dominated by the government, in the sense that few HIV+ Indians I spoke to were even aware of its existence, or the resources it potentially may have provided or could at least begin to provide. The 4th round of proposals for the Global Fund will close in April, and there is a movement among activists in India to submit a proposal focusing on ARV access. But one has to wonder what will be the Fund's reaction, given that India has been unable

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to even begin to make use of nearly \$200,000,000 that has already been approved.

Activists from TAC in South Africa, Healthgap in the United States, as well as from Brazilian NGO's, were present at activities during the World Social Forum, and discussed implementation of collaborative actions that would provide support from the international Ccommunity to Indians living with HIV.

Compounding India's AIDS problem is that fact that homosexuality, even among consenting adults, remains illegal, meaning that most gays, lesbians and transgendered people remain hidden, which compounds prevention efforts.

Paradoxically, the streets of Mumbai remind one, at least superficially, of San Francisco's Castro street gay district, in the sense that it is culturally acceptable for men to walk down the street hand in hand. In a half hour walk through the crowded Colaba district, I counted at least 30 male couples, generally in their teens and 20's, walking hand in hand, but in Indian culture this is completely acceptable behavior for heterosexuals.

## **The extermination of Men who have Sex with Men in India**

More overt homosexuality is not visible in bars or other socially tolerated venues, but is dramatically visible at the urinals in

the huge restrooms in the commuter railroad stations that wind their way through Mumbai. There seems to be a section reserved for "cruising" among gay men, and there were dozens of men presumably "seeking sex with men" present at the Churchgate station men's room during rush hour one evening. Equally visible were many men who were obviously cruising a darkened section along the beach just to the South of the famous Taj Mahal Hotel in Colaba. So, if Indian authorities, who tend not to visit such places, try to deny the existence of a substantial community of men who have sex with men, they are sorely mistaken.

According to "Fridae" an Asian Gay and lesbian network, there is a whole gay culture associated with the railroad system. "Tuesdays is for Dadar railway station... Wednesday is for Bandra station, platform one booking counter... the crowd here tends to be what the snobbish upper crust of Mumbai would refer to as the lower classes... on the express trains, the second to last compartment is often the cruising section of the train."

Mumbai, a city of 14 million, has only one gay bar that is only open one night a week; but there is an underground network of contacts and parties, and there are several gay associations as well. But the law against "unnatural acts," enacted by the British in 1871, carries stiff penalties, and, even if rarely enforced, casts a deep shadow over India's gay community which is highly repressed by culture as well as law.

According to Indian gay activist Ashok Row Kavi, Director of the Humsafer Foundation in Bombay, (quoted in an interview written by Perry Brass in *Gay Today*) "Indian gays are a product of Indian civilization. We will be reflecting all the contradictions of Indian Society... Gay men in huge numbers are infected. I estimate over 60 percent HIV prevalence in the 520,000 Men-Having-Sex-with-Men sector in Bombay. But they are dying futile, unsung deaths."

According to Row, the Indian term for gay sex "is 'musti,' or mischief; and young Indian boys who engage in gay sex are often joked about... Musti is considered something that takes place along with marriage, but never in place of it. Musti, then, is something to be joked about; it is never serious, and the deeper romantic feelings that Western gay men often have about their relationships are alien to Indian culture."

Rainbow Planet, a Coalition of NGO's that supports sex workers as well as sexual minorities in India, held a well attended plenary session at the World Social Forum in which various sex workers, as well as transgendered, lesbian and gay people gave testimonies as to the abuses and discrimination they are constantly subjected to.

*\*Richard Stern  
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## **ILGA ASIA AIRS CONCERNS FOR TAIPEI GAY BAR RAID**

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**T**he International Lesbian and Gay Association in Asia (ILGA Asia) is alarmed at the scandalous conduct of a police raid on a private party for gay men for supposed use of illegal drugs on January 17 in Taipei.

According to media reports, police arrested 93 men at a nightclub and seized more than 100 ecstasy pills and ketamine.

Police said the dance club in Chungshan District's Nongan Street was illegally converted from a small 1,080 square feet

apartment, which had been sound proofed.

Vivek Anand, ILGA Asia's male representative based in Bombay, India, lamented the revelations by the Department of Health's center for Disease Control, relayed by a local TV station and tabloids, about 55 of the men allegedly being HIV-positive.

"This is a gross abuse of privacy. HIV positive or not, people have the basic right not to have their health status publicized," an indignant Anand said in reaction to the

reports.

Anand, one of the region's staunch advocates for fairer treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS, also called to attention Taiwan's legal and systemic problems in dealing with AIDS.

Under Taiwan's AIDS Prevention Law, HIV is designated as a legally reported disease. Doctors who find that a patient has HIV must report that person to the government within 24 hours.

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CDC Director-General Su Ih-jen said that the rest of the men at the party would be tested for the virus again in six months, as authorised by the HIV Prevention Law. Conviction of a person who has sex or shares injections with other people to intentionally spread HIV can be as severe as seven years in jail.

Anand said that the use of shameful arrests and scandalous reporting of alleged drug use and sexual misdemeanors now getting popular in Asian countries are not likely to minimize these activities but complicate efforts of human rights advocates to reach marginalized communities, such as gay men and sex workers.

“This police action in Taiwan can only drive gay men deeper into the underground, where they indulge in a lot more dangerous behavior. Even the most dedicated volunteer outreach educators will not be able to provide education and counseling to them, and this will surely raise the risks for a bigger AIDS pandemic in Asia anytime soon,” Anand protested.

ILGA has an AIDS Working Party which advocates for the scrapping of national and global laws that forces people to undergo involuntary testing for HIV serum tests. For many years, ILGA has been fighting for the rights for lesbians, transgenders and gay men to have a more democratic access to preventive information and affordable health care.

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The Polish capital of Warsaw and the southern city of Krakow will be the sites on May 1st and the first week of May of the first stages of the 2004 ILGCN ‘Nazi and Neo Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals’ - part of Warsaw Pride, organized by ILGCN (International Lesbian & Gay Cultural Network) - Poland and other Polish activist groups.

“We’ll have space for seminars and discussions, stage performances, film screenings, art exhibits and a garden reception,” says Warsaw/Krakow organizer Slawek Starosta; “and this year’s Warsaw Pride will be very special marking Poland’s entry into the European Union!”

### **Travelling to Krakow and Re-visiting Auschwitz**

After Warsaw, the “Nazi and Neo Nazi Persecution” event will move to the southern Polish city of Krakow and include a follow-up visit to the near-by Auschwitz concentration camp and its memorial museum - the sites of the historic homo delegation ceremony there during the 2000 ILGCN world cultural conference held in the Polish capital. “Our event includes historic photos of the first homo monument erected in a Nazi death camp - Mauthausen in Austria - provided by HOSI-Linz as well as new material from Swedish and Finnish photographers, added thanks to financial support from the Swedish RFSL Erik Thorsell cultural fund, “ says Bill Schiller, ILGCN-Nordic co-ordinator and international secretary of

the Nordic Homo Council and Tupilak (nordic homo cultural workers).

“These efforts are vital in helping illustrate this often ignored part of the human rights struggle and the link between the homophobia of the Nazis and the homophobic violence of neo nazis today,” Schiller adds.

The expanded ‘Nazi Persecution’ event will also be brought to the ILGA European conference in Budapest in October and be displayed in Stockholm as part of the European-wide campaign for the November 9th ‘Kristallnacht.’

“Not only are many heterosexuals unaware that gays and lesbians perished in the death camps and that homo activists have been struggling for decades to get recognition for this tragedy, but even many gays themselves do not know much about our own history - and how feeds the neo nazi homophobia of today,” Schiller concludes.

Earlier ILGCN ‘Nazi Persecution’ seminars and photo exhibits have taken place along with other international homo events in Zagreb, Berlin, Linz, Vilnius, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Riga and Stockholm.

Photos of the HOSI Linz exhibition and the ILGCN 2000 visit to Auschwitz are available at the Tupilak web site under Photo Album:

<http://hem.passagen.se/tupilak>

## **GERMANY APPROVES MEMORIAL TO PERSECUTED GAY**

Germany's lower house of parliament has approved a 500,000-euro project to build a memorial in Berlin to the tens of thousands of homosexuals killed or persecuted by the Nazis.

The memorial, which will be chosen after an artists’ competition, will be built in the central Tiergarten park, the government said in a statement. “We want to and we will remember this group of victims, because we must not be allowed to be

silent about what price those who revealed their sexual orientation had to pay,” said Christina Weiss, a junior minister in charge of the government’s culture and media policies.

The Nazis conducted a relentless campaign of persecution against homosexuals, sending thousands to concentration camps where they were forced to wear pink triangles and where an unknown number were murdered.

## TIP OF THE ICEBERG: GAY MEN, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

by Alexander Renault

**I**cebergs are dangerous for ships, because only 20% of the total mass can be seen above the waterline. The classic example is the Titanic, the supposedly unsinkable ship doomed when an iceberg's sub-water surface jags ripped through its side.

Most people know of at least one other person who has developed a drug or alcohol problem and can attest to the symptoms which slowly creep to the surface over time. This drug and alcohol use can be a symptom for multiple problems underneath the visible surface, including a variety of emotional symptoms the person may be self-medicating. A person's substance use can be floating above problems that are 80% submerged.

Drug and alcohol use by members of the gay community is staggering as so many people attempt to numb themselves against the myriad psychological attacks against our sense of well being: job discrimination, family pressure to conform, attempts to remain hidden, sexual frustration, lack of social support, and the unattainable perfect gay body.

Initially, researchers were finding rampant drug and alcohol abuse among young gay men who were trying to achieve some kind of peaceful, yet fun level while hitting the dance bars. Almost inescapable anxiety caused by fear of HIV and AIDS was combated by the numbing effects of club drugs and alcohol. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we find older gay men who feel themselves evolving into complete invisibility by middle age within the gay community. Add to this all those who have lost friends and lovers to AIDS re-entering the social scene and you have a maelstrom of anxiety and approach-avoidance.

Drug abuse and/or addiction complicates other medical issues, including immune systems which are suppressed with HIV or HIV medications. A serious problem with many "club drugs" is their

adverse effects on brain chemistry. Some of these effects are transient while others are irreversible.

One of the most popular drugs in the gay community is methylene dioxymethamphetamine, otherwise known as "Ecstasy." People who use large doses of Ecstasy are often seen carrying water bottles to combat dehydration or pacifiers to ease the strong tremors and jaw grinding that go along with amphetamine abuse. Dehydration makes you extremely ill, and can lead to death.

Ecstasy also depletes the brain of an important neurotransmitter called serotonin. This brain chemical affects mood, appetite, temperature regulation, and sex drive. It is the primary chemical targeted by prescription antidepressants, including Prozac, Celexa, Wellbutrin, Zoloft, and Paxil.

Several studies in the late 1990s have shown that if a person uses Ecstasy three times per week for six months, the serotonin decrease often becomes permanent, leading to the person's need for a lifetime of psychotropic medications to elevate mood. Low levels of serotonin greatly increase a person's risk for suicide and can lead to risky sexual behaviors.

The drug referred to as "Special K" is ketamine, an animal tranquilizer. It has some hallucinatory effects and can induce feelings of euphoria and floating, or feelings of being emotionally disconnected, or stuck in a "K hole." The latter is preferred by some who wish to avoid painful feelings or otherwise have an intense desire to escape reality, if only for a few hours. Special K is dangerous when mixed with Ecstasy, because it may desensitize you to an increase in body temperature while dancing. Some rave attendants have died on the dance floor with temperatures later recorded at the local hospital of up to 107 degrees. The dehydration also dramatically intensifies the effects of alcohol.

Heroin use has dramatically increased over the past decade and has become the drug of choice among high school and college students in many parts of the U.S. It is cheaper than ever before and stronger. Most beginning heroin users will begin using the drug intranasally ("snorting") but opiate tolerance increases incredibly quickly. Eventually many people will inevitably begin to use via the IV method, or "shooting" the heroin directly into the bloodstream (the needle marks are referred to as "tracks.") Mixing heroin and cocaine together for injection is called "speedballing" and carries a high risk for heart attack or respiratory distress.

Oxycontin is the prescription name for a time released morphine based opiate painkiller that is also dramatically increasing in popularity. Some refer to it as "Beverly Hills heroin," and it is often used intranasally, by mouth, or liquefied and injected directly into the bloodstream. Oxycontin is a time release painkiller, but hardcore users will chew or crush the tablets, giving themselves a full eight-hour dose within minutes (or seconds if they are injecting). Oxycontin use is also increasing in the gay community because the high is easier to regulate according to dosage; and, therefore, people mistakenly believe they are safe from overdosing.

The line between alcohol abuse and dependence is found in a person's ability to control the amount of drinking in which they engage. College students who drink themselves into acute intoxication every weekend are not necessarily alcoholics, but they are certainly abusing alcohol.

The criteria for alcoholism are the inability to control the amounts used, an increase in tolerance (how much you have to drink to reach the desired effects), and the appearance of symptoms of detoxification when use is discontinued. An expression often heard in rehab circles; "one drink is too many and a thousand isn't

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enough," refers to the fact that alcoholics cannot drink alcohol and remain sober, or "on the wagon." This is because the trigger of a single sip of alcohol will bring on a full blown relapse into alcoholism. Many alcoholics will also drink into blackout and not be able to recall events that occurred while they were intoxicated, e.g. Jane Fonda in the film *The Morning After* or Nicholas Cage in *Leaving Las Vegas*.

There have been several movements to create "moderation drinking." These attempt to teach alcoholics that they can control their alcohol use. For true alcoholics this will always lead to disaster. The leader of one such movement is now in prison for vehicular homicide after killing a few people while driving drunk. So much for her moderation.

Alcoholism within the gay community has been steadily increasing for the past several decades. No one is sure exactly why this is happening, but researchers and addictions specialists speculate upon the effects of socio-economic changes, fears revolving around HIV transmission (from barhopping to dating), and the propensity for members of the gay community to structure their social events around alcohol, e.g. bars, dance clubs, and private parties. An important future task will be developing a better understanding of why drug and alcohol addictions remain so prevalent in the gay community, and the development of better strategies to cope with these problems.

The most successful treatment for addictions is the twelve-step method of Alcoholics Anonymous which has spawned a number of recovery movements, such as Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and twelve-step programs for sexual addictions and compulsive eating. Researchers are not completely sure why this method works. In all my years working the drug and alcohol field I can tell you first-hand that if you want to remain clean and sober you need to attend regular twelve-step meetings, period. Residential rehabilitation treatment facilities ("rehab") are excellent set-

tings in which to detoxify and get started in recovery but attending meetings is mandatory.

Out-patient counseling, when you see a drug and alcohol counselor once or twice a week, is an excellent aftercare component following a rehab stay. Relapse inevitably occurs after a person begins making excuses for not attending their twelve-step meetings and/or counseling sessions.

An important word of caution: alcohol detoxification should never be attempted without professional help. Alcohol withdrawal is extremely dangerous, and many people die from withdrawal seizures from alcohol, as opposed to heroin withdrawal, which is painful but not life threatening in and of itself. Benzodiazepine withdrawal is also dangerous; and this group of anti-anxiety medications includes Valium,

Xanax, Ativan, and Klonopin.

If you think you may be developing a problem with alcohol or drugs, or know someone who is, call your local drug and alcohol abuse hotline. It is never too late to get yourself some help while you are still breathing.

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*Alexander Renault is the pen name for a writer who has published in multiple genres. He has worked in the mental health and drug and alcohol fields for the past fifteen years. Mr. Renault is currently editing the non-fiction anthology *Walking Higher: Gay Men Write About the Deaths of Their Mothers*, from Renault Publishing, Inc. He invites you to visit him at [AlexanderRenault.com](http://AlexanderRenault.com).*

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## MACEDONIA IS ON THE MAP!

At the end of November some fifty people, representing LGBT groups from the Balkan countries as well as the COC (Netherlands) and RFSL (Sweden) and the International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network, found their way to Skopje to take part in the first international conference organised by the Centre for Civil and Human Rights (CCHR) - the first and only LGBT group in Macedonia, founded in February 2002. The aim of the newly-formed CCHR was to learn from the experience of the other groups - especially those active in the area. Alongside the more well-known groups such as Accept (Romania) and Gemini (Bulgaria) among others, there were also representatives of groups from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Although many of the experiences discussed were similar - some were outstanding, not least what the CCHR itself has been able to do in just over a year of work. It also became very clear that the internet is of extreme importance, especially to the isolated, and to LGBT people who have to hide themselves for fear of losing jobs or even lives.

Opening the conference Radomir Trajkovic, vice president of the CCHR, dealt with some aims of the new group:

"We want to help create a modern civil society in Macedonia in which LGBT rights and freedoms are legally secured and also publicly supported - which is a very important issue here because, although we had changes in our laws very recently, it's a fact that these changes were imposed upon us. So (we have to) make the public aware of them and build support for the changes."

Because the countries have often had similar experiences (centuries of foreign occupation, so-called socialism, the resurgence of the Orthodox Church, etc.) some reports were similar. A big exception was Bulgaria, where Ivaylo Tzoneff with great enthusiasm mentioned the adoption of the EU anti-discrimination Directive 2000/78 into Bulgarian law was reported - effective from 1st January 2004 - and that Gemini along with other NGOs had been consulted about the provisions of the law. Other

reports were more somber and indicative of the great problems facing LGBT people in the region.

VERA Cimpeanu from Accept (Romania): 45 per cent (of Romanians consider that homosexuals should not be accepted as any other person; 86% said that there is no homosexual or lesbian in their family or friends' circle; 70% said that there is no homosexual or lesbian among their neighbours; 35% answered that there is no gay or lesbian in their town; - and to go down in flames - 22% said that no gay or lesbian should be permitted to live in Romania. (Valid, September 2003)

"One of the major problems is that Romania is an Orthodox country where, after the revolution of 1989 and the end of the communist period, a lot of people discovered God - or think that they did - and the Orthodox Church is very, VERY strong. That is why the politicians and the members of parliament - although Romania is not a religious country - ask for permission from the Church when they want to pass legislation to which they know the Church could object.

"For years one of the arguments used as to why they didn't repeal repressive legislation was that it is against the wishes of the Church, and against the tradition and the moral fibre of the Romanian people."

She added: "I can tell you that it (the struggle) is on the one hand a very long effort - and the amount of effort, money and time on the other hand - and the successes that you get are not proportionate. You should know this from the start and not get discouraged, because it is worth doing it - even when you know that progress is very slow. Progress is there; and, if I look back on what the situation was five years ago, it is obvious that we have made a lot of progress, although it is very slow, too slow for what we want."

Arber N. from Kosovo spoke in part about the lack of access to proper psychological counselling and mental health. Adding that this is why, if you go to the web-site of the Gay Kosovo Association, "You will see that lot of our space and time

is devoted to psychological issues. In other aspects of health, the access of the LGBT community is as good as any other members of the community. However, there is the problem that people cannot openly admit to the doctor that they are gay, which means they will not be able to get specific advice related to their lifestyle."

Ninoslav Mladenovic, a lawyer, and president of the CCHR, made the point which is true for many accession countries and potential members of the E U.: "The recent Macedonian legislation has been one of artificial incorporation of prescribed, ready-made laws from the west into the Macedonian legal system. As well-meaning as they might be, these laws simply do not reflect either the will or the awareness of the Macedonian people.

"People in Macedonia find it difficult to comprehend that homosexuality exists in Macedonia. Since the protection of the rights of homosexuals is rooted precisely in those laws which are generally believed to have been imposed by the west, it is a frequent standpoint that homosexuality is a phenomenon that has itself been imported from the west.

"In Macedonia in reality homosexuals are neither recognised nor protected. Homosexuals still live in constant fear of humiliation, public insult and physical attack."

Reporting the results of research carried out jointly with the CCHR, Prof. Mirjana Najcevska of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee pointed out that the first major problem is that talking about sex itself is a taboo. Only 48 per cent of the population think that sexual orientation and even sex should be talked about.

"When we ask other questions they showed that 64 per cent consider that homosexuality is a disease. So, although 75 per cent think we should have freedom to make our own choice of sexual orientation, that choice should be among the normal, healthy sexual orientations - not diseases.

"Fifty-five per cent of the people think

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# MACEDONIA IS ON THE MAP!

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they (homosexuals) should be moved to a "Departement" or maybe make a wall around them, etc., etc. - so that we can be protected from homosexuals. AND - this is very interesting - there is a law which is against homosexuality and under which homosexuality is punished; and this is the Article 121 of the law on military and army service - where you can be rejected from the job, or put out of the job - if you have been accused of sexual abuse or are a homosexual, so there is still such a law, despite our saying that we have changed all laws.

"The ethnic affiliation was not such a big a issue in the differences between the groups. It emerges that Roma are much more homophobic; but when we cross check, we see that most of the Roma have

only an elementary or secondary schooling, so we have a much smaller number of Roma with a higher education.

"Where you live is important, but not so very much. In smaller towns it is much more homophobic than in a bigger town, especially Skopje; but we also found a very interesting thing - that in Macedonia, women are much more homophobic than men - which is very strange and very different than in other countries."

When asked in question time about this, Prof. Najcevska stated:

"Women in the small towns are living in a much more closed society. They do not have so many possibilities for communication. They are not exposed so much to the influences from the outside world, especially in the villages. We think that's why there

is the bigger conservatism towards this question."

In its short life the CCHR has been able to publish a basic leaflet in three languages, start a counselling programme with trained psychologists, initiate a billboard campaign, in co-operation with the Macedonian Helsinki Committee carry out a research project to establish what they are up against, organise workshops on human rights and tolerance for the youth of political organisations, start a web-site, and - with the financial support of the Swedish Olaf Palme International Foundation - to hold a successful international conference. We can only wish them the strength and courage to keep up this pace!

*Colin de la Motte-Sherman  
Berlin, January 2004.*

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## HIGH COURT BACKS REFUGEE CLAIM

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*By Cynthia Banham*

Two gay men from Bangladesh have won the right to have their refugee claim determined on the grounds that they cannot live openly as homosexuals in their home country, after a ground-breaking High Court decision. It is believed to be the first time in the world that a court of final resort has been asked to consider a refugee claim based on sexual orientation. The result could spark similar claims in Australia and other countries.

In a second landmark immigration ruling, the High Court has declared a British man who has lived in Australia since 1974, when he was 18 months old, but had never sought citizenship an "alien". This means the man, Jason Shaw, could be ejected from Australia because he has a history of petty crime.

The court found that the relationship between Australia and Britain had changed so much since federation that Mr Shaw was not entitled to be treated differently to any other foreign national.

The two Bangladeshis came to Australia in 1999 and applied for protection on the basis of fears they would be killed or

harmed if they returned to Bangladesh.

Homosexuality is a crime in Bangladesh, and the Refugee Review Tribunal accepted that people who lived openly as gays faced ostracism from family, friends and neighbours, as well as being bashed by police.

But it found much of the men's story about their persecution unconvincing, disbelieving a claim by the elder of the men - who told the tribunal he had lost his job after raping several young men at his workplace - that he had been sentenced to 300 lashes because of his sexual orientation.

The tribunal turned down the men's refugee claim, saying that if they conducted themselves discreetly in Bangladesh they would not face serious harm.

But that finding was rejected by the majority of the High Court, made up of Justices Michael Kirby, Michael McHugh, William Gummow and Kenneth Hayne. Persecution, said Justices McHugh and Kirby, "does not cease to be persecution for the purpose of the [Refugee] Convention because those persecuted can eliminate the harm by taking avoiding action within the country of nationality".

The majority effectively accepted the

argument of the men's legal team that telling gay men they would be safe from persecution if they hid their sexuality was akin to telling Anne Frank she would be safe from the Nazis if she hid her Jewishness.

However, three justices dissented, with Justices Ian Callinan and Dyson Heydon saying there was a "great difference" between persecution and disapproval and that the men might have wished to live discreetly to avoid disapproval.

They said also that the drafters of the 1951 Refugee Convention "were not seeking to guarantee all human rights".

The men's barrister, Bruce Levet, said the case was likely to strongly influence policy making in all the refugee receiving states. "[There are] two things this case does," he said. "First, so far as a person's sexual orientation is concerned, it fairly and squarely defines them as a social group for purposes of the Refugee Convention. In addition to that, it has a wider implication for persons of any race, religion, nationality or social group, and that is they don't have to be discreet about their membership of that group - in other words they don't have to hide who they are."



# ***ILGA E-MAIL DIRECTORY (continued)***

Peru:	MHOL	mhol+@amauta.rcp.net.pe	<b>International:</b>	
Philippines:	CLIC (Can't Live in the Closet)	clic_phils@yahoo.com	International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organization (IGLYO) secretariat and information pool	iglyo@intex.ie
	Order of Saint Aelred	st_aelred@hotmail.com	IGLYO American Secretariat	EP4417A@AUVM.American.Edu
	Progay Philippines	progay@edsamail.com.ph	International Lesbian Information Service	s.anderson@ifor.ccmil.compuserve.com
Poland:	International Lesbian and Gay Culture Network	ilgcn@ilgcn.gej.net	Other Sheep, MMMS	GIHerzog@aol.com
	Lambda Warszawa	warszawa@lambda.org.pl	World Congress of Gay, Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Jews	president@glbtjews.org
	Kampania Przeciw Homofobii	info@kampania.org	European Pride Organisers Association secretariat	hartmut.schoenknecht@t-online.de
	Kampania Przeciw Homofobii Cracow	krakow@kampania.org	Crosswix	crosswix@ix.netcom.com
	Kampania Przeciw Homofobii Trojmiasto	trojmiasto@kampania.org	<b>Other useful addresses:</b>	
Portugal:	ILGA Portugal	ilgapt@esoterica.pt	Lesbian Studies Network, Finland	lesbotutkverk@seta.fi
	Opus Gay Association	anser@netcabo.pt	Amnesty Intl Members for Ig Concerns	aimlgc@igc.apc.org
Quebec:	Coalition Gaie et Lesbienne du Quebec	cglq@videotron.ca	Lesbigay Directory of Scholars	lcrew@andromeda.rutgers.edu
Romania:	ACCEPT (Bucharest Acceptance Group)	accept@fx.ro	Diversity, UK	nigel@stonewall.demon.co.uk
Russia:	Argorisk	argorisk@glas.apc.org	<b>Selected press:</b>	
	Krilija	krilija@ilga.org	Rex Wockner	wockner@concentric.net
	Gay.Ru	info@gay.ru	This Way Out (radio, California)	tworadio@aol.com
Serbia:	Arkadia (in care of...)	Jelica.Todosijevic@zamir-bg.ztn.de	<b>Homepages:</b>	
Slovakia:	Altera	altera@nexta.sk	ILGA	http://www.ilga.org
Slovenia	Lesbian Group Skuc-LL	sekcijskuc@mail.ljudmila.org	ILGA-Europe	http://www.ilga-europe.org
South Africa:	Lesbian and Gay Equality Project	admin@equality.org.za	ILGA on the Queer Resource Directory	http://www.qrd.org/qrd/orgs/ILGA
	ABIGALE	raisin@icage.co.za	The ILGA Euroletter	http://www.steff.suite.dk/eur_inde.htm
	GLOW	glow.p@mweb.co.za	Comparative survey of the legal situation for homosexuals in Europe	http://inet.uni2.dk/~steff/survey.htm
	Triangle Project	info@triangle.org.za	Recognition of gay & lesbian partnerships in Europe	http://inet.uni2.dk/~steff/partner.htm
Spain:	Coordinadora Gai-lesbiana (cg-l), Barcelona	cogailes@pangea.org	IGLYO	www.iglyo.org
	COGAM, Madrid	cogam@ctv.es	ILGA Documentation Centre	http://www.homodok.nl
Sri Lanka:	Companions on a Journey	coj@ilga.org	Gay & Lesbian International Lobby	http://inet.uni2.dk/~steff/gilil.htm
Sweden:	RFSL (Swedish national organization)	forbund@rfs1.se	Hosi Wien	http://www.hosiwien.at
	RFSL Nord	polarstar@ilga.org	Queer Europe	http://home6.swipnet.se/~w-66936/q-e.htm
	International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network Nordic	bill.schiller@sr.se	Euro-Queer	http://home6.swipnet.se/~w-66936/e-q.htm
Switzerland:	Pink Cross	office@pinkcross.ch	International Association of Lesbian/Gay Pride Coordinators Inc.	http://www.interpride.org
	Lesbian Organization, Switzerland (LOS)	info@los.ch	European Pride Organizers Association	www.interpride.org/epoa/
	HAZ - Homosexuelle Arbeitsgruppen Zürich	info@haz.ch	Háttér Support Society for Gays and Lesbians in Hungary	www.hatter.hu
Thailand	association for social knowledge	sanders@law.ubc.ca	International Lesbian and Gay Cultural Network	www.caritig.org
Turkey:	Lambda Istanbul	lambda@lambdaistanbul.org	International Lesbian and Gay Culture Network (Poland)	http://ilgcn.gej.net
	Sisters of Venus	sevinc@boun.edu.tr	World AIDS Awareness Days	http://www.outpr.com.au/wad.html
	KAOS GL	kaosgl@ilga.org	IGLHRC	http://www.iglhrc.org/
UK:	Consortium of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Voluntary and Community Organisations	admin@clgb.org.uk	Belarus Lambda League for Freedom of Gays and Lesbians	http://www.irex.minsk.by/~gayforum/
	Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM)	lgcm@lgcm.org.uk	Satyricon	http://www.satyricon.recife.net
	Leicester University Student LGB Assn. c/o P Humble	pjh1@le.ac.uk	HAZ - Homosexuelle Arbeitsgruppen Zürich	www.haz.ch
	London Bisexual Group	iwatters@cix.compulink.co.uk	Humsafar	www.humsafar.org
	London Gay and Lesbian Switchboard c/o	admin@llgs.org.uk	Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM)	www.lgcm.org.uk
	Outright Scotland: The Secretary	secretariat@outright-scotland.org	Lithuanian Gay League	www.gay.lt
	Press for Change	letters@pfc.org.uk	CARITIG	www.caritig.org
	Pride Trust	info@pride.org.uk	Russian National Gay and Lesbian Site Gay.Ru	http://www.gay.ru/english
	Stonewall Immigration Group	info@stonewall-immigration.org.uk	Press for Change	http://www.pfc.org.uk
	Unison National Lesbian and Gay Committee	out@unison.co.uk	Lambda Warszawa	www.lambda.org.pl
Ukraine:	Nash Mir (Our World) Gay and Lesbian Center	ourworld@cci.lg.ua	UNISON	www.unison.org.uk/out
USA:	Bisexual Political Action, San Diego	paquette@mail.inetworld.net	World Congress of Gay, Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender Jews	www.glbttjews.org
	Center GAP, New York	lgcscnyc@aol.com	<b>News/Magazines:</b>	
	G&L Assn of Chorus (GALA Chorus)	galachorus@aol.com	GLINN, the Gay/Lesbian International News Network	http://www.glinn.com
	GLAAW (g&l activists of Washington)	rick.rosendall@glaa.org	De Gay Krant, The Netherlands	http://www.bart.nl/~megatel/gaykrant/nl
	GLPCI (g&l parents coalition intl):	GLPCINat@ix.netcom.com	Rex Wockner World News	http://www.qrd.org/qrd/www/world/wockner.html
	Family Values	FamValues@aol.com	This Way Out	www.planetout.com!
	Global Aids Action Network (GAAN)	globalaids@aol.com	PlanetOut	http://www.planetout.com/
	International Association of Gay and Lesbian Martial Artists	peobumjong@aol.com		
	L&G Community Services Center, NY	lgsc_nyc@aol.com		
	NLGA (natl l&g health association)	nlgha@aol.com		
	NLGLA (natl l&g law assn)	jwilets@umiami.ir.miami.edu		
	NGLTF (natl g&l task force)	nglft@aol.com		
	NetGALA (g&l alumni/ae assns)	NetGALA@aol.com		
	More Light Presbyterians for LGBT Concerns c/o James Anderson	jda@mariner.rutgers.edu		
Zimbabwe:	GALZ	galz@samara.co.zw		

# SCENES FROM MANILA CONFERENCE

