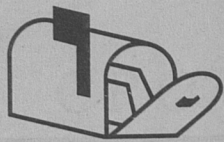


== *letters* ==



OITM, PO Box 1078, Richmond, VT 05477-1078 or Editor@mountainpridemedia.org

*Out in the Mountains* welcomes your letters. Although we will withhold names from printing upon request, the letter must be accompanied by a verifiable name and address in order to be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. Letters are also subject to the editorial policy stated in the masthead.

VCU grateful

We just want to thank the hundreds of volunteers who worked long and hard, day and night, over the past months to protect our civil union law in the November election. Thanks to everyone's hard work, most Vermonters expressed support for the law at the polls, and over 60 percent voted for pro-civil union gubernatorial candidates. It's clear that, regardless of how folks feel about civil unions, a strong majority of Vermonters are ready to move on to other issues and don't want to see our legislature spend another session bogged down in this divisive issue.

It's dangerous to single out individuals for special thanks, because so many folks went above and beyond, but we'd like to acknowledge one particularly special person. Since June, Jakki Flanagan has worked night and day, without weekends or vacations, with unflagging intensity and good humor, to coordinate our statewide grassroots work. Our community owes a special debt of gratitude to Jakki for her passion, commitment, and competence. Thanks, Jakki!

Beth Robinson  
Susan Murray  
Vermonters for Civil Unions

Biological argument for marriage

By current definitions of gender and orientation, I am considered a heterosexual male. As such, I consider it very much a matter of self-interest to support, amongst other common civil rights, the right of Gays and Lesbians to engage in civil marriage. I support this right because I know that the contrary voices are of those who would presume to define for others who and what they may be. There is no right that is more important to me than the right to define for myself who and what I am, and I know that I place that right in jeopardy when I stand by and watch as the right of others to self-definition is called in question.

In this regard I would like to suggest that an important line of argument, which I hope will be addressed sooner or later, was missed by the plaintiffs in *Baker vs State of Vermont*. It

seems to me that the principal point of difference between the minority opinion, which advocated the allowance of same-sex marriages under the current marriage statutes, and the majority opinion, which stipulated that a "separate but equal" form of civil union would satisfy Constitutional requirements, was whether or not the definition of marriage as a legal union between "one man and one woman" constituted sexual discrimination. The majority held that since anyone, whether male or female, may participate in marriage, so long as they are willing to conform to the statutory requirement to marry someone of the "opposite sex," the current statutes cannot be construed as discriminating on the basis of sex.

This line of reasoning, however, depends on an assumption so basic to the beliefs of our society that we do not ordinarily think to question it, yet which is shown to be false by the the basic facts of human reproductive and developmental biology as cited in any good basic textbook on the subject. This assumption is that we can, by a set of clear, objective, universally applicable criteria, designate every human being as belonging unequivocally to one of two mutually exclusive categories, either "male" or "female."

Most people, whether adults or infants, seem by agreement of their external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, gonads, and sex chromosomes to so obviously fit into one or the other of these categories that we assume this must be true for everyone. Yet if there are people with enough differently mismatched assortments of these or any other sexually dimorphic criteria that we can-

not find any one criterion, or set of criteria, by which we could satisfactorily designate every person as either unequivocally male or unequivocally female, then our current marriage statutes will not pass Constitutional muster for failure to abide by the requirement for equal protection and due process. For if there are any who cannot be objectively defined as either male or female, then either they are neither, and so are prohibited from marrying as a matter of sexual discrimination, or they are both, and may marry either a man or a woman, which is then a case of sex discrimination towards both men and women.

The people I am talking about, of course, are all those, including "true hermaphrodites," currently included under the umbrella term "inter-sexed." Some of the individual "types" that fall within this category are probably as common as about one in 1500 live births, while others are much rarer. But overall, a reasonable estimate seems to be that about one in 500 infants is born with sufficiently ambiguous external genitalia that it cannot be said to be obviously either male or female. As far as other sexual criteria are concerned, there are individuals with testes, male sex chromosomes(XY), obviously female external genitalia, but no functional internal reproductive organs; others with one testis and one ovary; or with two gonads that are not differentiated as either testes or ovaries; or without differentiated gonadal tissue at all; or with female gonads and chromosomes but apparently male external genitalia.

In other words, no matter what criteria we select, there is

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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