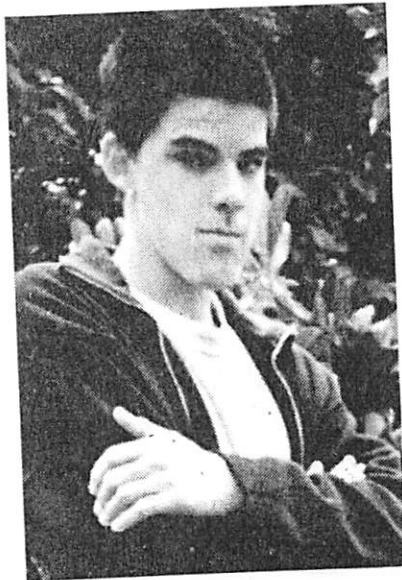
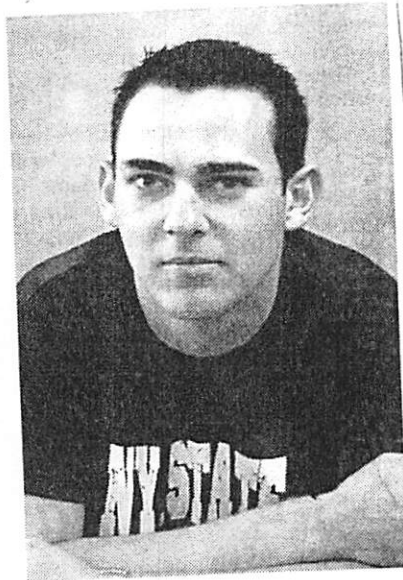
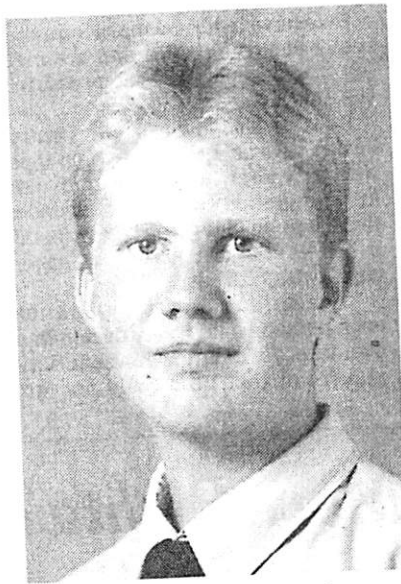


# Gay<sup>s</sup> Respond Quickly to Killings in Cape Town



Photographs From Die Burger

Fanus Fouche, top left, Juan Meyer, top right, Travis Reade, above, left, and Sergio de Castro, above, right, were four of the gay men who were killed by gunmen on Jan. 20 at a massage parlor in the Sea Point neighborhood of Cape Town. Gay people in the city have rallied to help with the investigation and offer aid to the men's families.

By RACHEL L. SWARNS

CAPE TOWN, Feb. 2 — The bodies are gone, but blood still stains the wooden floors at 7 Graham Road. For two weeks now, dozens of mourners have come here to weep and leave flowers in memory of the nine gay men who were killed in an attack on the massage parlor.

The massacre was front-page news and the story is now well known: on Jan. 20, killers believed to be looking for two gay prostitutes involved in a drug deal entered the massage parlor and shot everyone inside, execution style, even though they could not find the prostitutes they were looking for. Some of the men had their throats slit and their hands bound with tape.

What is less commonly known is how gay people here rallied to speed the investigation and to help the families of the dead. Within hours of the killings, the Triangle Project, which counsels gay and lesbian clients, was passing along tips to the police and extending its counseling hours.

The killings of the men — who were all white and were mostly in their 20's — have outraged this city known for its tolerance and diversity. Cape Town, the lovely, mountain-ringed city on the southernmost tip of the continent, has even been marketed in recent years to gay tourists from Europe and the United States who flock here for the beautiful scenery and lively night life.

Many of the young men killed were

runaways who worked as prostitutes in the white house on Graham Road in Sea Point, a seaside neighborhood that has been increasingly plagued with drugs and crime. Initially, advocates for gay people feared that the victims would be ignored because of their jobs in the sex industry and because the killing was linked to the drug trade.

But that has not happened. Good Hope Metropolitan Community Church, which ministers to a predominantly gay congregation, has raised money to cover funeral costs for one of the victims, whose family was struggling to pay for his burial.

The Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, which works for social and economic equality, has put the police sketches of two suspects on its Web site. Hundreds of people, including local politicians in the governing African National Congress, attended memorial services around the city to honor the dead.

"I was surprised by the extent of the response," said Evert Knoesen, national director of the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project. "It was overwhelming."

"I think men in the gay community are able to understand the difficulties faced by young gay men in a society where poverty is rife and are far more sympathetic to the plight of sex workers generally," he said. "I think people did identify this as an attack on the gay community. People want this thing to be cleared up. They want to know that it's safe to be out there."

The police have worked hard on the investigation and have opened channels of communication, handing the cellphone numbers of senior officials to advocacy and service organizations. Leaders in local government have promised to fight crime more aggressively in the Sea Point community.

"The police have been so receptive to us," said Glenn de Swardt, the manager of clinical services at the Triangle Project. "These guys were sex workers, but they also have partners. They also have mothers. They also have friends. People have really come together around this."

No one has been arrested yet and the police are still struggling to sort out exactly what happened. Investigators are looking for two suspects — one white and one mixed-race — between the ages of 25 and 35. The police have said the killings seem to have occurred when the angry killers could not find the drug-dealing prostitutes they were looking for. But

detectives are investigating additional leads, which they refuse to discuss.

Relatives of the owner of the massage parlor, Aubrey Otgaar, are maintaining hope that the killers will be caught and put to justice. They are still mourning Mr. Otgaar, who was 56 and, they say, refused to allow drugs to be used in his business.

Mr. Otgaar's relatives said they were wary of politicians getting involved in the memorial services, but they welcomed the outpouring of sup-

port from other people.

"It surprised us, how people from all walks of life came out to support us," said Cheryl Cunningham, Mr. Otgaar's sister.

Lauren Cunningham, Mr. Otgaar's niece, said she was particularly touched by the flowers that were tucked in the white picket fence outside the massage parlor on Graham Road. "People came every day," she said. "There was always someone interested in watering the flowers."