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How could change your sexual orientation by simply taking a pill would you? Yes No

Mass. court says state must allow gay marriages

Same-sex couples gain at state, local level

by David Stout
Q-Notes staff

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a clarification of its own landmark ruling, on Feb. 4 the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court declared that the state could not offer civil unions in lieu of full marriage rights for same-sex couples.

"The history of our nation has demonstrated that separate is seldom, if ever, equal," the justices wrote in response to a draft bill submitted by the Senate that would create civil unions with many of the rights and responsibilities of marriage.

"The bill that would allow for civil unions, but falls short of marriage, makes for 'unconstitutional, inferior, and discriminatory status for same-sex couples,'" the justices said.

"For no rational reason the marriage laws of the Commonwealth discriminate against a defined class; no amount of tinkering with language will eradicate that stain. The bill would have the effect of maintaining and fostering a stigma of exclusion that the Constitution prohibits," they added.

The debate over same-sex marriage and gay civil unions is already boiling in the nation's political cauldron and conservatives at the federal level will now be even

more determined to keep the heat turned up.

In fact President George W. Bush has stirred the pot twice in recent weeks. During his State of the Union address he again denounced same-sex marriages and, depending on how you interpret his remarks, *may have* subtly endorsed the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment. One week earlier he rankled some gay leaders with the announcement of a new \$1.5 billion initiative to promote traditional marriage.

Barring an administration change in November, it's clear that support for same-sex unions won't come from the top but from progressive leaders at the state and municipal levels where gains continue to be made.

Here's a sampling of same-sex marriage and domestic partner legislation across the country.

California — Last year former Gov. Gray Davis signed the *Domestic Partner Rights & Responsibilities Act*, a bill that extends hundreds of rights to same-sex couples. California joins Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Vermont in offering some form of statewide benefits, but Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) believes it's not enough.



The decision heard 'round the world: Maryland Supreme Court Justices (seated, left to right) Francis X. Spina, Roderick L. Ireland, Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall, John M. Greaney; (standing) Judith A. Cowin, Robert J. Cordy and Martha B. Sosman.

Leno, the head of the California Legislature's gay caucus, announced on Jan. 13 plans to introduce a bill that would allow same-sex couples to marry in California.

"My bill will affirm the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender adults who wish to take on the responsibility of marriage and ensure that children being raised by these couples receive the same protections as children raised by married couples."

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Jamaica: Queer in a culture of violence

Cops are deadly, politicians corrupt, the people poor, but musicians sing, "Kill the fags, bum the sissies."

by Kelly Cogswell
with contributions by Richard Stern

Don't let Bob Marley's peace and love lyrics fool you. In Jamaica, violence is an endemic problem that erodes everyone's basic civil liberties and threatens gay lives. More than 740 murders have taken place so far this year on the Caribbean island, many of them due to reprisal killings, gang-related violence, and domestic incidents.



Face of the anti-gay Jamaican 'taliban': Recording artist Capleton

In 2002, the police themselves were responsible for the deaths of at least 133 people, "many in disputed circumstances suggesting extrajudicial executions," according to Amnesty International. The elections that year saw the

deaths of at least 60 people in politically motivated violence.

Lesbians, gay men, and transgender people are on the front lines, targeted for repression and violence from the dance-halls to the pulpits, and police stations.

Against God and Jamaica

In the 1980s, AIDS brought the issue of homosexuality out of the closet in Jamaica, but the violent backlash drove the small lesbian and gay community underground. Queer issues are once again in the hot seat, this time with the first confirmation of an openly gay priest as an Anglican bishop almost two thousand miles away.

Jamaica's Christian pastors are united against it. Just prior to last week's ceremony for now Bishop of New Hampshire Gene Robinson, Kingston's Anglican priests gathered to reaffirm their opposition, voting 40-0 to reject his elevation.

Blood out ah chi chi

The denunciations from the pulpits have a far-reaching effect. Most Jamaicans are Christian Protestants, heavily slanted towards an anti-gay, anti-woman fundamentalism, with the Church of God capturing 21 percent,

Baptists nine percent, Seventh-Day Adventists nine percent, and Pentecostals just over seven percent. Anglicans claim slightly less than six percent.

The Rastafarian religion, which emphasizes traditional gender roles, is also no haven for lesbians or gay men. Though it is only practiced strictly by about five percent of Jamaicans, it has a much broader impact. Critically acclaimed musician Capleton has popularized a radical strain of Rastafarianism called Bobo Dread. One of his songs says, "Blood out ah chi chi/ Bun out ah sissy." Kill the fags, burn the sissies. Some detractors refer to Bobo Dread fans as "the Jamaican Taliban."

Police nurture violence

Most victims of homophobic violence in Jamaica find it's a miracle if anyone intervenes, especially the police. J-FLAG (Jamaican Friends of Lesbians and Gays) has been documenting cases for the last few years.

In one case during the summer of 2003, a group of gay men were assaulted by their neighbors. It was a family affair. Both par-

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