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HTI43201.FE

16 December 2004

Haiti: Homosexuals in Haiti, their situation and treatment; state protection available to them (2002-December 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to a sociology professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal and specialist on Haitian issues, homosexuality, [translation] "a reality that has barely been explored" and one that is concealed, is [translation] "still an aberration in Haitian society"; therefore, only a few people have made their homosexuality public (1 Dec. 2004).

The Internet site Globalgayz.com presents Richard Ammon's commentary on his time spent in Haiti (Feb. 2003). According to him, homosexuality is legal in Haiti "but [is] not tolerated by the mostly Christian culture" (Globalgayz.com Feb. 2003). Violence toward homosexuals is rare, although a homosexual Haitian/American who is once again living in Haiti said that two homosexuals were burned alive in their house a few years ago (ibid. ). The author said that there is no law to protect those who openly declare themselves homosexual and that many homosexual or lesbian relationships go undetected or unknown because women's closeness is more accepted, while men often invoke family ties (ibid. ).

No corroboration of the information provided by Globalgayz.com could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

A national strategic plan prepared by Haiti's Ministry of Public Health and Population refers to the vulnerability of homosexuals to AIDS, given that homosexuality is not socially accepted and that relationships are generally kept secret (Haiti 2002; Johns Hopkins Feb. 2004). A literature review on HIV/AIDS in Haiti indicated that the only two organizations that work with [translation] "men who have sexual relations with men" are Family Health International and GRASADIS (Groupe de recherche et d'action anti-SIDA et anti-discrimination sexuelle), a research and action group against AIDS and sexual discrimination (ibid.).

The documentary *Of Men and Gods (Des hommes et des dieux)*, produced in 2002 by Anne Lescot and Laurence Magloire for DigitAl LM Films Productions, addresses the links between homosexuality and voodooism in Haiti:

[translation]

This ethnographic documentary, produced in Haiti, describes a particular group of individuals-homosexuals and transvestites-in the context of voodooism. The connection between these two worlds leads us into a unique symbolic universe where the unaccepted people of society express themselves, sometimes with the greatest extraversion and drama, sometimes with deep emotion. It is an emotion that reflects the search for meaning and recognition of marginalized individuals in a country where referring to homosexuality and transvestism remains taboo. Voodoo becomes a liberating space and a means of expression where anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, can find protection and comfort (ALGI 30 Oct. 2002).

Globalgayz.com also points out that voodooism has a considerable effect on Haitians and that it does not discriminate against gays and lesbians (Feb. 2003).

In the online magazine *Haïtiwebs*, homosexuality is addressed from the point of view of young men and street children who are prostitutes: [translation] "in Haiti, almost all street children have had sexual relations at a very young age or are homosexuals. It is said that tourists introduced the phenomenon of young male prostitutes to Haiti. Today, the problem has spread" (HaïtiWebs.com 17 May 2000).

No other information on homosexuality in Haiti and on the state protection available to homosexuals could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

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Professor of sociology at the Université du Québec à Montréal. 1 December 2004. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International, Alterpresse, Freedom House, Haïti en marche, Haïti Info, *Haïti Progrès* , Haïti-Référence, *Haitian Times* , [Haïtiglobalvillage.com](http://Haïtiglobalvillage.com), [Haïtionline.com](http://Haïtionline.com), Human Rights Watch, *Miami Herald* , Moun, National Coalition for Haitian Rights, *Le Nouvelliste* , Organization of American States, Planet Out, Radio Métropole, Resource Centre of the Americas, Washington Office on Latin America.

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